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SAVAGE HEROINES? THE TREATMENT OF GENDER AND GENRE IN TRANSLATIONS OF PHILIP PULLMAN'S *NORTHERN LIGHTS**

Abstract

Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights* is the first instalment of his award-winning trilogy *His Dark Materials*. In this alternate-worlds fantasy and children's literature classic, Lyra and her daemon Pan are catapulted from the relative stability of Oxford to negotiate an increasingly threatening world in a quest to protect free will from cataclysmic adult zealotry. According to prophecy, Lyra is the chosen one; she conforms to the tropes of the fantasy quest performing the paradigmatic steps of the saviour hero.

Pullman's protagonist transgresses and subverts the stereotypical expectations of the fantasy heroine whose generic destiny is coded in enclosure, passivity and endurance. Lyra is also a coming of age story and here again Pullman's conceptualisation does not conform to the female pattern in both fantasy and children's literature where marriage functions as the marker for maturity.

Character is one of the two defining traits of fantasy (Attebery 1992) and it performs a didactic function in children's literature. Characterisation is created through the reader's interpretation of textual cues: narratorial description, direct and free-indirect speech. Lyra's character subverts fantasy stereotypes and depicts a transgressive child who does not conform to gender role expectations.

Genre translation tends to adapt the text to target culture norms and the didactic and socialising impetus of children's literature has been shown to prompt translation strategies which comply with the receiving culture's linguistic and behavioural norms. In

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this paper, we analyse the rendering of character cues in the French, German and Italian translations of *Northern Lights*:

　　1. Is the transgressive trope of a) the heroine following the male hero paradigm and b) the coming of age pattern maintained or normalised to conform to genre expectations?

　　2. Is Lyra's transgressive character rendered in translation or is it adapted to comply with didactic expectations of behaviour?

　　3. Are there different notions of the role and function of children's literature in the target environments and do these impact on translation strategies?

Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights* (1995) is the first instalment of the trilogy *His Dark Materials*. It was very successful, winning the Carnegie medal (a children's and young adult's literature prize), and in 2007 was named Carnegie of Carnegies following a public vote (O'Brien 2017, online). The last novel in the trilogy, *The Amber Spyglass*, was the first book to win the Whitbread Book Award in both the adult and children's categories, affirming how the trilogy has reached a broad spectrum of readers. Marketed for young adults, *Northern Lights* is classified as a children's text; however, the trilogy can be seen as an 'ambivalent text' which

> provides the writer for children with a larger range of options in manipulating the text than does a univalent text. The writer has the option of producing a text composed of models which are in disagreement with each of the prevalent systems (the adult and the children's) and could not be exclusively accepted by either (Shavit 1980: 77).

In this alternate-worlds fantasy, Lyra Belacqua and her daemon Pan are catapulted from the relative stability of an Oxford college to negotiate an increasingly threatening world in a quest to protect free will from cataclysmic adult zealotry. Pullman's critique of religious dogma in the books has generated criticism and there have been many attempts to have the trilogy banned in North America and Canada (Pilkington 2009). Nevertheless, *Northern Lights* was very quickly – and widely – translated: in 1996 into Italian by Marina Astrologo and Alfred Tutino as *La Bussola D'oro*, and, also in 1996, into German by Wolfram Ströle and Andrea Kann as *Der goldene Kompass*. The French translation by Jean Esch came out a little later in 1998 as *Les Royaumes du Nord*. None of the translations opted to keep

the English title; both the Italian and French versions opted for *The Golden Compass*,[1] which was in fact the title of the American publication (Knopf 1996), while the French, although retaining an association with 'the north', has nevertheless dropped the important reference to the Northern lights.

Translation does not happen in isolation; translation strategies depend on the status of the text, the author, the source language and the text's function. These varying factors shape the degree of translatorial intervention and determine whether the translation will adopt the target text's cultural, genre and linguistic norms or preserve the source culture's patterns. Pullman's trilogy is a combination of popular genre literature – fantasy – and children's literature. In general, translations of genre texts and popular literature are adapted to target cultural norms. Such translation strategies privilege target reader accessibility and produce a fluent, comprehensible, 'as if original'-sounding text. However, the conventions of fantasy demand an element of the foreign and strange; neologisms, unfamiliar phrases, incomprehensible worlds and peculiarities – for example in objects, customs, and names – which the translator must respect.

World-building is one of the defining features of fantasy: for it to be successful, the author needs to generate a fully developed environment which convinces the reader and draws them in. Familiarity and strangeness need to be negotiated on the same plane of narrative exposition without potentially jarring disruptions of too much explanation or alienating unfamiliarity. Lyra's geographical world is recognisably our own but its physical and temporal settings, as well as religious, political and educational structures, are refracted through a more archaic lens. Furthermore, it is populated by characters and shaped by existential laws that transcend our everyday world. Evoking the unfamiliar, strange and new poses tremendous challenges for description and translation, requiring new words and concepts to convey ways of being, thinking, acting and speaking that are divorced from our everyday world. In the original texts, Pullman achieves this feat admirably. He has created a believable fictional world which both captures and feeds the readers' imagination. But for fantasy to go beyond formula, it also needs to serve as an 'instrument of ethics' (Le Guin 2009: 7), incorporating a critical dimension which exploits the opportunities of defamiliarization that the skewed representation of the not-quite real represents. The story of Lyra's quest articulates a sustained and scathing critique of the church

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[1] It is also the title of the feature film released in 2007.

as "a powerful and ruthlessly repressive organization, determined to root out sin and to control weak human beings for their own good at any cost" (Gooderham 2003: 155).

Northern Lights is a typical quest fantasy where the protagonist Lyra must embark on numerous journeys, which "start in a place of security and stability, and then a disruption from the outside world occurs" (Senior 2012: 190). Quest fantasy has a clearly defined structure where the hero (sometimes reluctantly) accepts the call to leave, completes the challenge and returns home, his success often marked by having won a bride. This is a clearly gendered format – in contrast to the traditional male coming-of-age story which traces the hero's transformation and maturation, the rare female quest is marked by enclosure, passivity and endurance, teaching girls about social expectations and the restricted role they are to lead (Lincoln 3, quoted in Attebery 1992: 90). Story and character are the two fundamental features in fantasy literature (Attebery 1992: 54–55). 'Story' relates to the formulaic and highly gendered pattern of the hero/ine's movement through defined narrative steps; it also relates to the world-building aspects discussed above. Brian Attebery's second defining feature of fantasy is 'character' which is also strongly influenced by conventions. Fantasy characters are role-bound archetypes – the hero, the antagonist, the helper, the victim etc. Unlike the mimetic characters of realist fiction ('actors'), these 'actants' are story functions propelling the story by doing what they are expected to do. And in good fantasy fiction, character is a dialogue between 'actor' and 'actant', a movement between (realist) actor and (stereotypical story function) actant where believable analogs of humanity act out the patterns of fairy tale or myth. In Lyra's case, we have the fully realised character construct of a young girl who is naughty, uncertain, emotional and bossy in turns but who is propelled into a quest to initially help Lord Asriel, then to save her friend Roger and other kidnapped children, and ultimately to save the world from religious oppression. Accepting this role, she transgresses and subverts the stereotypical expectations of the fantasy heroine. Instead, her narrative trajectory follows the male hero paradigm, except for the short excursion into the domain of Mrs Coulter, who attempts to educate her into appropriate femininity, which Lyra rejects after initially being dazzled. Lyra's complex character not only portrays her as an agent, a leader and fighter, but also as illogical, intuitive and emotional, features typical of the female pattern.

Lyra is not the only one who transgresses stereotypical generic expectations. Pullman plays around with his role-bound fantasy characters, shifting

and changing their functionality throughout the novel, where the actor versus actant dimension is foregrounded/backgrounded during the course of the story. Very few characters perform a purely 'actant' role. Among them is the Master of Jordan College who is instrumental in initiating Lyra leaving 'home'; he is an enabler by giving her the alethiometer and tasking her to take it to Lord Asriel. Other actants are Lyra's friend Roger, whose abduction is the catalyst for the quest, and the villain Iofur, the usurper bear king. But the majority of characters have actant and actor dimensions: using stock characters and reinventing them, Pullman gives them complexity, psychological depth and progressive purpose. All stereotypical roles are de-constructed and re-formed to create multidimensional and subversive characters. As fully realised and highly ambiguous actors, they also propel the story along, but their functionality changes depending on both narrative development and Lyra's growing understanding and more mature perspective. This is especially the case in relation to her parents: Mrs Coulter changes from enabling fairy godmother to villainous evil witch to caring mother in the third book of the trilogy, and Lord Asriel moves from powerful uncle to distant and admired father to feared ruthless scientist, who sacrifices Lyra's friend Roger to his ambition.

In this article, we will focus on an examination of whether the transgressive tropes of Lyra performing the male hero function and resisting the female coming-of-age pattern are maintained or normalised in translation. In terms of fantasy, the analysis is twofold: a) mapping the hero/heroine paradigm to see how Lyra conforms or transgresses the stereotypical actant paradigm, and b) analysing the actor character construct. Characterisation is created through the reader's interpretation of textual cues: narratorial description and character comments as well as Lyra's actions, behaviour, direct speech, free indirect discourse, how she interacts with her environment and her attitude towards others. However, *Northern Lights* is a children's fantasy with a central character who embodies a blatant disregard for the didactic and socialising norms transmitted in children's literature. The book depicts a transgressive child who does not conform to contemporary gender role expectations and who challenges pedagogical norms.

Genre translation tends to adapt the text to target culture norms and the didactic and the socialising impetus of children's literature has been shown to prompt translation strategies which comply with the receiving culture's linguistic and behavioural norms (Shavit 1986, Seago 2006). This includes the domestication of cultural items which are foreign or difficult to understand,

as well as omission or editing in order to adhere to pedagogical goals. Due to these differing and contrasting expectations translation strategies may be pulled in various directions. In this article, we shall analyse the rendering of character cues in the French, German and Italian translations of *Northern Lights*, in order to answer the following questions:

1. Is the transgressive trope of a) the heroine following the male hero paradigm and b) the coming-of-age pattern maintained or normalised to conform to genre expectations?
2. Is Lyra's transgressive character rendered in translation or is it adapted to comply with didactic expectations of behaviour?
3. Are there different notions of the role and function of children's literature in the target environments and do they impact on translation strategies?

Lyra as male hero (actant)

According to Peter Hunt and Millicent Lenz, heroes in fantasy literature have certain characteristics (quoted in Solhaug 2008: 328), and all of these tropes (highlighted in bold below) are present in Lyra's character and narrative performance. She understands herself to be an **orphan**, living at Jordan College and cared for by college scholars. It is only later that she learns that Mrs Coulter and Lord Asriel are her parents. Lyra has an **outsider** status at the all-male Jordan College, because of her gender, age and class—all other women are servants and it is their children Lyra plays with. She is also an outsider in relation to the scholars who have privileges, rituals and secrets, and consciously recognises her exclusion from this adult, male and scholarly domain. However, she also sees herself as an insider, feeling a sense of belonging, an intense pride in the superiority of Jordan compared to other colleges or indeed the world outside, and subscribes to its chauvinist attitude towards female scholars. Lyra's daemon Pan performs the role of the hero's **animal guide and helper** while Farder Coram (and to a certain extent Ma Costa) act as her **mentor**. Lyra is 'the one' who will save the world according to the witches' **prophecy** and she **accepts the call to action** when she leaves Jordan College, as the **understanding of her destiny and task** evolves and develops.

Initially, Lyra understands her task to be a simple one of taking the alethiometer to Lord Asriel; however, once it becomes clear that Roger has

been abducted by the gobblers, she fights to win a place on the Gyptian rescue mission to the far north and, once there, extends her task of saving Roger to all the children held captive at Bolvangar. The alethiometer is her **special gift**, and her ability to read this complex instrument aligns her with one of the rare female hero pattern traits: innate, intuitive, and illogical knowledge. Lyra's ability to tell stories, to enthral her hearers and to lie is her **special weapon or gift**. Lying is explicitly described in the text as a positive attribute,[2] necessary for her to function as a hero and explicitly linked to the other special gift, the alethiometer itself. Both are highly complex and require special abilities to master them. Lyra commits two **acts of betrayal**: firstly, leading Iorek into a fight with the usurper bear king which (she fears) he cannot win, and secondly when she unwittingly delivers Roger into the power of her father, who kills the boy when excising his daemon, a fate Lyra had set out to save her friend from.

In the original English text, Lyra clearly performs the male hero function, matching all the notable characteristics, and all three translations render the paradigm with only minor variations. The French version shows the greatest degree of intervention, shifting the nuance of how some of the hero characteristics are presented. It foregrounds Lyra's sense of Jordan College as home, and emphasises that this is a secure place for a child, where she is looked after by others whilst lacking agency in her everyday life. The French text also frames her destiny in more emotional and relational terms: her interpretation of her duty is cast in terms of assisting 'her father' rather than the distanced 'Lord Asriel' as in the English, foregrounding the emotional link to him.

Once Roger has been abducted, Lyra's own sense of her destiny is that she is strong and able enough to help others; this is articulated in her argument to be allowed to join the Gyptians' rescue mission as an equal member. In the original, Lyra wants *to come and help rescue the kids* (E: 140) but in French this is cast as Lyra assisting the Gyptians by adding 'you' (vous) 'I want to help **you** free the children' (*Je veux **vous** aider à libérer les enfants*, F: 131). This foregrounding of assistance, help and relationality casts

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[2] The name Iorek bestows on her, Lyra Silvertongue, recognises her ability to speak persuasively, sometimes bordering on misrepresentation (lying). In German, this is expressly rendered by calling her 'Lyra the Wily One' (*Lyra die Listenreiche*), while the French rendering 'Speaker of Gold' (*Parle D'or*) means 'speaking wisely,' the opposite of the expressive meaning in the English. The Italian version offers a literal translation and thereby loses any expressive meaning.

Lyra's character in rather more traditional terms, normally associated with the female supporting role. It is further developed when the French version minimises the prophetic force of the witches' articulation of Lyra's destiny as saviour: Lyra seems to have less choice and rather than being a magical child who has an illustrious destiny, in the French she cannot seem to unburden herself of the fate with which she has been 'blessed' (*dotée*), but which weighs on her:

Table 1. Comparison of English and French version (example 1)

English	French	English gloss of the French
She had struggled all this way to bring something to Lord Asriel, thinking she knew what he wanted; and it wasn't the alethiometer at all. (E: 380)	Elle avait lutté pour arriver jusqu'ici, convaincue de savoir ce que Lord Asriel attendait, mais ce n'était pas l'aléthiomètre qui intéressait **son père**. (F: 340)	She had fought to arrive here, convinced in the knowledge of what Lord Asriel was expecting, but it wasn't the alethiometer which interested **her father.**

Source: own study.

Table 2. Comparison of English and French version (example 2)

English	French	English gloss of the French
And they have spoken of a child such as this, who **has** a great destiny (E: 175)	Et elles parlent d'une enfant comme celle-ci, **dotée** d'un grand destin (F: 162)	And they speak of a child such as this **blessed** with a great destiny
There is a curious prophecy about this child (E: 310)	Une curieuse prophétie **pèse sur** cette enfant (F: 280)	A curious prophecy **weighs on** this child

Source: own study.

Secondly, rather than being the saviour herself, Lyra includes herself as one of the children who need to be freed: she says, 'Some people are going to come to free **us'** (*Des gens vont venir pour **nous** libérer*, F: 241). The French also tones down evidence of Lyra's agency in her ability to read the alethiometer: rather than being able to ask it questions, read and report messages (E: 204), in the French she merely 'relays' (*transmit*, F: 188) meaning. This is in comparison to the German version which foregrounds the prophetic dimension, having Lyra 'announce' the answer (*verkündete*, G: 231). The French Lyra also has a more superficial attitude towards the alethiometer. Rather than being 'delighted' in its 'complexity and detail' (E: 80), she is

conventionally 'enchanted by the complexity and beauty of this object' (*enchantée par la complexité et la beauté de cet objet*, F: 79). Similarly, her power over others and her ability to read and react appropriately to situations (E: 177) is framed as a game, or child's play (F: 163).

In contrast to the French translation, the German and Italian texts present very few shifts. The German foregrounds the fact that Jordan College functions as her 'home' (*zu Hause*, G: 45–46), whilst reducing her emotional link to the college, and tempering the childishness of her irresponsible behaviour (G: 44). Jordan's chauvinism towards women is removed, rendering the derogatory word 'females' (E: 4) as the more neutral noun 'women' (*Frauen*, G: 10). In the Italian text, Lyra is made to be more culpable in the betrayal of Roger with the addition of 'with her intervention' (*con il suo intervento*, I: 338), which explicitly identifies *her* actions as the reason why he dies. However, overall, the handling of the hero paradigm is mostly conveyed in translation, although the larger-than-life exceptionality of the hero figure is tempered and to some extent normalised. Both the French and German versions foreground to some extent the presence and importance of family: in both German and French it is the family functionality of Jordan College, and additionally in the French, Lyra feels a stronger bond for her father. They also both intensify the fact that Lyra is a child, although the German text introduces a much more mature, less emotionally irresponsible conceptualisation. Agency in relation to the betrayal trope is reduced in the French text, while the Italian version increases Lyra's culpability. The Italian slightly strengthens the outsider function, making Lyra a more conflicted child protagonist. Overall, though, it seems that the substance of the male hero paradigm has mostly been rendered in translation, maintaining the transgressive force of applying the fantasy paradigm of the male hero trajectory to a female character.

The changes that are introduced appear to be far more concerned with conceptualisations of childhood: family relations, recognition and foregrounding of the child (though represented differently in the French and the German), and a slight preference to reduce agency in favour of showing the protagonist not entirely in control of her actions and their outcome. What is interesting in relation to the children's literature dimension, however, is that a hero trope which we would have expected to be manipulated has not been changed by any of the translators. Lyra's special gift is making up stories and lying; while storytelling can be seen as a positive attribute, lying clearly is far more problematic in the context of the didactic and socialising impetus

of children's literature. However, neither the German nor the Italian texts have a problem with the fact that Lyra is a habitual liar, or that her ability to manipulate others is positively connoted in terms of narrative development. Only the French slightly tempers this feature, belittling Lyra's power over others by framing her storytelling as a game or child's play (F: 163). *Northern Lights* is, of course, a children's fantasy, a heroic coming-of-age story which follows the *Bildungsroman* format. In the following section, we will consider *Northern Lights* as children's literature and whether, or to what extent, the French, German and Italian translations adapt the text to the receiving culture's linguistic and behavioural norms.

Northern Lights as children's literature

Coming-of-age stories in fantasy and in children's literature describe the protagonist's development from a condition of unformedness in childhood through to adulthood: the child learns about themselves, their faults and what their abilities are and matures into a responsible, socially adapted adult. This process of growing up has typically tended to be gendered, especially in fantasy; boys learn about and assume their 'proper powers', taking their place in society (Attebery 1992: 88), while the girl's development focuses on containment and 'emergence' into marriage and motherhood (Hunt and Lenz 2003: 154, quoted in Solhaug 2008: 331). As already indicated in the fantasy discussion, Lyra's trajectory follows that of the male hero; it also does not conform to the female pattern in children's literature, where inter-relationality, responsibility, caring and nurturing are desirable traits, functioning as markers for maturity. Lyra's character depicts a transgressive child whose disregard for social norms does not conform to gender role expectations; for example, the short episode at Mrs Coulter's, who attempts to educate her into femininity in terms of behaviour, interests and appearance, is unsuccessful, with Lyra feeling constrained and bored.

Lyra is a dirty, assertive, deceitful, disobedient, rude, bossy and arrogant child, who rejects school learning; she is manipulative, enters forbidden territories (the Jordan College cellars and roofs, the retiring room and Oxford alleys) and commits forbidden acts (drinking wine, smoking, stealing rides on horses, damaging property). But she also has positive characteristics: she has empathy and leadership ability, she is not a snob, she is very brave, stands up for others and helps them at some personal cost. She has a flexible

identity, and is aware of different environments, adapting her manner of speaking to her interlocutors, consciously switching codes when speaking with her 'ruffian' Oxford friends, the Gyptians, the scholars or polite society at Mrs Coulter's. In addition, Lyra undergoes a process of maturation in the course of the book, developing a code of ethics and taking responsibility for Roger and the children abducted by the gobblers. She develops the ability of self-critical scrutiny, learns to reign in her impulses, and becomes more critical of society. In the following section, we shall focus on Lyra's representation as a child, on childishness and agency, emotions, transgression and the savage, as well as representations of femininity and how these are handled in translation.

Lyra as child

Pullman explicitly characterises Lyra as *a coarse and greedy little savage, for the most part* (E: 37), *a half-wild, half-civilized girl* (E: 19); this image of an asocial child is maintained in Italian but manipulated in the French and the German versions. The French omits that she is a *half-civilised girl* and that she is a *coarse and greedy savage* (E: 41). The German tones down the description, omitting the *half-civilized* and shifting the *coarse and greedy savage* to a more acceptable and stereotypically naughty little girl by describing her as 'a cheeky little girl' (*ein freches kleines Mädchen*, G: 45–46). But it is not only direct characterisation cues which create an image for the reader. Synonyms or co-referents for Lyra also give us an insight into how the text positions her: descriptors such as child, daughter, girl or little girl foreground particular aspects of her characterisation and frequency of descriptor indicates to what extent social position, family relationship, gender or age play a role in how the reader engages with and perceives the character. English very clearly places the greatest importance on the fact that Lyra is a child—this is the most frequent co-referent with 39 occurrences[3] in the text selected for analysis. Her family relationship as 'daughter' plays a minimal role and occurs only four times, when her relationship with her mother or father is explicitly discussed. The remaining co-referents of 'girl' and 'little girl' also play a relatively marginal role with eight and four hits respectively.

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[3] This is only in the data extracted, i.e., 39 occurrences in the paired couplets based on Rimmon-Kenan's direct and indirect definition of character (1983, pp. 61–67).
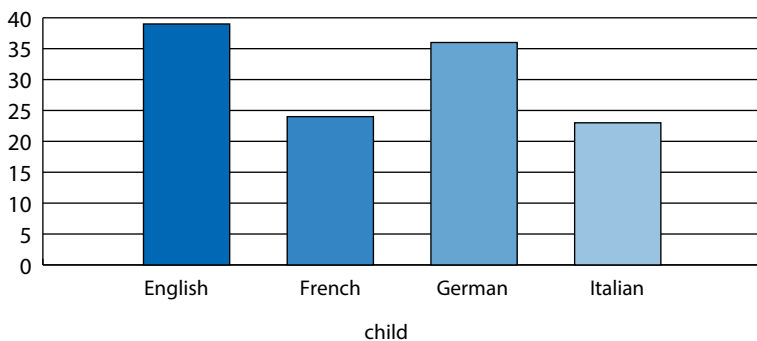
Figure 1. Frequency of 'child' as descriptor for Lyra.
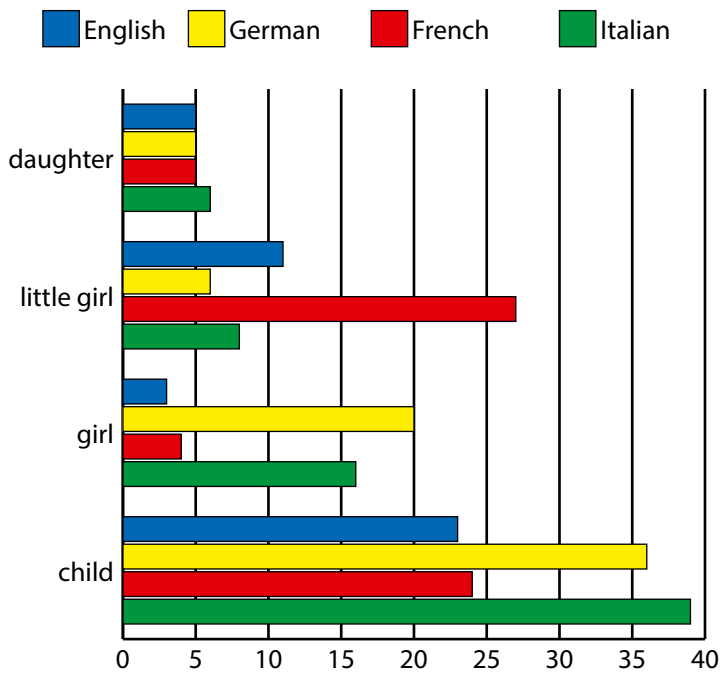
Source: own study.

Figure 2. Frequency of co-referents for Lyra in all languages.

Source: own study.

The key fact about the English version of Lyra is that she is a child, not that she is a girl or a daughter. She is finding her place, standing up for herself and her peers in an adult world, irrespective of gender or family role.

The German text follows this representation quite closely with 36 occurrences for 'Kind' (child) but the French and Italian target texts background the explicit reference to Lyra as a child with only 24 and 23 occurrences. Instead, they show a marked preference for 'little girl'; the 27 occurrences in the French make this the most-used descriptor for Lyra, turning her into a character whose gender and 'littleness' are the most important feature about her. In Italian, 'little girl' also shows a higher frequency than in the English, while German, significantly, reduces this aspect, but increases the use of 'girl' instead.

Gendering Lyra

Lyra is in no way a stereotypical little girl, and her femininity is one of the least accentuated aspects in the English original. Various optional and obligatory changes in the French and Italian translations, however, result in a much greater visibility in relation to Lyra's gender. In addition to a preference for gender-specific lexical choices in French and Italian, the fact that these languages are highly inflected with compulsory masculine and feminine endings also makes gender far more evident in these texts. While the French *enfant* is ungendered, it is only used in 37% of cases, while in 73% cases French uses one of the synonyms for 'child' such as 'kid' (*gamine*, F: 1) and 'little one' (*petite*, F: 7) which have a gendered ending thus foregrounding the fact that she is a young girl. Similarly, Italian uses synonyms for child (*bimba*, 1, *bambina*, 14, *ragazzina*, 10, *bambinetta*, 1); in 82% of cases these are visibly gendered and often foreground Lyra's young age.

In addition, the French text frequently substitutes the proper name Lyra with the gender-visible pronominal referent; it has the highest use of feminine pronominal references overall (370 entries of the pronoun *elle*), 47% more than the 252 occurrences in English, while the German version has 17% less than English with 207; in ten cases, the German shifts from pronoun to Lyra's name. The Italian text does not use pronouns with verbs unless necessary for coherence or emphasis, explaining the very low number of examples (89) where the Italian *lei* (she) is used. Thus, the French translation emphasises femininity on a syntactical level to a much greater extent than
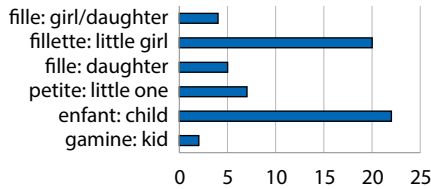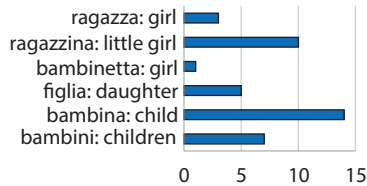
Figure 3a. French co-referents for Lyra

Figure 3b. Italian co-referents for Lyra

Source: own study.

any of the other texts. And while the German translation also uses gender markers, these are often grammatical, rather than biological: *Mädchen* (girl) is neuter – as is *Kind* (child), so reference to these enhances the non-gendered aspect of Lyra's representation in German.

Making Lyra seem younger and weaker through lexical choices is a regular occurrence in the French version (but not in Italian or German): 45% of the nouns used to refer to Lyra comprise 'little girl' (*petite*, *fillette*). The reiteration of 'littleness' throughout the French translation constantly reminds the reader of Lyra's small stature and may enforce the idea that Lyra is young and in need of looking after. This idea is further established in the French text by one of the very few physical descriptions given of Lyra: *Lyra's skinny frame* (E: 65) becomes 'Lyra's fragile body' (*le corp frêle de Lyra*, F: 66). By varying the synonyms used to refer to Lyra, the translator often employs translation strategies which impact on elements of cohesion or add information (***la petite** Lyra de Jordan College*, F: 141), again foregrounding Lyra's youth or lack of agency. *Lyra's bedroom* (E: 63) becomes 'the bedroom of the little girl' (*la chambre de la fillette*, F: 63), removing Lyra's point of view and ownership; it is no longer *Lyra's* room and further removes control of the space around her by changing her name to a descriptive noun. To summarise, the French Lyra is more of

a 'girl' than in either the English, German or Italian versions, associating her more explicitly with the ideas and prejudices associated with girls in social and dramatic schemata. It introduces an element of contradiction to her male hero characterisation, and perhaps foregrounds more the fact that she is a female heroine in a Christian story, the cause of man's downfall. In contrast, the Italian text plays down Lyra's role as a female heroine, while in German, the main co-referent for Lyra is 'child' with a slight preference for the gender-specific nouns 'girl' (*Mädchen*) and 'daughter' (*Tochter*) in place of 'little girl.' Thus, the German text not only does not participate in the French trend of belittling Lyra, but further invests in the representation of a child who will mature and fulfil her destiny, moving her slightly closer to the boy hero format in children's fantasy.

Emotion

Although Lyra is determined and strong in the ST, changes in word order and syntactic reorganisation in the French translation tend to foreground Lyra as an emotional character who is not in control of her actions. In the following example, we can see how the change from 'Lyra' as the subject to 'hate' (*la haine*) foregrounds feelings and emotion and removes her as the agent of the sentence:

Table 3. Comparison of English and French version (example 3)

English	French	English gloss of French
Lyra nearly blazed with hatred (E: 285)	**La haine** faillit lui faire perdre le controle d'elle-me-me (F: 257)	**Hate** almost made her lose control of herself.

Source: own study.

In addition, in English she 'nearly' blazes with anger but manages to control the extent of her emotions, while the French construction creates a Lyra who is overtaken by emotions and feelings, almost losing control of herself and explicitly articulating this. The paired couplets used for this study reveal that when looking at characterisation in terms of direct definition and action, there are frequent changes from finite to infinite clauses, from active to passive and shifts in synonyms, explicitness and information

change through omission or addition. These account for 37% of shifts in the data analysed and these translation strategies create a Lyra who is not an agent but a subject who is controlled and described by her feelings. As a result, the French Lyra is a weak girl who frequently cries (F: 311), is in pain (F: 191), and suffers from the cold (F: 192). The example below demonstrates a combination of these strategies involving the move from active to passive, as well as shifts in information, in this case through omission:

Table 4. Comparison of English and French version (example 4)

English	French	English gloss of French
'If', Lyra was <u>passionate</u>; **she could hardly speak for indignation** - 'if the alethiometer says something, I know it's true.' (E: 189)	'Quand le… (étouffée par l'indignation, Lyra avait mal à s'exprimer.) … quand l'aléthiomètre dit quelque chose, je sais que c'est vrai…' (F: 174)	'When the… (**smothered by indignation** Lyra <u>couldn't explain herself</u>) … when the alethiometer says something, I know that it is true.

Source: own study

The French translation omits Lyra's strong and *passionate* frame of mind, replacing it with her inability to express herself, and the introduction of a passive instead of an active clause shifts her actively articulated outrage into a passive feeling of suffocating emotion. Changes in clause structure and information change are subtle but in the French text they slowly build up a picture of Lyra who is motivated by sadness and shock rather than a sense of justice, and of a protagonist who is little in control of her actions.

The Italian translation offers a different picture of Lyra. Firstly, by using a greater percentage of literal translations, it retains Lyra as the subject of the sentences whenever it is grammatically possible to do so and consequently, the reader continually reads this version through Lyra's eyes and can judge her sense of right, wrong, fear, anger and understanding as the novel progresses. Secondly, the effect of translation strategies used in the Italian isolate Lyra's feelings of despair or sadness to specific moments in the novel, providing explanations for her emotions rather than presenting a character who is governed by her emotions. Furthermore, when Lyra is hesitant or worried in the ST, the Italian text contextualises these feelings and makes it clear that these are passing thoughts and preoccupations. For example, when Lyra is deciding whether to leave the forbidden retiring room or watch from the cupboard once she has seen the poison poured into the decanter, the narrator explains:

Table 5. Comparison of English and Italian version (example 1)

English	Italian	English gloss of Italian
But she was confused, and that made her hesitate. (E: 7)	Ma **ora** si sentiva confusa, e ciò la fece esitare. (I: 14)	But **now** she felt confused, and that made her hesitate.

Source: own study.

The addition of the time marker 'now' (*ora*) in the Italian, emphasises that Lyra is not always confused; it is only these strange circumstances which have made her less decisive. Similarly, in an example showing Lyra as emotional, and longing for a past life, the addition of a time marker 'in those moments' (*in quei momenti*; I: 140) qualifies her feelings as momentary, only occurring in troubling and changing times. By the same token, in separating and contextualising Lyra's emotions, the Italian Lyra may seem more logical and calculating.

The German version, too, does not change Lyra's emotional stance to a great extent, but most changes reduce the expression of her feelings. The only occasion when Lyra is more emotional is when the German places greater emphasis on her accusation that the Jordan College housekeeper does not care about Roger's absence (G: 75). All other shifts result in a reduction of her emotional response—even in relation to Roger where the German omits Lyra worrying about what might be involved in rescuing him (G: 280). When she is in great danger, she twice wishes that she and her world would stay the same *for ever and ever* (E: 63) and that *nothing would ever change* (E: 151) which in the German version is rendered in a rather more formal and literary register as 'for all eternity' (*in alle Ewigkeit*, G: 73) and a positively phrased 'that everything should stay the same (*dass alles immer gleich wäre*, G: 171). Her empathy is also reduced; compassion for Iorek loses some intensity when the German translation shifts the verb in *facing this sadness again* (E: 195) to 'sensing this sadness' (*diese Traurigkeit zu spüren*, G: 220) and moving the *again* which in English modulates the emotion of sadness to the previous phrase that Lyra cannot face being parted from Iorek again. In addition, the German text compresses the description of her empathy for Iorek in this heart-rending passage, shifting her response from a feeling of *gentleness* (E: 195) to *Rührung* (G: 220). This is one of the many synonyms for 'emotion' in German but it introduces a sense of pathos, and has inflections of shallowness through its overuse in pulp romance novels. Finally, Lyra's struggle to feel compassion for the child whose daemon has been

excised is increased and foregrounded in the German by changing the cohesive device and adding an emphatic particle:

Table 6. Comparison of English and German version (example 5)

English	German	English gloss of German
In Lyra's heart, revulsion struggled with compassion, **and** compassion won. (E: 217)	In Lyras Herz kämpften Abscheu und Mitgefühl, **doch** das Mitgefühl siegte **schliesslich**. (G: 244)	In Lyra's heart revulsion and compassion struggled but compassion **finally** won.

Source: own study.

For the German Lyra, the struggle to be compassionate is far more dramatic, and in the subsequent argument that the fishing village has benefitted from Iorek and Lyra rescuing the child and should therefore give them some food in return, her coldness is also further enhanced in the German.

Table 7. Comparison of English and German version (example 6)

English	German	English gloss of German
We're taking the child away for them. They can afford to give one fish to pay for that.	**Immerhin** haben sie es uns zu verdanken, dass sie das Kind los sind. Dafür können sie ja wohl einen Fisch opfern. (G: 243)	**After all** it is thanks to us that they have got rid of the child. For that they can at least sacrifice a fish.

Source: own study.

The German translation expands Lyra's reasoning to a cynically argued cost-benefit rationale by spelling out the villagers' indebtedness ('after all it is thanks to us'), using unemotive references to the little boy ('got rid of') and a phrase which in the German has sarcastic overtones: 'sacrifice' a fish in exchange. This unemotive stance also moves Lyra towards a more stereotypical hero representation, foregrounding reason over feeling.

The shift to a less emotive and more rational Lyra is echoed by the changes introduced into the descriptions of exemplars of femininity at Mrs Coulter's. The superficial conversation of these role models is rendered as *geistreich* which literally translates as 'rich in wit/intelligence', shifting these ladies from empty-headed gossips to informed and educated women:

Table 8. Comparison of English and German version (example 7)

English	German	English gloss of German
the ladies would pamper her and include her in their graceful delicate talk (E: 82)	die Damen verwöhnten sie und schlossen sie in ihre geistreichen Gespräche ein (G: 94–95)	the ladies spoiled her and included her in their witty/intelligent conversations

Source: own study.

Similarly, Lyra's almost non-existent formal education is minimised in the German where her lack of knowledge is compared to a 'map **nibbled** on by mice' (*eine von eine von Mäusen **angeknabberte** Weltkarte*; G: 95) rather than a *map … **largely eaten*** (E: 83). Her sense of constriction at Mrs Coulter's endless rounds of visits, shopping and socialising is increased, choosing 'locked up' (*eingesperrt*, G: 98) for *confined* (E: 86). By making Mrs Coulter more of a threat through shifting her challenge from *I will win* (E: 88) to 'I am stronger than you' (*ich bin stärker als du*; G: 100) makes Lyra's compliance with this stultifying environment appear more enforced. Overall, the German Lyra is less seduced by polite society and the stereotypical femininity present in the English text, even though the representation of the German ladies as role models is less gender-bound.

Transgression

In the English original, Lyra is often rude, not only to her peers but also to the adults around her; she is called *coarse and vulgar* (E: 88) by Mrs Coulter but these terms are omitted in the French translation (F: 85). Through information change strategies, synonym changes and emphasis change strategies, Lyra's rudeness and directness towards other adults is often softened in the French, or even omitted. When Lyra swears at Lord Asriel, for example, the French does not render the word *bloody* (E: 369, F: 330). This is clearly a conscious intervention since swear words are retained (E: 62, F: 62) when Lyra does not swear at an adult directly.

The French Lyra observes standards of polite behaviour by not swearing when speaking to adults and carefully using the formal address *vous* (you, polite) rather than the informal *tu* (you, familiar). This is the case even when she is challenging or arguing with adults (F: 14, 29, 559). Based on an

analysis of the French translation of *Harry Potter*, Anne-Lise Feral argues that translations of children's books in French promote educational values: "Non-educational models, such as Ron's penchant for truancy, are toned down" and that a "colloquial tone disappears in favour of a perfect syntax" (2006: 462 and 463). Feral's observation may explain similar French shifts in *Northern Lights* and can further explain why, when Lyra questions adults or shouts at them, she still uses the formal address. Although the novel may question society and contemporary values, the decrease in literal translation strategies when dealing with impolite speech shows that pedagogical norms are still of importance in the French.

In contrast, the German text does not shift to the polite form when Lyra is addressing adults, except when she is talking to the Witch Consul (G: 194) whom she has only just met. In her interactions with adults she knows, such as the College porter (G: 109), the housekeeper Mrs Parslow (G: 72 and G: 75) and Lord Asriel (G: 20, G: 412 and G: 440), she uses the familiar *du* (you) or *dein* (your), which makes her behaviour towards these figures of authority even more challenging. Direct descriptions of Lyra's transgressive behaviour and disobedience are also more forcefully emphasised; for example, when she is told to stay in College, added emphatic particles make her disregard for the College servant's instructions (G: 69) even more disrespectful. Shifting her enjoyment of inappropriate smoking from a performative showing off (*ostentatiously*; E:54) to enjoyment: *geniesserisch* (appreciatively; G: 64), suggests she indulges herself frequently in the habit, for which she has developed a liking. In her own assessment, the German Lyra is also more transgressive: she describes her own life as 'wild' (G: 78) while in the English original it is only *half-wild* (E: 67).

On the other hand, Lyra's impolite and offensive speech is reduced in 30% of cases using a range of strategies: through omissions or toning down of swearing; modulating an imperious, direct command (*Put it down*; E: 55) into a laconic throw-away comment (*Vergiss es* ['Forget it']; G: 64), and normalisation by expanding a threat into an idiomatic expression. Similarly, her friendships are portrayed as less transgressive; instead of the unsuitable companions she has chosen in the English original, the German text has normalised the *urchins* (E: 37, E: 54, E: 131) to 'children' (*Kinder*; G: 46, G: 148) and 'comrades' (*Kameraden*; G: 64)' and *ragamuffins* (E: 86) to 'play comrades' (*Spielkameraden*; G: 98). These lexical choices foreground childhood, innocence and companionship rather than the inappropriateness of the English. Her disruption of College tutorials is also tempered by

omitting the fact that there is any teaching going on when she imitates owl calls outside seminar rooms (G: 44). The assessment the master and the intercessor have of her is modulated in German from 'not being bad' to an assertion of her goodness:

Table 9. Comparison of English and German version (example 8)

English	German	English gloss of German
… you've never been a bad child. There's a lot of goodness and sweetness in your nature, and a lot of determination. (E: 70)	… du bist ein gutes Kind. Du hast ein aufrichtiges Herz, bist ein großes Mädchen, und du weißt, was Du willst. (G: 81)	… you are a good child. You have an honest heart, are a big girl and you know, what you want.

Source: own study.

In English, recognition of her good qualities are qualified, while the German foregrounds her essential goodness, her 'honest heart' and her self-knowledge, and omits an earlier assessment of her as *sly* (E: 52, G: 61).

In terms of register and content, the Italian translation is much closer to the English source text and far more similar to the German version than to the French, suggesting that for both these languages pedagogical norms are not at the forefront of translation decisions. In all cases of direct address to adults, the Italian text shows the same translation decisions as the German. Given that in German and Italian children are expected to use the formal mode of address with adults, Lyra's disregard for this in both German and Italian noticeably increases her challenges towards authority figures. In addition, the introduction of emphasis (in Italian) in some of these exchanges further positions Lyra as an unusually direct and rude child, whose behaviour blatantly ignores norms of interaction and behaviour. The annoyance and irritation she experiences for those around her, regardless of their age or relation to her are often foregrounded in Italian. *You're a coward, Pan* (E: 9) is translated with the addition of the adverb 'really' (*Tu sei **proprio** un vigliacco*, Pan; I: 16) which emphasises her annoyance with Pan. Her anger at Mrs Parslow for not caring about Roger is also emphasised, in this case by the repetition of the indirect pronoun:

Table 10. Comparison of English and Italian versio

English	Italian	English gloss of Italian
'…You don't care about Roger' (E: 65)	'… **Anche a te**, non te ne importa niente di Roger' (I: 63)	'**Even to you**, you yourself don't care about Roger'

Source: own study.

The consistency in the use of these translation strategies in German and Italian indicates a conscious decision on the part of the translators to maintain the English source text representations even if they run counter to target culture expectations, and as a result they position Lyra as an even more transgressive figure. The French translation, on the other hand, appears to have chosen to adjust Lyra's linguistic and interactional behaviour towards target culture expectations, conforming to pedagogical norms in terms of content and register.

Although standard and formal English is the norm for much of the English text, used for direct narration, free indirect discourse and Lyra's interactions with the majority of characters, an important feature of her character is that she is a highly competent language user, choosing the appropriate mode of communication in any given interaction. She becomes competent in Gyptian, able to switch to non-standard forms of English with her Oxford friends and adopt a more childish or less educated form of communication in dangerous situations, where she needs to mislead or disguise herself. In English, this ability is part of her identity, explicitly described as *her voice* (E: 113). But in all target languages this integral part of her character is described as a performance: her 'manner of expression' (*Ausdrucksweise*; G: 128) in German, her 'accent' (*accent*; F: 108) in French and her 'way of speaking' (*modo di parlare*; I: 107) in Italian. Of course, dialect variation is difficult to render, and all of the target texts have chosen to standardise without exception. But this linguistic correctness seriously impacts on Lyra's character, her ability to fit in, and to not only adapt to others' linguistic identity but also to exploit others' preconceptions of her—thus the translated Lyra has lost much of her authority, complexity and flexibility.

However, the standardisation of dialect usage and non-standard, grammatical variants may also – consciously – serve a pedagogical purpose in not providing examples of 'inappropriate' language. Indeed, there are many changes in the French and German target texts where stylistic improvements

are introduced. The avoidance of repetition, especially in the use of far more varied reporting verbs, reorganised syntax and more explicit coherence through introduction of cohesive devices, together with a tendency to opt for a more formal tenor and more precise description, all serve to provide a model of expression for children, teaching them appropriate language and style. It is noticeable that this stylistic improvement has not been implemented in the Italian translation, once more singling it out as a markedly source text-oriented translation.

Conclusion

Literary translation is constrained from the outset as the translator not only needs linguistic and literary skills to produce the target text but also generic knowledge and understanding of the literary system in the target culture, in this case the positioning of children's literature and the expectations placed on it. The extent to which the target culture has an established children's literature market, and to what extent translations are part of this, shapes the receiving context and impacts on translation strategies. A widely shared assumption is that the stronger the target culture literary system is, in this case the sub-system of children's literature, the more the decisions taken by translators will be to accommodate target culture norms across the spectrum. But if the target culture does not have its own clearly defined literature, then the translated literature will introduce its characteristics by choosing translation strategies that tend towards the source language, culture and norms.

While all three translations are marketed as children's literature, the environment in which they were produced differs greatly. According to Isabella Zeli (cited in Tabbert 2002: 330), Italy began translating and publishing children's literature 20 years later than its neighbouring countries and in 1996, 47% of published books in Italy were in translation. According to Zeli, "The position of children's literature in the Italian literary system is very marginal, at the periphery, consequently the foreign production has easily gained the centre" (cited in Tabbert 2002: 300), indicating how strong the influence of translated literature is, shaping and influencing literary production. In 1996, the year in which the Italian translation of *Northern Lights* was published, the editor-in-chief of the Salani publishing house recognised this impact on Italian children's literature: "The few interesting [Italian children's writers] belong to the new generation of Italian authors,

influenced by the new trend coming from the North European countries, not concerned with moral or pedagogical goals" (cited in Tabbert 2002: 330). In the Italian literary system, translated literature occupies a central, strong position importing source culture norms and producing, in Toury's terms, 'adequate' translations which do not adapt to the target system. We can clearly see this in the Italian translation of *Northern Lights* which consistently chooses source-oriented translation strategies, rendering even the most transgressive features faithfully. Lyra remains a rude, vulgar and transgressive 'wild child'. Only very few shifts are introduced and these tend to be driven by target language syntactic and grammatical norms.

In contrast, the French translation has consistently shown the greatest degree of target culture-oriented translation strategies. The context of reception is markedly different from the Italian, with a significantly lower market share for literature translated into French; in 2013, for example, only 14% of books were translated ("The Independent" 2013, online). France has an established market for its own children's literature and the status of fantasy literature in France is also low; even Tolkien 'has been perceived by the media as an example of 'fantastique' and juvenile literature' (Ferré, Lauzon, Riggs 2003: 50). Both fantasy and translated children's texts in France are likely to occupy a secondary, weak position in the literary system, conforming to the literary norms of the target system. As our analysis has shown, the French translation consistently adapts to literary, social and pedagogic target norms. Lyra is a far more acceptable little girl in the French version. Her speech conforms to pedagogical norms in terms of content and register and is far less rude and discourteous.

As with French, it is difficult to access exact figures on the market share of fiction translated into German. According to the online publication for the German publishing industry, *Börsenblatt*, figures for 2017 indicate that 13.6% of all first publications in fiction in Germany, including children's literature, were translations (June 7, 2018). In his review of translation flows, Rüdiger Wischenbart notes that since 2000, translations into German have been falling, so we can assume that the percentage of translations in 1996 was rather higher, especially as 1996 was a peak year for the number of translated books reported (2008: 23). Nevertheless, the German literary scene is not dominated by translated fiction, suggesting that translators will produce a text oriented towards target culture norms. Overall, the translation of *Northern Lights* has been reasonably faithful, especially in the representation of Lyra as a transgressive fantasy hero/ine. But there have also

been changes in her representation, producing a more mature, thoughtful and responsible child, in line with German educational ideals. An on-line opinion poll for the 'Eltern Familiennetzwerk' (Parents Family Network) identified independence, a strong sense of identity, responsibility, empathy, honesty, ambition, a desire to help and respect others, courage and a sense of humour as the ten most important qualities desirable in a child. The German Lyra meets most of these expectations, except for honesty, her slightly reduced empathy and, perhaps, a sense of humour. Gender equality is also a feature that shapes changes in the representation of femininity, reducing, for example, chauvinistic labelling and stereotypical qualities and replacing them with intelligence. The most sustained intervention is in the didactic changes introducing appropriate language and style, and in the standardisation of non-standard variants.

All the translations discussed above have maintained the transgressive fantasy trope but have slightly modified Lyra's transgressive character or else have adapted it to comply with didactic expectations of behaviour. The French and German translations introduce changes ensuring the text complies with the didactic role of children's literature in terms of language education, and manipulate Lyra's character to meet target culture expectations. In French, this results in a frail little girl and in German, a more responsible and mature child. As for the Italian version, it is a markedly source-oriented translation, maintaining features of the English text, even when this creates potential comprehension problems.

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