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# The Translator's 'Magic' Wand: Harry Potter's Journey from English into French

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## Résumé de l'article

On a beaucoup écrit sur le phénomène international de la série Harry Potter et inévitablement sur les traductions qui ont contribué à son succès. En particulier, l'analyse comparative de quelques-unes de ces traductions par Eirlys E. Davis montre des dissimilitudes entre les stratégies adoptées dans différentes langues et donne aux choix des traducteurs une apparence d'inconsistance. Cet article se consacre presque exclusivement à la traduction française de Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone et révèle qu'en tenant compte de la réalité idéologique et culturelle du corpus d'arrivée, certaines constantes apparaissent. Cet article explore les stratégies transformatives et leurs effets dans le texte d'arrivée, en se concentrant en premier lieu sur les valeurs étrangères britanniques. Leur transformation et leur disparition indiquent un besoin de produire un texte moralement adéquat pour son lectorat présumé : la jeunesse française. En effet, il semble que le skopos du texte d'arrivée – être lu par des enfants français – ait déterminé les décisions du traducteur de non seulement faire disparaître l'extrême altérité britannique mais aussi de renforcer la nature fantastique du monde de Harry Potter. Le texte français crée ainsi un monde complètement « autre » en exagérant les aspects magiques et féériques tout en affaiblissant le sentiment de familiarité et de crédibilité de la communauté dont il est question. Le changement de perspective, de celle d'un enfant dans l'original à celle d'un adulte dans la traduction, aboutit à de nombreuses omissions de détails banals et réels, diminuant le réalisme du décor et des protagonistes. Exemples textuels et extratextuels à l'appui, j'expose ces stratégies transformatives qui, en définitive, ont réduit Harry Potter à l'école des sorciers à un conte de fées et ont influencé la manière dont l'oeuvre fut perçue et reçue en France.

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# The Translator's 'Magic' Wand: Harry Potter's Journey from English into French

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## RÉSUMÉ

On a beaucoup écrit sur le phénomène international de la série Harry Potter et inévitablement sur les traductions qui ont contribué à son succès. En particulier, l'analyse comparative de quelques-unes de ces traductions par Eirlys E. Davis montre des dissimilarités entre les stratégies adoptées dans différentes langues et donne aux choix des traducteurs une apparence d'inconsistance.

Cet article se consacre presque exclusivement à la traduction française de *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* et révèle qu'en tenant compte de la réalité idéologique et culturelle du corpus d'arrivée, certaines constantes apparaissent. Cet article explore les stratégies transformatives et leurs effets dans le texte d'arrivée, en se concentrant en premier lieu sur les valeurs étrangères britanniques. Leur transformation et leur disparition indiquent un besoin de produire un texte moralement adéquat pour son lectorat présumé: la jeunesse française. En effet, il semble que le *skopos* du texte d'arrivée – être lu par des enfants français – ait déterminé les décisions du traducteur de non seulement faire disparaître l'extrême altérité britannique mais aussi de renforcer la nature fantastique du monde de Harry Potter.

Le texte français crée ainsi un monde complètement « autre » en exagérant les aspects magiques et féériques tout en affaiblissant le sentiment de familiarité et de crédibilité de la communauté dont il est question. Le changement de perspective, de celle d'un enfant dans l'original à celle d'un adulte dans la traduction, aboutit à de nombreuses omissions de détails banals et réels, diminuant le réalisme du décor et des protagonistes.

Exemples textuels et extratextuels à l'appui, j'expose ces stratégies transformatives qui, en définitive, ont réduit *Harry Potter à l'école des sorciers* à un conte de fées et ont influencé la manière dont l'œuvre fut perçue et reçue en France.

## ABSTRACT

Much has been written about the international phenomenon that the *Harry Potter* series has become and inevitably about the translations that contributed to its success. Eirlys E. Davis's comparative analysis of some of these translations in particular shows dissimilarities between the strategies adopted in different languages and presents individual translators' choices as inconsistent.

This paper deals almost exclusively with the French translation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and reveals that, in the light of the ideological and cultural reality of the receiving corpus, patterns of translation techniques do appear. This paper looks at the transformative strategies and their effects in the target text, first focusing on the treatment of alien British values. Their transformation and disappearance indicate the need to produce a text morally suitable for its assumed readership: French youngsters. Indeed, it seems that the *skopos* of the target text – being read by French children – determined the translator's decisions not only to smooth down extreme British otherness but also to reinforce the fantasy of Harry Potter's world.

Indeed, the French creates an utterly “other” world by strengthening its fantastic and magical aspects while undermining the sense of familiarity and credibility of the community portrayed. The shift from a child's perspective in the original to an adult's in the

translation leads to numerous omissions of banal and realistic details, weakening the realness of the setting and the protagonists.

I give textual and extra-textual examples of these transformative strategies which ultimately reduced *Harry Potter à l'école des sorciers* to a fairy tale and shaped the way it was perceived and received in France.

#### MOTS-CLÉS/KEYWORDS

Harry Potter, best-selling children's literature, culture, ideology, reception

Since its publication by Bloomsbury in June 1997, J.K. Rowling's first *Harry Potter* book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, has won seven British book awards<sup>1</sup> and became Britain's best-selling title in 2001, with 1.1 million copies. Translated in sixty languages and sold in over 200 countries, it is now a world-wide bestseller. Its French translation, *Harry Potter à l'école des sorciers*, by Jean-François Ménard was published by Gallimard in France in October 1998. It received two awards<sup>2</sup> in 1999 and became a best-seller the following year with 640,000 copies.

This case study intends to be descriptive rather than prescriptive. It is not aimed at professionals or would-be translators but at Descriptive Translation Studies and Intercultural Studies scholars and students interested in the manipulation of texts when translated for mass-consumption. Children's bestsellers, like any other bestsellers, "must appeal to different constituencies [and] be intelligible within the different, potentially conflicting codes and ideologies that characterize that audience" (Venuti 1998: 124). The first purpose of this comparative analysis of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and *Harry Potter à l'école des sorciers* is to reveal the difference in ideological and cultural values between France and Britain. As Ben-Ari Nitsa pointed out "intratextual coherence" (Nord 1997: 32) in Vermeer's terms tends to prevail over "intertextual coherence" when translating juvenile literature (1992: 227).

The French translation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* has figured in studies before, notably by Eirlys E. Davis and Nancy K. Jentsch, but has always been analysed in comparison to translations of other languages. *Harry Potter à l'école des sorciers* as a translation has also been the object of some websites<sup>3</sup>. Yet, these websites deal with Ménard's rendering of J.K. Rowling's fantastical and invented terms, assuming that the rest of the narrative has been rendered in its entirety. This paper looks mainly beyond the translator's creative translation of the novel's invented names and objects and explores the strategies, notably the frequent omissions and shifts of narrative point of view which he employed to translate realistic features. A limited amount of time allowed for the translation could explain the numerous cuts the text underwent from English to French. Yet, these features were not J.K. Rowling's inventions *per se* and surely required a lesser degree of creativity and effort on the translator's part. This paper concludes on the various ways in which Ménard's translation shaped the reception and perception of *Harry Potter à l'école des sorciers* in France.

### From British to French values

#### *Educational expectations*

The transformation process starts from the onset: the book's title. The change from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* to 'Harry Potter at the school of wizards,'

*Harry Potter à l'école des sorciers* was due to the "French editor's concern with a title too obscure for a book aimed at the youth"<sup>4</sup> (Labbé 2003: 10). Interestingly, the American publishing house Scholastic changed the book's name for the same reason "to *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* in the belief that American children would be confused by the apparent reference to philosophy" (Olson 2001: internet version). This parallel between France and the United States reminds us that "the publisher's approach to the foreign text... is primary commercial...an exploitation governed by an estimate of the market at home" (Venuti 1998: 124). The change of title was therefore based on an assumption youngsters' lack of knowledge and interest in a word which differed from their immediate environment.

This section will demonstrate how similar assumptions and expectations as regards children permeate the book's French translation and, to a certain extent, its American version. A comparative analysis of the original and its French translation reveals several of these "conflicting codes and ideologies" (*ibid.*).

A close examination of the Source Text (ST) *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and the Target Text (TT) *Harry Potter à l'école des sorciers* highlights the differences in values between Britain and France regarding education. While "responsibility in the running of the institution is considered a valuable part of training in the British system" (Hantrais 1982: 128), the French emphasises academic merit:

ST:

'Now, yer mum an' dad were as good a witch an' wizard as I ever knew. Head Boy an' Girl at Hogwarts in their day!' (45)

TT:

– ...Ton père et ta mère étaient d'excellent sorciers. Toujours premiers de la classe à Poudlard, à l'époque où ils étaient étudiants!" (60)

BT:

– Your father and your mother were excellent wizards. Always top of the class at Hogwarts, at the time when they were students!

The cultural conversion of Hagrid's praise of Harry's parents 'Head Boy an' Girl' into "top of the class" avoids a footnote and is intratextually coherent since children can relate to the concept. It also conveys a positive message on academic achievement considered important in French society. Ménard manipulated the text "in accordance with values, beliefs and representations" (Venuti 1995: 18) of the target language and culture:

ST:

'Harry – You're a great wizard, you know.'

'I'm not as good as you' said Harry, very embarrassed, as she let go of him.

'Me!' said Hermione. 'Books! And cleverness! There are more important things – friendship and bravery and – oh... (208)

TT:

– Harry, tu es un grand sorcier!

– Pas autant que toi...répondit Harry, un peu gêné

– Moi? J'ai tout appris dans les livres. Mais il y a des choses beaucoup plus importantes, le courage, l'amitié...Oh...(280)

BT:

– Harry, you are a great wizard!

– Not as great as you, Harry replied, slightly embarrassed.

– Me? I learnt everything in books. But there are much more important things, bravery, friendship...Oh...

French Hermione does not dismiss brains as less important than friendship and courage. She does not really dismiss books either since as she explains, they are the reason why she is a great witch. The fact that Hermione features on the cover of the French edition holding a book is significant. Being an ‘intellectual’ in France does not carry the same negative connotation as in Britain. Hermione provides a model for young readers to be valuable members of their society. Non-educational models, such as Ron’s penchant for truancy, are toned down. While original “Ron wanted to skip Herbology and go straight down to the hut” (171) to see their friend Hagrid’s dragon’s egg hatch, French “Ron wanted to go that very minute” (Ron voulut aller voir à l’instant même) (232). His argument “Hermione, how many times in our lives are we going to see a dragon hatching?” (171), is deleted from the French. Interestingly, the translation leaves Hermione’s side of the conversation untouched, therefore giving preference to her argument not to skip their lesson. Wise and studious Hermione’s voice of reason stands out while Ron’s mischievous voice is silenced.

J.K. Rowling’s success in the Anglophone world is often said to be due to her accurate representation of children’s slang. In *Harry Potter à l’école des sorciers*, however, the young characters’ chat loses much of its spontaneity. Ron’s expressive ‘Weird!’ (77)(147), for instance, becomes “Ca, c’est vraiment bizarre.” (106) (That is really strange.) “C’est bizarre.” (199) (That’s strange). Similarly, his “I dunno” (156), “Dunno” (134) are either omitted or translated into impeccable French “Je n’en sais rien” (182) (I know nothing about it), despite the existence of ‘Chaipas,’ the colloquial and contracted form of ‘Je ne sais pas.’ The children’s syntax is also improved, making them sound stiff and formal:

ST: ‘You don’t want this, it’s all dry’ said Ron. ‘She hasn’t got much time,’ he added quickly, ‘you know, with five of us.’ (76)

TT: – Il ne faut surtout pas manger ça, c’est tout sec, dit Ron. Ma mère n’a pas beaucoup le temps de faire la cuisine, nous sommes cinq enfants à la maison. (105)

BT: – You must not eat this, it’s all dry, said Ron. My mother does not have time to cook, we are five children at home.

The constant retention of *ne* in all negative clauses and the use of *nous* as personal pronoun subject is unnatural: “everyday spoken French overwhelmingly has no *ne*” (Armstrong 2001:122) and no *nous* (Doppagne 1966:160). The children’s unrealistic use of L’Académie Française’s French reflects the importance of grammar in the school curriculum in France where pupils spend a minimum of eight years learning the complex mechanisms of their own language. The educational function of juvenile literature is, of course, not specific to France. American editors feel compelled to Americanise spelling and lexical items in children’s literature imported from the U.K. They are aware that they cater for readers who are still learning how to read and write ‘proper’ American English. American editors altered the first of the *Harry Potter* books 80 times. For instance “cinema” (22) “holidaying” (30), “mum” (42), became “movies” (22), “vacationing” (34), “mom” (50). These changes show a concern for acceptability in a country where educating youngsters to understand and accept cultural and linguistic differences outside their country is not a priority.

Going back to the French translation, the systematic embellishment of the young protagonists' language also reflects an educational priority: to encourage young readers to speak properly. Misspellings, misconstructions and colloquialisms such as the ones illustrated in this section are unacceptable in children's books since their main purpose is to familiarise youngsters with the written canonised French. The French therefore provides models such as Seamus, whose colloquial tone disappears in favour of a perfect syntax and a perfectly formed subjunctive:

ST: 'I'm half and half,' said Seamus. 'Me dad's a Muggle. Mam didn't tell him she was a witch 'til after they were married. Bit of a nasty shock for him.' (93)

TT: Moi, je suis moitié-moitié, expliqua Seamus. Mon père est un Moldu et ma mère a attendu qu'ils soient mariés pour lui dire qu'elle était une sorcière. Ça lui a fait un choc. (127)

BT: – I am half and half, Seamus explained, My father is a Muggle and my mother waited until they were married to tell him that she was a witch. It was a shock for him.

Personal reviews of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* show that there is a much more flexible approach to dialect rendering in juvenile literature in Britain. In fact, familiarising children with the rendering of spoken language and different dialects is encouraged: "The National Literacy Strategy suggests that children should actively explore how dialect is represented in writing. This involves study of children's books and plays which include direct speech" (Medwell 2001: 10). This would explain why, despite Hagrid's incorrect English, J.K. Rowling was still praised for her good grammar (Amazon.co.uk).

### *Ideological values*

#### *Hagrid*

Half-man half-giant, gamekeeper Hagrid is unrefined, uneducated and unquestionably working-class. His rendered accent draws from almost every British dialect. "In Britain, ... the further down the social scale you go, the more you find that speech is marked by regional features" (Lodge 1997: 18). J.K. Rowling was therefore more concerned with conveying Hagrid's social status than his regional origins. French Hagrid's language is identical to the other characters. First of all, rendering his working-class accent is difficult since in France "class bound differences in language are evaluated on a slightly different basis: pronunciation variables are less strongly coded than in Britain" (*ibid.*). Secondly, "using a particular dialect for the character of Hagrid would be demeaning to the speakers of that dialect" (Jentsch 2001:56). The standardisation of Hagrid's speech could also suggest a concern for credibility since using "dialect forms in French might have created just too French a flavour in a character who is in some ways very British" (Davis 2002: 82). However, one might wonder how credible is an extremely well-spoken gamekeeper. By removing all traces of colloquialism from his speech, Ménard's distortion of Hagrid's characterisation is, in fact, far greater. I would argue that, rather than a need for credibility, the absence of slang in the target text reflects the translator's concern for acceptability.

Hagrid's case presents us with two imperialistic norms when translating into French: the already mentioned "very strong literary requirement of grammatically correct usage" (Robyns 1994: 65) and the ideological "prohibition on references to

specific regions and subcultures” (*ibid.*). Not conveying Hagrid’s social status conforms to the French’s view of their society as classless and the actively encouraged tendency towards “uniformity and standardisation.” (Shepherd 2002: 1). In comparison, Britain seems more “obsessed with class than any other nation in the world” (Cannadine 1998: 170) Not that class differences are greater in the United Kingdom than anywhere else but because there is a deeper-seated consciousness that makes British people talk more about it (*ibid.*). The French republican ideology of classlessness makes the subject unacceptable in children’s literature.

### *Malfoy*

Items referring to social issues or status are systematically omitted or transformed. Draco Malfoy’s discourse, for instance, loses its upper-class twang and intolerance of lower classes and first-generation wizards. In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, eleven-year old Draco refers to his parents using the sociolinguistically marked ‘father’ and ‘mother’ (60). Interestingly, the French translator chooses the same neutral “mon père” (my father), “ma mère” (my mother) (81) as he used to translate Irish Seamus’s ‘Me dad’ and ‘Mam’ (93).

In his first encounter with Harry, Draco tries to establish if Harry is a pure blood by asking him if his parents belonged to the same breed as him... ‘But they were *our* kind, weren’t they?’ (61) The stress on “*our* kind” shows that he believes in birth and heredity and opposes his breed to ‘the other sort’ who just don’t know ‘our ways’ (61). As he does not get a satisfactory response, he asks Harry: ‘What’s your surname, anyway?’ (61). Significantly, *our* kind becomes ‘from our world’ (“de notre monde” (83)); *our* ways, ‘the same education’ (“la même éducation” (83)); the other sort, ‘those coming from other families’ (“Ceux qui viennent d’autres familles” (82)) in the French. If they understand that Draco comes from an out-and-out wizard family, target readers remain unaware of his social background. In the original, his attempt to place Harry socially by asking his surname is transformed into the implicative-free ‘Au fait, comment tu t’appelles?’ (82). (by the way, what’s your name?).

Despite his choice of the phrase “coming from” to convey Malfoy’s ‘the other sort’ the translator changed it when it appeared in another character’s speech:

ST: ‘There’s loads of people who come from Muggle families.’ (76)

TT: – Il y a plein d’élèves qui ont vécu dans des familles de Moldus. (104)

BT: – There are a lot of pupils who lived with Muggle families.

Although tolerant of first-generation wizards, Ron still opposes people according to their origins in ST as does the original narrator:

ST:

Loads of people had come from Muggle families (100)

TT:

Nombres d’entre d’eux avaient également élevés dans des familles de Moldus (136)

BT:

Many of them had also been brought up in Muggle families.

The French ‘who lived with’ and ‘been brought up in’ convey the more acceptable value that nurture matters more than genes.

These efforts to produce an 'ideologically correct' text are by no means isolated. Again, the American version provides an insightful parallel to the French translation. Where the British original version reads "...three people left to be sorted. 'Turpin, Lisa' became..." (48), the American reads "...three people left to be sorted. "Thomas, Dean, a Black boy even taller than Ron, joined Harry at the Gryffindor table. "Turpin, Lisa" became..." (122) This addition shows the editor's need to conform to American educational values. Grounded in ideals of social and racial justice, multicultural education is a derived product of the "multicultural ideology [which] asserts that America is one big multicultural, multiethnic salad" (Rivers 1998: Internet version). The inclusion of cultural and ethnic diversity is therefore an imperative in children's literature as the "lack of African-American...characters in children's media has a detrimental effect on children of all races and creeds." (Pirofski 2001: Internet version). This addition reflects this educational value of multiculturalism and conveys a positive message on equal opportunities as Dean is accepted into Gryffindor, the best (and Harry's) house of the school. It protects American children from the potential harm caused by the invisibility of a Black character who is never defined by his race in the original and whose name does not appear until Chapter 9.

As the transformations in Harry's second encounter with Malfoy show, French children also need to be protected from the values of birth and heredity which go against France's Republican ideology:

ST:

'You'll soon find out some wizarding families are much better than others, Potter. You don't want to go making friends with the wrong sort. I can help you there.' (81)

TT:

– Fais bien attention à qui tu fréquentes, Potter. Si tu veux éviter les gens douteux, je peux te donner des conseils. (112)

BT:

– Be careful who you hang around with, Potter. If you want to avoid dubious people, I can give you some advice.

In the original, Malfoy's first utterance presents the wizarding community as a hierarchy into which he ranks himself at the top. He ranks Harry very high too as he offers him his help to avoid 'the wrong sort.' The omission of this superiority of some families over others in TT shows the translator and possibly editor's unease to include such a radical statement. Both 'douteux' and 'racaille' (112), which is used to translate Malfoy's 'riff-raff' (81) later on in the text, imply that Harry's friends are unprincipled rather than people of low birth. Malfoy's warning is inconsistent since Ron and Hagrid appear morally sound. Yet, it was preferable to having them dismissed for 'belonging to the lowest class of a community' as Malfoy meant by 'riff-raff' (81).

### *Moral values*

These changes and omissions in Malfoy's intolerant discourse could also be part of a larger attempt on the translator's part to render the boy more moral. In *Harry Potter à l'école des sorciers*, Malfoy and his gang appear less evil and aggressive:

'Scowling' (108) becomes 'pulled a face' (147), 'crack their knuckles and scowl' (114) is transformed into a simple 'frown' ("froncer les sourcils" (155)), "snatched the Rememberall out of his hand" (108) 'throwing it back to Harry' (122) into gentler

“took it out of Neville’s hands” (“pris le Rapeltout des mains de Neville”(147)), “gave it back to him” (“Il le lui rendit”(165)), “Malfoy’s ‘jealousy and spite” (122) into the weaker “contempt and envy” (“mépris mêlée d’envie”) (165). French Malfoy also seems to possess more feelings than original Malfoy:

ST: ‘I’d take you on anytime on my own.’ said Malfoy. (114)

TT: -Je te prends quand tu veux, dit Malefoy, vexé. (155)

BT: -I take you on whenever you want, said Malfoy, offended.

*Harry Potter à l’école des sorciers* is not an isolated case. There is a tendency in translation of children’s best-selling fiction to attenuate or delete the original young characters’ aggressiveness, bad tempers and evil intentions. Descriptions of actions and dialogues are often manipulated in order to conform to more socially desirable behaviours in the target culture (Le Brun 2003: 46-67), (Lefevre 1992: 59-73). *Harry Potter à l’école des sorciers* indeed enlightens us as to what ‘good’ manners are expected from French youngsters. For instance, the importance the French attach to eating habits, to the respect towards food and the mother who prepared it results in omitting: ‘It was a nice feeling, sitting there with Ron, eating their way through all Harry’s pastries and cakes (the sandwiches lay forgotten)’ (76). The Weasley boys’ sharp tongue and sarcasm is often silenced. For instance, Fred’s cheeky ‘All right. Keep your hair on.’ (73) to his mother is absent from the French.

The translator seems bound to the necessity of portraying desirable adult-child relationships. Despite their obvious close friendship in the original, French Harry, Hermione and Ron address Hagrid with formal ‘vous.’ Unlike the German and Spanish translations where the children use the informal “du” and “tú,” the French fails to convey “the specialness of this particular mixed-age clique” (Jentsch 2002: 289). Similarly, when Professor McGonagall is about to punish Harry unfairly in the original, two students, Pavarti and Ron, try to speak up (111). Pavarti’s intervention is missing from the French, leaving only Ron, Harry’s bold friend (and incidentally a male) to challenge the teacher’s authority (151).

These attenuations and omissions in the characterisation of extreme working-classness, upper-classness, evilness or cheekiness present a clear pattern. The items’ “contribution to an overall textual effect” (Davis 97: 2003) here seems to have been overlooked in favour of their educational, moral and ideological acceptability. The deletions and transformations aim to protect young and impressionable minds from undesirable models of behaviour in a society in which extreme categorisation is believed to result in “regrettable...separatism” (Harvey 311: 1998). In this light, the French translator’s choice of procedure seems very consistent. *Harry Potter’s* story starting in the real world, children should not be made aware of such radically distinct categories in their immediate environment. In the following books, Ménard’s portrayal of Malfoy, baddies and other protagonists’ mischief tends to be more intertextually coherent. I would like to suggest that the translation of the first book having succeeded in setting a world young readers cannot relate to as reality, there is a lesser risk for them to be influenced by or to identify with characters’ excessive (mis-) behaviour.

## From a realistic community to an extra-ordinary world

### *Fantastical British Realia*

As Elizabeth D. Schafer points out, “While British readers acknowledge aspects of their own culture and even feel nostalgic or sentimental about boarding school...exotic details to readers outside Britain enhance the series’ fantastical nature.” (2000: 17). Preserving the “constant interplay of the familiar and the fantastic” (Davis 2002: 97) is a challenge in translating *Harry Potter* and “unadapted CSIs may seem as exotic and alien as the elements of magic and wizardry” (*ibid.*). In *Harry Potter à l’école des sorciers*, British public schools’ realia is indistinguishable from fantasy. The French translator uses what Aixela calls “intratextual gloss” (quoted in Davis 2002: 77) to explain typical features of schools. Target readers remain unaware that, magic aside, Hogwarts is a typical British public school<sup>5</sup> in both its function (producing a *Cloistered Elite* (Wakeford 1969): wizards) and its structure:

ST:

‘...Bill was Head Boy and Charlie was captain of Quidditch. Now Percy’s a Prefect. Fred and George mess around a lot...’ (75)

TT: ...Bill était Préfet en chef et Charlie capitaine de l’équipe de Quidditch. Maintenant, c’est Percy qui est préfet.

– Préfet? Qu’est-ce que c’est que ça? demanda Harry.

– C’est un élève chargé de maintenir la discipline, répondit Ron, une sorte de pion... Tu ne savais pas ça?

– Je ne suis pas beaucoup sorti de chez moi, confessa Harry.

– Fred et George font pas mal de bêtises, poursuivit Ron...(103)

BT:

...Bill was Head-Prefect and Charlie, captain of the Quidditch team. Now, it’s Percy that is Prefect.

– Prefect? What is that? Harry asked.

– It’s a pupil who is in charge of maintaining the discipline, Ron replied, a sort of supervisor...didn’t you know that?

– I haven’t been out much, Harry admitted.

– Fred and George get into a lot of trouble, Ron carried on...

In France, private independent institutions such as Hogwarts do not enjoy the prestige of British boarding schools. They fulfil a marginal role: educating children who failed to meet the high standards of the state system. The addition appears integral to the text since it is Ron’s role to introduce Harry to the nitty-gritty of the wizarding world. Harry’s ignorance and his interlocutor’s surprise is a recurring conversational pattern in the book. Using Ron, a pure wizard, to explicate such concepts makes them belong to *his* world. With this type of addition (another one explicates the house system), “the opposition between the banality of the real-life British background and the magical, unpredictable features of the wizard community” (Davis 2002: 97) has been lost. Ménard did not expect the audience to know the house and prefect systems. Yet, no effort was made to make the readership aware that these concepts were British and real. I do not feel convinced that the absence of footnotes can be explained by young French readers’ expectations (*ibid.* 78) or that it can be justified by Britain and France’s geographical closeness and cultural contacts (*ibid.* 78). On the contrary, I would argue that extratextual gloss in this context limits cultural contacts. The lack of footnote on “prefect” as well as the transformation of “Head

Boy an' Girl'" (45) avoid acknowledging the otherness of the British education system. French youngsters' attention is not drawn to the fact that, contrary to them, their British counterparts are in charge of their own discipline. This is confirmed by Labbé and Millet's *étude sur Harry Potter à l'école des sorciers J.K Rowling*: "Hogwarts has very little in common with French high-schools... J.K. Rowling is English, her references are English high schools which maintain more traditions than our own."<sup>6</sup> (Labbé 2003: 48). The rest of the explanation, however, reduces these traditions to the uniform and the house system, leaving out prefects and head boys and girls (*ibid.* 48-50).

The smoothness of Ménard's explicative insertions in his translation also shows why the *Harry Potter* series has been claimed to be the most translatable books in children's literature (Jentsch 2002: 285). Rowling's wizarding community provides the translator with an invented world whose boundaries s/he can expand, allowing him or her to transform the otherness of British reality into the otherness of fantasy. As the French translator often uses and abuses of this flexibility of the Target Text, target readers dissociate themselves even further from Ron and his fellow wizards.

The translation of Bertie Bott's Every-Flavour Beans illustrates how Menard's approach creates a distance between the text and its readership. While beanie babies are available from any corner shop and Jelly Beans sweets come in fifty flavours<sup>7</sup>, the *dragées* of "Dragées surprise de Bertie Crochue" are French old-fashioned sugared almonds only consumed at baptisms and weddings and ordered from specialist shops. 'Dragées' could be a compensation for the absence of traditional items. The familiarity they might trigger, however, disappears when Ron warns:

ST:

When they say every flavour, they mean every flavour...George reckons he had a bogey-flavoured one once. (78)

TT:

On peut vraiment avoir des surprises en mangeant ces trucs-là. Il y a toutes sortes de parfums...George dit qu'un jour il en a eu un au sang de gobelin. (106)

BT:

You can really get surprises eating those... There are all kinds of flavours. George says that one day he got a goblin's blood-flavoured one.

Rowling's flavours, "bogey," "A vomit-flavour one" (217) "Earwax" (218) is in line with a body-secretion type of humour very popular with children. The French, however, transforms these mischievous references into flavours which are unlikely to be thought as funny such as fantastical goblin's blood flavour or 'bin flavour' ("Le gout de poubelle" (293)) or 'wax for ears' ("de la cire pour les oreilles"(293)). These transformations enhance the fantastical nature of the brand and weaken the realness of the setting it features.

### *Non-western wizards*

Indeed, the translation undermines the familiarity of a very westernised setting by removing the obvious connection between the magical community portrayed and the readers' non-magical western world. While 'you could see his trainers underneath' Ron's robes (83) in the original, his trainers become 'his shoes and the bottom of his

trousers' ("ses chaussures et le bas de son pantalon" (114)) in the French. Interestingly, the French translation gives more information on Ron's dress sense than the original. He wears a 'pantalon,' not an eleven-year-old's usual pair of jeans, and his trainers have become conservative shoes. Existing brands such as Mars bars (76) are respectively replaced by 'chocolate bars' and 'sweets' ("barres en chocolat, friandises" (104)). These strategies are not only a typical "protection from the coca-cola culture" (Battye 49:1992), they are also astonishingly out-of-touch with French reality and prevent readers from recognising Harry and Ron as regular western children.

Trainers sticking out of robes is a typical example of the author's "juxtaposition of magical and Muggle world [which] is integral to the original text and must be a serious consideration to its translator" (Jentsch 2002:286). What differentiates Harry Potter from traditional fantasy tale is that the magic society it portrays "draws young readers into the books by connecting aspects of the world in which they live with" (Beach 2002: Internet version). One of these successful 'connections' between the wizards' society and our own is the commercial and material aspect. Names of shops, brands, food, every day objects and marketing devices contribute to the 'realness' of her tale (Brown 2002:139). This sense of realness is weakened in the translation, maintaining the readers' disbelief.

The "Eeylops Owl Emporium" (63), for instance, becomes 'the owl shop' ("magasin de hiboux" (85)) depriving readers of the pompousness of the name. The wizard shopping experience is also a parody of modern consumers' society:

ST: Hagrid wouldn't let Harry buy a solid gold cauldron, either ('It says pewter on yer list') (62)

TT: Harry n'eut pas non plus la permission d'acheter un gros chaudron en or ("Il faut qu'il soit en étain" assura Hagrid. (84)

BT: Harry was not allowed to buy a big gold cauldron either ("It has to be pewter" assured Hagrid)

The original implies that Harry is trying to get fancy things and Hagrid wants to stick to 'what it says on the list.' Any child or parent who has ever been out shopping for school supplies instantly recognises the scene. There is no hint of this typical negotiation between child and parent in TT. Instead, Hagrid seems to insist on pewter because, as a wizard, he knows best. Such transformations deny the credibility and spontaneity of the original.

### *Incredible wizards*

The wizards' credibility is also undermined by Ménard's use of hypocoristic endings such as -ette, -eau, -ine for names of people he chose to Frenchify; *Miranda Goshawk* thus became *Miranda Fauconnette*; *Aldabert Waffling*, *Aldabert Lasornette*; *Newt Scamander*, *Norbert Dragonneau*; *Madam Hooch*, *Madame Bibine*. These are more Frenchifications than translations since names were mostly reinvented to sound French and "do not add to the reader's understanding of the text." (Jentsch, 2002: 294) Endearing suffix "-ette" is also found in everyday items: 'Poudre de cheminette' for Floo powder and 'La Gazette des Sorciers' for 'The Daily Prophet.' *The Daily Prophet* sounds similar to existing newspapers: *the Daily Telegraph*, *The Daily Express*, *The Daily Mirror*, *the Daily Record*, *The Daily Mail*. As the definition of 'Gazette' shows, the translator's choice misses this resonance with reality:

1. Historical or old: Periodical writing containing news  
NOTE: *Gazette*, in everyday language, has been replaced by *journal* (newspaper)
2. Modern use, humorous: Newspaper, periodical.
3. A person who likes gossiping.<sup>8</sup>

The name “La Gazette des sorciers” evokes an amusing world, remote both in time and space. “des sorciers” also draws attention to the peculiarity of the newspaper’s readership.

In fact, redundant specifications such as “des sorciers” ‘of wizards’ are omnipresent in the translation. Hermione’s ‘You two had better change’ (80) becomes “Vous feriez bien de mettre vos robes de sorciers vous deux” (109) (You two had better put your wizards’ robes) and echoes the translation of *Madam Malkin’s Robes for All Occasions* (59) by “Madame Guipure, prêt-à-porter pour mages et sorciers.” (80) (ready-to-wear for magi and wizards). ‘Magic wand,’ for instance, only occurs once in ST (63) expressing Harry’s emotion at the prospect of purchasing one. In the French, however, ‘baguette’ almost always appears followed by the adjective ‘magique.’ Significantly, “Ollivander: *Makers of Fine Wands since 382 BC*” (63) becomes Ollivander – Fabricants de baguettes magiques depuis 382 avant JC (86) (Ollivander – Makers of magic wands since 382 BC.). This translation not only misses the boasting ‘*Fine*,’ it also presents this society and its members as inconsistent. Against all logic, French wizards never developed the same concise way of referring to their wands and robes as the original ones did. Given the magical context, it is very unlikely that French readers would mistake ‘baguettes’ for drumsticks or breadsticks. These reminders draw attention to the otherness of their world and distract readers from relating to common human feelings such as Ron’s annoyance at getting his older siblings’ equipment:

ST: ‘I’ve got Billy’s old robes, Charlie’s old wand’ (75)

TT: –...J’ai les vieilles robes de sorciers de Billy, la vieille baguette magique de Charlie (103)

Harry’s immediate response is to associate with Ron’s plight by ‘telling him all about having to wear Dudley’s old clothes.... This seemed to cheer Ron up’ (75). The French misses the connection between Muggle and magic worlds by omitting Ron’s relief at hearing a similar situation to his own.

### **From a schoolchild to an observing adult**

#### *Sensations*

Regular omissions of realistic details in characterisations and descriptions often lead the translation to miss the connection between Muggles and Wizards. French readers are not given the opportunity to associate with the heroes and the ordinary situations they found themselves in. Indeed, the sense of place and realness of the world created by Rowling is undermined as characteristics of identifiable and simple experiences, such as being in the cold, unexplainably vanish from the French translation. Hagrid’s winter outfit for instance “a long mole-skin overcoat, rabbit-fur gloves and enormous beaverskin boots” (133) is simplified into “a big coat” (“un gros manteau”(180)). The children’s breath which “rose in a mist before them” (143) also disappears.

These details have a very important textual function. As Davis notes about the details of food at meal times, they “contribute to the realism of the scenes in which

they feature...and...serve to reinforce the credibility of the fantasy” (2002: 91-92). References to food, the simple gesture of feeding oneself and the connected sensations of smell, taste, swallowing, hunger and satisfaction constitute essential identifiable features even for the least experienced readership. They are frequently deleted from the French, preventing young readers from relating to common situations such as canteen conversations:

ST:

Ron had a piece of steak-and-kidney pie halfway to his mouth, but he'd forgotten all about it. ‘Seeker?’ he said. ‘But first-years never – you must be the youngest house player in about –’

‘– a century,’ said Harry, shovelling pie into his mouth. He felt particularly hungry after the excitement of the afternoon. ‘Wood told me.’ (113)

TT:

– Attrapeur, Mais les première année ne jouent jamais... Tu vas être le plus jeune joueur depuis...

– Un siècle, acheva Harry. C'est Dubois qui me l'a dit. (154)

BT:

– Seeker? Ron exclaimed. But first-years never play... You are going to be the youngest player in...

– A century, finished Harry. It's Wood who told me.

As the food and eating process disappear from the French, there is no feature to counterbalance the alien conversation topics such as a wizard sport, the wizards' school curriculum or a wizards' duel.

*Harry Potter à l'école des sorciers* undeniably “suffers from the lack of vivid detail that abounds in Rowling's original and enchants young imaginative minds” (Jentsch 2002). There is a significant change of narrative point of view in the French translation. In her rich descriptions, Rowling often adopts the perspective of child. The perspective offered in *Harry Potter à l'école des sorciers*, however, is often an adult's. This prevents children from relating to the young characters, their environment and their activities.

### *The school environment and activities*

The credibility of the school setting relies on many details which the French frequently leaves out:

ST:

At three-thirty that afternoon, Harry, Ron and the other Gryffindors hurried down the front steps into the grounds for their first flying lesson. It was a clear breezy day and the grass rippled under their feet as they marched down the sloping lawns towards a smooth lawn on the opposite side of the grounds to the Forbidden Forest, whose trees were swaying in the distance. (108-9)

TT: A trois heures et demie, cet après-midi-là, les élèves de Gryffondor sortirent dans le parc pour se rendre sur lieu de leur première leçon de vol. Le ciel était clair et les vastes pelouses ondulaient sous une faible brise. Le terrain se trouvait du côté opposé à la Forêt interdite dont on voyait les arbres se balancer au loin. (147)

BT:

At half past three that afternoon, the Gryffondor pupils went out into the park to go to the location of their first flying lesson. The sky was clear and the large lawns rippled

under a weak breeze. The ground was at the opposite side of the Forbidden Forest where one could see the trees sway in the distance.

The pupils' walk, so similar to schoolchildren on their way to play outdoor games, is considerably transformed in the translation. While the original puts the two heroes in the spotlight before melting them into the larger Gryffindor crowd, the French provides a different focus and the two boys are not distinguishable from the other "pupils." The perspective adopted here is that of an adult watching the scene from a distance, not of two individual children belonging to a larger group. The children are no longer the active agents as their motions "hurried down" "they marched down" and sensations "the grass rippled under their feet" disappear. Specific locations such as "the steps," "a smooth lawn," "the sloping lawns" vanish in favour of a more general panoramic description of the setting.

The same can be said about the following example where the specific location of a school-corridor at a busy time fades away: "It's no wonder no one can stand her' Ron said to Harry as they pushed their way into the crowded corridor" (127) is simplified into "I am not surprised that no one can stand her, Ron said to Harry at the end of the class" (173) ("– Ça ne m'étonne pas que personne ne puisse la supporter, dit Ron à Harry à la fin du cours"). Again, the two protagonists are not portrayed as belonging to a larger group of schoolchildren. Many similar deletions and simplifications fail to convey the reality of the children's activity:

ST:

Three times a week they went out to the greenhouses behind the castle to study Herbology, with a dumpy little witch called Professor Sprout, where they learnt how to take care of all the strange plants and fungi and found out what they were used for. (99)

TT:

Trois fois par semaine, ils étudiaient les plantes dans les serres situées à l'arrière du château, sous la direction d'une petite sorcière potelée qui s'appellait Madame Chourave. (135)

BT:

Three times a week, they studied plants in the green houses situated at the back of the castle, under the supervision of a plump little witch who was called Mrs Sprout.

In this example, not only is the children's motional "went out" changed into situational "studied" but the name and content of their class are also missing from the French. It seems odd that, despite his ingenuity in his translations of Rowling's invented words (Ernould 2001: Internet version), Ménard seems reluctant to risk a neologism by calquing 'Herbology.' Yet, 'Herbologie' would have echoed a French eleven-year-old student's syllabus (Technologie, Biologie...). The disappearance of identifiable background elements undeniably undermines the sense of familiarity. The following example depicts regular 'evening after evening' activities: 'they struggled through the extra homework they were getting':

ST:

'Wonder what it's like to have a peaceful life,' Ron sighed, as evening after evening they struggled through all the extra homework they were getting. Hermione had started making revision timetables for Harry and Ron, too. It was driving them mad. (171)

TT:

– Je me demande à quoi ça ressemble, une vie paisible, soupira Ron, accablé par le poids des devoirs à faire.

BT:

– I am wondering what a peaceful life is like, Ron sighed, overwhelmed at the burden of the homework to do.

The translation does not emphasise on the daily routine. Swotty Hermione's revision timetables and the boys' consequent annoyance at her are deleted as well, suggesting that the children's actions and reactions portrayed here may have appeared too unimportant to the development of the plot to be translated. The plot was certainly prioritised in the example below.

ST:

Many students had binoculars. The seats might be raised high in the air but it was still difficult to see what was going on sometimes.

Ron and Hermione joined Neville, Seamus and Dean the West Ham fan up in the top row. As a surprise for Harry, they had painted a large banner on one of the sheets Scabbers had ruined. It said Potter for President and Dean, who was good at drawing, had done a large Gryffondor lion underneath. Then Hermione had performed a tricky little charm so that the paint flashed different colours. (136)

TT:

De nombreux élèves étaient équipés de jumelles. Ron, Hermione, Neville, Seamus et Dean s'étaient assis côte à côte tout en haut et avaient déployé une grande bannière sur laquelle était écrit: «Potter président». Hermione avait même réussi un tour de magie qui avait rendu les lettres lumineuses. Dean avait dessiné en dessous un énorme lion Gryffondor. (184)

BT:

Numerous pupils were equipped with binoculars. Ron, Hermione, Neville, Seamus and Dean had sat down next to each other at the very top and had opened a large banner which read "Potter president." Hermione had even managed a magic trick to make the letters shine. Dean had drawn a huge Gryffondor lion below.

First of all, there is no mention that the banner is a surprise. French readers are not given the opportunity to identify Dean as a fan of a real football club and a child who is "good at drawing" (a skill highly valued amongst children). Similarly, they cannot recognise Ron's rat Scabbers as an undisciplined pet that damages household items. Finally, the explanation on the use of binoculars, in the original, invites the readers to imagine being in the stands themselves and finding it hard to see. The deletion prevents such invitation and weakens the sense of place.

### *The school community*

Rowling's engaging narrative is also due to the constant presence of classmates' names which places the main characters within a community: "Harry and Ron overheard Pavarti Patil telling her friend Lavender that Hermione was crying in the girls' toilets" (127). In this scene of school-corridor gossip, the French replaces the girls' names by "a pupil" telling her "friend" ("une élève dire à sa copine" (172)). As we saw earlier, this is not the first instance of Pavarti Patil's name being deleted. Nor is it the last, when Hermione hugs her in delight as their house team wins the Quidditch match, (164) "Pavarti Patil in the row in front" becomes "whoever was within her reach" ("quiconque se trouvait à sa portée" (222)).

In the original, Professor MacGonagall appears as a typical teacher who is efficient at maintaining discipline: "who could spot trouble quicker than any teacher in

the school” (108). The French omits this characterising observation, focusing on the children’s heated argument and her interference, a change of focus which prevents young readers from recognising her as the type of adult who hears and sees everything. “He was just telling everyone to look at the perfect way Malfoy had stewed his horned slugs when clouds of acid green smoke...” (103) describes a scene of regular favouritism and characterises Snape as a temperamental teacher and Malfoy as the teacher’s pet. Its deletion in the French not only prevents this characterisation but also removes the background to the extraordinary explosion of Neville’s cauldron. “Suddenly, a cloud of green smoke...” (“Brusquement un nuage de fumée verte...” (140)).

These deletions, substitutions and simplifications reflect a shift from the perspective of a child aware of his/her fellow boarders and teachers to that of an observing adult, to whom such details might appear unimportant to the storyline. The translation focuses on the main action and their consequences to the plot: an owl is bought, Hermione’s whereabouts are revealed, a match is won, a new confusing clue prevents the characters from solving the mystery, a fight is prevented, Harry has supporters in the stands, a cauldron blows up. This approach undeniably fails to convey the immediacy and familiarity of the children’s environment.

Non-verbal communication and complicity amongst children is frequently altered. In class, Harry answers back to his teacher and “A few people laughed; Harry caught Seamus’s eye and Seamus winked” (103). While “a few laughs” (“quelques rires” (140)) are reported in the French, the translator omits the look and wink exchanged between the two friends, to move on to the teacher’s annoyance at Harry’s cheek.

### *Harry’s mind*

In this last example, the translation does not convey the unspoken support between the two classmates, nor does it offer Harry’s point of view of the scene. Harry’s point of view observations and perceptions are in fact, often transformed or overlooked in the French:

ST:

Perhaps it was because he was now so busy, what with Quidditch practice three evenings a week on top of all his homework, but Harry could hardly believe it when he realised that he’d already been at Hogwarts two months. (126)

TT:

Harry était si occupé par ses cours et ses séances d’entraînement qu’il ne voyait pas le temps passer. Il ne s’était pas rendu compte qu’il était à Poudlard depuis déjà deux mois. (171)

BT:

Harry had been so busy with his classes and his training sessions that he was not noticing the time. He hadn’t realised that he had been at Hogwarts for two months already.

The translation simplifies once again the school activities by reducing Harry’s routine. The French narration also misses phrases which imitate the boy’s train of thought in the original: his internal debate “Perhaps it was because”; his overwhelmed feeling “what with” “on top of all his”; his disbelief “Harry could hardly believe it.” In fact, the perspective is no longer Harry’s as the tone of his observations and emotions becomes much more factual and detached:

ST:

It was really lucky that Harry now had Hermione as a friend. He didn't know how he'd have got through all his homework without her, what with all the last-minute Quidditch practice Wood was making them do. (133)

TT:

En tout cas, l'amitié d'Hermione avait été utile à Harry. Elle l'avait aidé à faire ses devoirs pour compenser le temps qu'il passait à s'entraîner. (180)

BT:

In any case, Hermione's friend had been useful to Harry. She had helped him to do his homework to make up for the time he spent training.

The game and the team captain's pushy attitude disappear as well as Harry's subjectivity which was conveyed by his appreciation "really lucky," his gratitude towards Hermione "He didn't know how he'd....without her" and the already mentioned overwhelmed feeling "what with." The shift from 'lucky' to 'useful' also offers a more mature, practical and result-oriented view of the two children's friendship.

On ten separate occasions, Harry's comments to himself, his memories and emotions are deleted [Appendix 1]. French readers therefore remain partly unaware of the main character's intentions and motivations and consequently are not given the opportunity to identify fully with Harry. Secondly, the different narrating point of view leads to omit many recognisable details and the translation fails to convey the banality of the setting. The distance and unfamiliarity of both the background and the heroes are maintained, "weakening the book's ability to transport the reader to Rowling's fantasy world" (Jentsch 2002: 299).

### Reception: A fairy tale

An analysis of paratexts, extratexts and epitexts indicates that Ménard's translation shaped the way the book was received and perceived in France. In this case, Genette's idea that paratext is subordinate to its text applies (Tahir-Gurça lar 2002: 56). On the original edition, a red steam engine represents Britain's once grandeur in engineering.<sup>9</sup> Schoolboy Harry looks in wonder at the train that will take him and his fellow students to Hogwarts. The cover tells the reader that *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* will be a journey into fantasy and tradition. The modern and real train in the background reminds that "Harry Potter's world is a world within our own." (Jentsch 2002: 286). This was recognised by most foreign publishers and illustrators who portrayed Harry in normal clothes or added a cape to his ordinary outfit. The French publisher, however, favoured an illustration of innocent-looking Harry, Ron and Hermione in their full wizard outfit, standing in the school grounds with a witch flying over the grey gothic castle behind them.

The changed title *Harry Potter à l'école des sorciers* (Harry Potter at the school of wizards) draws attention to the peculiarity of the story and its setting: "his *extraordinary* school, its *strange* teachers and their *curious* teaching"<sup>10</sup> (Amazon.fr's own review, my emphasis). The cover and title of *Harry Potter à l'école des sorciers* imply a world extremely remote and alien from reality and the castle and funny clothing indicate a fairy tale. Unsurprisingly, despite J.K. Rowling's writings being recognised as a hybrid of fantasy, school, orphan and adventure stories, "conte de fée" or fairy tale is the only genre referred to in French personal reviews (Amazon.fr).

*Harry Potter à l'école des sorciers* was the object of four publications in France. Two were translations from the English of American works: Allan and Elizabeth Kronzek's *Le Monde magique de Harry Potter (the Magical World of Harry Potter)* and David Colbert's *Les mondes magique de Harry Potter (The Magical Worlds of Harry Potter)*<sup>11</sup>. Several studies have been published on Harry Potter in both the U.S and the U.K. They offer a wide range of multidisciplinary interpretations and analyses: literary, gender, social, political, educational, commercial and spiritual<sup>12</sup>. In comparison, as their titles indicate, the books selected for translation and publication in France exclusively deal with the magical world of *Harry Potter*. The third book on Harry Potter is French Isabelle Smadja's *Harry Potter, les raisons d'un succès (Harry Potter, the reasons of a success)* which offers a psycho-analytical study of the series. According to Smadja, the story's appeal lays in its fairy tale characteristics:

Like in fairy tales, their content [the Harry Potter novels] speaks to the unconscious first. The miserable orphan Harry is meant to a fabulous destiny, like Cinderella.<sup>13</sup> (Ernould 2003: Internet version, my translation)

The last publication is Labbé and Millet's *étude sur Harry Potter et l'école des sorciers J.K. Rowling*, a guide aimed at young students and their teachers. The title suggests an in-depth and neutral analysis. Although the reader is reminded twice in footnotes that the studied text is a translation, there is a strong assumption from the title and throughout the study that the book in question is solely J.K. Rowling's. Yet, the content of Labbé and Millet's analysis is clearly influenced by Ménard's translational strategies. "Conte de fée" is the most frequently mentioned genre (twenty six times, compared to three times for Dickens and once for Dahl). A section is even titled "Cendrillon au masculin" (23) (Masculine Cinderella) in which parallels are drawn between Harry's story and the famous fairy tale in their study.

Labbé and Millet also devote thirty one pages out of one hundred and twenty seven to 'Le fantastique' (85-117), dealing with all the fantastical aspects of the novels. Magic wands, cauldrons and brooms are mentioned as recurring objects of fairy tales. Less magical items are also defined as fantastical. The "set books' list" (Rowling: 52) and the Flourish and Botts bookshop (Rowling: 62) are references to "grimoires" (Labbé and Millet 1998: 98). Rather than regular items of the start-of-the-school-year shopping frenzy, books are presented as recurring objects in fantastical and fairy tales (*ibid.*). Harry and the Mirror of Erised are linked to another fairy tale character, Snow White's step-mother who was herself an "occasional witch" ("une sorcière à ses heures") (*ibid.*: 99). Harry's invisibility cape is also identified as "un objet récurrent des contes" (*ibid.*) (recurring object of tales) although there is no example to support this.

Ménard's tendency to undermine the wizard's credibility is apparent in a subsection devoted to 'Les Dragées surprises de Bertie Corchue' (Bertie Botts' Every-Flavour Beans) amongst Rowling's inventions. No reference is made to Jelly Beans but Ron's fantastical 'goblin's blood' and Professor Dumbledore's absurd 'wax for ears' are both quoted. The authors conclude that the brand "shows **the lack of seriousness of this world** in which even venerable wizards try their luck at children's sweets."<sup>14</sup> (Labbé 2003: 111, originally in bold, my translation)

The first chapter of *étude sur Harry Potter et l'école des sorciers J.K. Rowling* puts the novel under examination "L'oeuvre en examen." A chart analyses the construction

and development of the plot: each chapter appears with the main action, summed up in one sentence, the date, the duration, the possible flashbacks and the hero(es). The novel is reduced to its story line. Labbé and Millet also note “*Harry Potter at the school of wizards* is not a documentary on school life. Favouring the action forces the author to cut through the time line, to eliminate weak moments”<sup>15</sup> (2003: 36 my translation). One is reminded of Ménard’s numerous cuts on the school features: its setting, its community and its activities. The prioritisation of the plot also appears to be Rowling’s sole choice in the authors’ analysis of the novel from Chapter 10 to 15. They point out that “this part of the novel is devoted to the action. Everything must go fast not to bore the reader... flashbacks, very frequent so far, disappear almost entirely”<sup>16</sup> (2003: 35 my translation). Interestingly, these five chapters are the ones that underwent the most significant change of narrative point of view. Twenty out of twenty seven omissions and simplifications occur in these five chapters.

Labbé and Millet also state that “modern novelists, especially if they address children or teenagers, are weary of descriptions, which are notorious for being boring”<sup>17</sup> (2003: 16 my translation). Ménard’s tendency to reduce J.K. Rowling’s descriptions certainly confirm this trend. Ménard’s choice to omit would have therefore been motivated by this assumption that the intended audience of his translation, children, get bored with details. What’s more, his rewriting of *Harry Potter* was probably influenced by his own production, as a children’s writer, of three witches’ stories<sup>18</sup> around the time of the publication of *Harry Potter à l’école des sorciers*. As an interview by *Le Figaro* shows, his interpretation also turned *Harry Potter* into a “conte de fée”:

In fact, [the *Harry Potter* books] belong more to a typically British tradition: the ‘Fairy Tail’ [*sic.*], the fairy tale mixing fantasy stories, not to forget a little bit of Gothic novel. From Lewis Carroll and J.R.R Tolkien, J.K Rowling is now carrying the torch of English literature, she ensures the remarkable continuity of this literary tradition which is so British.<sup>19</sup> (Ménard, 27.11.00: my translation)

Despite her writings’ striking similarity to Roald Dahl (Nel 2002: 38), Thomas Hughes (Nel 2002: 28) and Enid Blyton (Blake 2002: 18-19), J.K. Rowling appears as the successor of pure fantasy fiction writers. *Harry Potter* emerges as a fairy tale only, and so does her life story in the biography provided at the end of the French edition:

She was living in a precarious situation. For six months, she devoted herself to the writing of her book. What followed resembles a fairy tale. The first agent she sent her manuscript to accepted it straightaway for publication... As soon as it was published, the first volume was a huge success.<sup>20</sup> (304: my translation)

In reality, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* was rejected by nine publishers. It took a year for an agent to recognise its potential. The book’s success was not instant either, like any low budget, it relied on word of mouth. J.K. Rowling herself denies the rags-to-rich story, claiming the direness of her financial situation was exaggerated by the press.

## Conclusion

From this study, I do not feel convinced that the translatability of *Harry Potter* was due to the “universality of the themes” (Schafer 2000: 17). As we saw, the French translator regularly manipulates these themes in order to provide more acceptable

and desirable models of behaviours and thoughts to his French readership. The flexibility offered by the source text would explain Harry Potter's translatability in so many languages as well as the apparent lack of coherence noted by Davis as regards translators' different treatment of Culture Specific Items. Similarly, I do not believe that the book's success was due to "the translators...being successful in calculating which adaptations will suit the needs and tastes of their particular audiences, while preserving the character of the original texts" (Davies 2003: 97).

First of all, the international phenomenon that *Harry Potter* has become was triggered by the initial commercial success of the first book in the English speaking world. In June 1997, American Publishers Scholastic purchased the publishing rights of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* for the sum of \$105,000 at the Bologna Children's Book Fair. In October 1998, the rights of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and its sequel were sold for \$700,000 to Warner Brothers Entertainment, one of the world's largest producers of film and television entertainment. Such names and figures do not go unnoticed by overseas publishers. The translations were therefore a result of Harry Potter's success rather than its cause. While these translations undoubtedly contributed to the globalisation of Pottermania, so did the books' adaptation to the big screen and the extensive marketing and merchandizing of companies such as Matelle, Hallmark and Coca-Cola to name but a few.

Secondly, success does not imply that the character of the original text has been preserved. When buying the rights of a bestseller which is likely to result in movies, video games, toys, sweets and other items, the publishers' priority is to make the story line and its protagonists available to potential readers of this book and consumers of its derived products. As we saw, the character of the original text was regularly overlooked in the French translation in favour of the plot, which remained intact. The publication of *Harry Potter à l'école des sorciers* on the French market allowed France, not only to be part of, but also to gain from this multi-billion pound Pottermania.

Finally, children are readers whose 'needs and tastes' remain to be shaped and for whom censorship is stronger than any other group in society. I strongly doubt that French children do not find descriptive details of food and school activities to their taste and if they did, that they would be in a position to voice such preferences. Instead, I would argue that Ménard's deleting approach not only reflects his assumption of children's likes and dislikes but also his own literary tastes as a children's writer. The regular shift from a child's to an adult's point of view in his translation suggests a certain reservation towards the reliability of children's perspective, the relevance of their preoccupations and the quality of a narrative that would rely on such features.

A translated children's book therefore reflects what is acceptable and desirable to both its receiving culture and its translator. Ménard's translation is consistently in line with his personal interpretation of the source text as a pure fantasy and his own writings of sorcerers' stories. Translations of bestselling children's literature are primarily commercial products. A text to be consumed by a child needs to reinforce the norms governing the socio-cultural and ideological reality in which this child lives. Ménard has therefore produced a text reassuringly French in its values and alien in its peculiarities.

The opportunities for further research on *Harry Potter* are endless. As this particular analysis highlighted the differences in educational, ideological and moral values between France and the United Kingdom, many other studies could be under-

taken on the translations of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* in other languages. Each translation could be analysed independently of each other and in relation to the market and culture for which it was produced. One could obviously look at the cinematographic adaptations and whether the dubbing and subtitles are coherent with the translations of the books. It would also be interesting to compare official translations and 'pirate' translations produced by impatient Harry Potter fans across the world. As the Harry Potter phenomenon has evolved beyond the publishing and cinematographic industries, one could investigate whether manufacturers used translation for Harry Potter toys, games, collectibles, clothes, costumes, food, beverages, toiletries, stationary items and household goods. Such studies would remind us of the interdependent relation between translation, market and society and further our understanding of translation for mass consumption.

#### NOTES

1. Nestlé Smarties Book Prize (1997) Gold Medal 9-11 years FCBG Children's Book Award (1997) Overall winner and Longer Novel Category Birmingham Cable Children's Book Award (1997), Young Telegraph Paperback of the Year (1998), British Book Awards (1997), Children's Book of the Year Sheffield Children's Book Award (1998), Whitaker's Platinum Book Award (2001).
2. prix Sorcières du roman and prix Tam-Tam du livre de Jeunesse, catégorie Je Bouquine
3. <<http://harrydico.net/collins/index2.php?&width=983>> <<http://mondeharrypotter.free.fr/pages/traduc/>>
4. "la crainte de l'éditeur français d'un titre trop obscur pour un livre destiné à la jeunesse."
5. In Britain, independent school, private school and public school all mean schools which are self-governing and funded independently of the state. Eton, where some members of the royal family have been educated, is one of the most famous 'public' schools.
6. Poudlard ne possède pas grand-chose de commun avec les collèges français. C'est un endroit moyen-âgeux, aux salles de classes archaïques. Néanmoins, J.K. Rowling est anglaise; elle prend donc comme référence les collèges anglais qui conservent plus de traditions que les nôtres.
7. The similarity between the two led Jelly Beans' brand to become the official manufacturer of Bertie Bott's Every-Flavour Beans.
8. Gazette: 1. Hist ou vx: Ecrit périodique contenant des nouvelles.  
REM: Gazette, dans le langage courant, a été remplacé par journal.  
2. Mod. Plais. Journal, périodique.  
3. Personne qui aime à colporter des nouvelles.
9. The only feature to be retained on the book cover designed for adults.
10. "son extraordinaire école, ses étranges professeurs et les curieux enseignements qu'ils prodiguent."
11. Original titles *The Sorcerer's Companion: A Guide to the Magical World of Harry Potter* and *The Magical Worlds of Harry Potter*.
12. Lana A. Whited's *The ivory tower and Harry Potter: perspectives on a literary phenomenon*,  
Giselle Liza Anatol's *Reading Harry Potter: critical essays*,  
Elizabeth D. Schafer's. *Exploring Harry Potter*  
Philip Nel's *J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter novels: a reader's guide*  
Connie Neal's *The Gospel according to Harry Potter: spirituality in the stories of the world's most famous seeker*.  
Lisa Cherrett's *The triumph of goodness: biblical themes in the Harry Potter stories*  
Philip Plyming's *Harry Potter and the meaning of life: engaging with spirituality in Christian mission*  
Suman Gupta's *Re-reading Harry Potter*  
Elizabeth E. Heilman's *Harry Potter's world: multidisciplinary critical perspectives*  
Julia Eccleshare's *A guide to the Harry Potter novels*.
13. "à la manière des contes de fées, leur contenu parlait d'abord à l'inconscient. L'orphelin malheureux Harry est voué à un destin fabuleux, comme Cendrillon."
14. "montre **le manque de sérieux de ce monde** dans lequel, même de vénérables magiciens tentent leur chance avec des bonbons pour enfants."

15. "Harry Potter à l'école des sorciers n'est pas un documentaire sur la vie scolaire. Privilégier l'action oblige l'auteur à couper dans la trame temporelle, à éliminer les moments faibles."
16. Cette partie du roman est consacrée à l'action. Tout doit aller vite pour que le lecteur ne se lasse pas... Les analepses, très fréquentes jusque là, disparaissent presque entièrement.
17. ...les romanciers modernes, particulièrement quand ils s'adressent à des enfants et des adolescents, se méfient des descriptions, réputés ennuyeuses.
18. *Les pieds de la sorcière* (99), *La sorcière mange-tout* (98), *Du balai la sorcière* (99).
19. "En fait, ils appartiennent plutôt à une tradition typiquement britannique, celle du Fairy Tail [*sic.*], le conte de fée qui mélange aussi des histoires de fantômes, sans oublier une pincée de roman gothique... De Lewis Carroll en passant par J.R.R. Tolkien... J.K. Rowling a su reprendre le flambeau de la littérature anglaise... elle assure une formidable continuité avec toute cette tradition littéraire tellement britannique..."
20. "Elle vivait alors dans une situation précaire. Pendant six mois, elle s'est consacrée à l'écriture de son livre. Le reste ressemble à un conte de fées. Le premier agent auquel elle avait envoyé son manuscrit le retint aussitôt pour publication... Le premier volume a rencontré dès sa parution un succès phénoménal."

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<http://www.amazon.co.uk/>  
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