

# **“QUALITY NOT QUANTITY”: The Role of the Editor and the Language Consultant in the English Translations of Swedish and Norwegian Children’s Fiction at Turton & Chambers, 1988–92**

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**ABSTRACT**

This article takes as its subject the project of British author and editor Aidan Chambers to set up a small press dedicated to publishing modern European children’s literature in translation, 1988–92. Positioned within Gideon Toury’s framework of Descriptive Translation Studies, this paper outlines the history of the firm and its founding ideology to publish children’s literature “with a difference” for a British audience. As a result, preliminary norms (relating to text, author and translator selection) and operational norms (relating to translation strategies) for four novels by Maud Reuterswård, Peter Pohl and Tormod Haugen are identified and analyzed. Fundamental to the article’s methodology is the use of bibliographical, archival and oral history primary sources. The principal focus of research interest is Chambers’ use of language consultants in addition to his commissioned translators in an unusual and sometimes challenging professional collaboration of editor-translator-consultant within a Nordic-British setting.

**RÉSUMÉ**

Le présent article aborde un projet lancé par Aidan Chambers, écrivain et éditeur britannique, soit la création d’une maison d’édition vouée à la littérature jeunesse européenne contemporaine en traduction (1988-1992). Il s’inscrit dans le cadre de la traductologie descriptive de Gideon Toury et présente l’historique de l’entreprise et son idéologie fondatrice : la publication d’une littérature jeunesse « différente » pour un public britannique. De ce fait, sont identifiés et analysés les critères préliminaires (relatifs au choix du texte, de l’auteur et du traducteur) et les critères d’exécution (relatifs aux stratégies de traduction) dans quatre romans de Maud Reuterswård, Peter Pohl et Tormod Haugen. Notre méthodologie se fonde sur l’utilisation de sources primaires bibliographiques, archivistiques et d’histoire orale. Nous accordons une attention particulière au recours, par Chambers, à des consultants linguistiques (outre les traducteurs qu’il a retenus), ce qui donne lieu à une collaboration inhabituelle et parfois difficile entre éditeur, traducteur et consultant, dans un contexte scandinavo-britannique.

This article builds up, from archival and oral history primary sources, a publishing history and translation back-story of the Nordic translations published by Turton & Chambers in Stroud, Gloucestershire, England, over a short but productive period from 1988 to 1992.<sup>1</sup> This innovative small press run by Carnegie Prize-winning author and educator Aidan Chambers and funded by David Turton concentrated on publishing children's literature with a difference, primarily that appearing in English translation for the first time. The unusually complete and well-preserved publishing archive documents all aspects of the history of the press in minute detail and enables a thorough and full analysis of the editorial and translation processes that combined to produce four Nordic titles during the brief operational lifespan of the firm. The survival of the publishing archive enables all parts of the role of its publisher/editor Aidan Chambers to be unpicked and revealed for the first time.

The case study of Nordic children's translation at Turton & Chambers is an unusual one. As a one-man band, Chambers shaped and defined all areas of the publishing process: text selection, author selection, translator selection and illustrator selection, as well as translation strategy, marketing and distribution. Although it was not uncommon for British children's editors in the period 1950–2000 to take a time-heavy role in bringing Nordic translations to a British juvenile audience,<sup>2</sup> the autonomy of Chambers in the late 1980s and early 1990s was by that period unusual in a rapidly changing publishing sector where sales were beginning to dominate as a decisive factor for title and author selection, and where the recommendation of the editor was diminishing in its power and influence to drive a commission. Readers competent in the Nordic languages needed to be employed who could propose titles and authors of interest and who could write reports of synopsis and recommendation for monolingual British editors. Translators needed to be found and commissioned who would work on the translation drafts and then hand them over to the British editor for polishing and eventual publication. And throughout all these phases of the commissioning, translation and editorial process, the British editor remained fully dependent on the linguistic and cultural competencies of his or her appointed reader and translator. As a British editor typically had no prior knowledge of the Nordic

languages (or often any other languages), the usual and traditional scope of his or role as an agent within the publishing process was severely curtailed.

This article will explore how Aidan Chambers developed a new translation strategy in order to address this specific problem—how could a British children’s editor rigorously work with a text written in an entirely unfamiliar language and often originating from an unknown source culture? How would suitable texts, authors, readers and translators be found? These elements will be addressed in this article, in particular the introduction of language consultants at Turton & Chambers—these specialists worked across the full range of European languages published, and their contributions enabled Chambers to gain unusually in-depth editorial insights into the translation drafts he had commissioned.

## **Theoretical Approaches to Reconstructions of Translation History**

This research utilises an approach to the history of translation based on using modern publishing archives and oral history sources, which will now be outlined. This methodology is able to deliver a full narrative of the publishing history of Nordic titles and their language consultants at Turton & Chambers.

This case study makes use of Gideon Toury’s translation norms within Descriptive Translation Studies, as they provide a convenient point of entry into the reconstruction of the translation history of Nordic titles at Turton & Chambers. This branch of translation studies as developed by Toury and others focuses on “describing, explaining and predicting phenomena.”<sup>3</sup> Toury’s “norms” can be defined as the socio-cultural constraints that determine behaviour with translation<sup>4</sup> and that operate in all translations at all levels throughout the translating process. Toury identifies two types of norm: preliminary and operational, the former relating to translation policy and the latter relating to “decisions made during the act of translation itself.”<sup>5</sup> Both types of norms are analyzed within this case study, firstly the identification of factors that dictate text selection within a particular language at a particular point in time<sup>6</sup> (preliminary norms) and, secondly, translation strategies as revealed through looking at the role of the translator and in particular the language consultant (operational norms). This concentration on translation

norms is attractive within a research context of publishing history (rather than specifically translation history) as it inevitably draws attention to the role of various literary agents rather than to the text itself.<sup>7</sup> Primary sources are identified and exploited in order to trace the movement of cultural products and to focus on the “why” rather than the “what” and “how” of translation.<sup>8</sup>

The research method used in this case study takes a two-stage approach. Firstly, the broader context of the publishing activity within which the translation activity takes place is given briefly through bibliographical analysis of the corpus of British translated Nordic children’s literature for the period 1950–2000. Within this bibliographical positioning, understanding can be reached of the full extent of the firms, editors, authors, translators, illustrators and other agents in operation within the selected corpus. Recent bibliographical research in children’s literature positioned within Toury’s model of translation norms is now actively identifying corpora of translated children’s literature in different language combinations for the first time and opening them up to debate and discussion. Such bibliographical analysis permits understanding of the precise scope and extent of these translations, often in combination with primary sources such as interviews and publishing archives. This facilitates the identification and interpretation of translation norms operating at different levels within children’s publishing, expanding upon the research trend already established and developed in the last ten years.<sup>9</sup> For example, both Thomson-Wohlgemuth and Berry emphasise macro-levels of analysis within a translated corpus, building a full picture of the literary system, its agents and its manipulation and rewriting of texts through translation as defined by Lefevere.<sup>10</sup> Van Meerbergen<sup>11</sup> similarly supplements her use of existing historical archival sources with newly commissioned oral history interviews. All these scholars actively demonstrate the potential of this methodology, which does not yet appear to be widely used in scholarship relating to translated children’s literature in the United Kingdom.

Secondly, an additional research phase is necessary in order to present as much original data for analysis as possible. Several primary sources are required, which are then interrogated in order to support analysis of the decision-making processes taking place within editorial and translational processes for this case study. Without the inclusion of these primary sources

into the methodology, it is difficult if not impossible to capture and identify the full range of sequential elements occurring within the publishing act some twenty-five years later. Archival editorial files and translation drafts in addition to modern-day oral history interviews help replicate and recreate the multi-faceted and complex sequence of actions as no other method of research can do. Unique to the Turton & Chambers' case study is the fact that translation drafts are extant for all titles published—this is unprecedented in any other research into surviving publishing archives for other Nordic children's titles at other publishing houses, where in-house publishing practice dictates that drafts of manuscripts (translated or otherwise) are not routinely preserved.<sup>12</sup>

## **Turton & Chambers and its Position within Translated Nordic Children's Literature 1950–2000**

As has already been noted, an important aspect of identifying and understanding translation norms in the publishing sector is to understand the wider context within which those norms have originated and developed. Berry's bibliographical analysis of the *British National Bibliography (BNB)* for the period 1950–2000<sup>13</sup> has resulted in the generation of some preliminary data that enables some interim conclusions to be drawn about the publishing landscape for this particular corpus. This research has followed similar work by Desmet and Van Meerbergen, and it enables the selected corpus to be delineated and its size and diversity placed “at a certain moment in time in a certain sociocultural context.”<sup>14</sup> Berry's collation of bibliographical data contributes to an understanding of Toury's preliminary norms for this chosen corpus and, as such, positions these translations within their specific British publishing context.

Berry has estimated that some 778 Nordic translations were published for children in the UK between 1950 and 2000 (including reprints). This figure is significantly smaller than for other major western European languages such as French and German, although comparable statistics and data have not been gathered from the *BNB* on other languages. The most active publishers of Nordic children's literature within this period are Methuen, Puffin/Penguin and Hodder & Stoughton, together outputting some 225 titles respectively.<sup>15</sup>

Fifteen other British publishers published between 10 and 20 titles each during this time.

Turton & Chambers is responsible for a very modest output of the wider corpus, namely four Nordic titles by one Norwegian and two Swedish authors, representing only 0.005% of the total corpus of 778 titles. What can analysis of such a small-scale and short-lived publisher generating such a diminutive share of Nordic production thus bring to any discussion about the British children's literature publishing scene during this period? Two important factors support scholarly consideration of this particular case study in detail. The first is that the firm's extant publishing archive is one of the finest and most complete examples for children's literature publishing of any type available in the United Kingdom, offering unparalleled opportunities for multiple levels of analysis from multiple research perspectives.<sup>16</sup> There is sadly little correlation between the most active houses publishing translations of (Nordic) children's literature and the publishing firms that have the biggest extant archives in terms of chronological coverage, depth, breadth and completeness. As a result, selection of pertinent case studies and subsequent detailed analysis have had to depend significantly, if not entirely, on the serendipitous survival rate of relevant archives at institutions or businesses where collections are sufficiently managed and organised to be made available for research use by external scholars.

The second significant factor in pursuing this case study for detailed exploration is that the press's publisher and editor Aidan Chambers holds innovative, passionate yet largely atypical views for a publisher about bringing translated literature with a difference to the juvenile British readership. Translation sits at the very heart of this publishing and editorial ideology and became the primary emphasis and goal for the press from its very outset. Whilst other more productive British publishers for the same period published unquestionably more titles forming part of this corpus, nothing is known about their publishing ideologies for translation, as these have not survived in the archives or perhaps were never recorded—editors interviewed by Berry in recent years typically have no recollection of a specific in-house (Nordic) translation policy or goal in place.<sup>17</sup> Titles were selected often for their similarity to popular and established juvenile British genres (e.g. fantasy genre, as for the *Moomins* and the works of Irmelin Sandman Lilius; mystery

genre, as for the *Agaton Sax* series)<sup>18</sup> so that the expense of employing a translation in addition to the usual children's editor could be justified. Editors were reluctant to take risks that might jeopardise the wider success of their children's lists and their publishing house. Difference was typically not celebrated; it could even be said to be avoided by cautious editors. The full picture of this editorial apathy and a better understanding of editorial strategies surrounding the translation of children's literature will never become entirely clear as the required breadth and depth of British archival sources is not available. Within this context, the Turton & Chambers' project to promote European children's literature in British translation represents an irresistible research opportunity to examine translation norms in detail and to unpick its editorial priorities and preferences.

Aidan Chambers (1934–) is a polymathic figure within British and international children's literature who delights in new literatures and ideas. Greenway sums him up as “a writer who doesn't make things easy for his readers but who richly rewards the thoughtful reader who likes to be challenged”<sup>19</sup> and as an author fascinated by experimental structure and form, complex interpersonal relationships and indefinite conclusions. Although primarily a novelist, he has been a teacher, school librarian, editor and monk in earlier stages of his career and he is still active as an educator and critic. Lucy Pearson gives a detailed analysis of his role of editor for Macmillan's paperback teenage series *Topliners* in her PhD dissertation, drawing for the first time on the extensive and comprehensive Chambers archive (then held at Aberystwyth University).<sup>20</sup> Chambers was appointed as General Editor (a freelance position) from the founding of the series in 1968 until 1979, developing his interests in the reluctant adolescent reader and new models for publishing for young people.<sup>21</sup> He was able to publish translations of international teen writing for *Topliners*, selecting titles from Sweden as well as Germany and the Netherlands, and honing his editorial skills in general as well as in working with texts in translation. Chambers had developed his love of language and word play into a love for European children's literature partly through his mentorship and friendship with teen author Joan Tate. Tate (1922–2000) was also one of the most successful and prolific British translators of Scandinavian literature and one of her Swedish translations (already drafted without a publisher in mind) became one of the very first titles of Chambers' new publishing venture. As Harwood observes, Chambers

wants “young readers to be imaginatively at home in our close European neighbour-hood” and translation was the publishing strategy that would deliver this vision and aspiration to a British readership through the work of Turton & Chambers.<sup>22</sup>

## **“The Difference that Matters”: Turton & Chambers’ Translation Strategy and First Steps**

Chambers’ fascination with translation is well documented through his own critical work. In this, he bemoans the commonly held British publishing view for foreign texts to be “culturally translated” or “domesticated” in order to make them palatable, and for the presence of the translator to be hidden from view.<sup>23</sup> He laments that many “superlative” texts do not even reach a British translation, as progressive subject matter or treatment causes editors to fear that this type of content would “cause too much upset and thus suffer even lower sales than translations usually achieve.”<sup>24</sup>

Chambers occupied an unusual editorial role at Macmillan in the 1960s and 1970s, working from home in a part-time capacity at a distance from the publishing firm and fitting in his editorial duties alongside his own writing and other commitments. And again, it was in a similarly atypical role as sole editor at Turton & Chambers that he was able to pursue his passion for translated children’s literature through a venture funded entirely by Australian bookseller David Turton of The Singing Tree children’s bookshop, whom Chambers had met whilst writer-in-residence at Perth University in 1988. Turton had money to spare for investment, and Chambers was able to suggest translation as the press’s primary remit, with a focus on “the best and most innovative of other-language books.”<sup>25</sup>

The new firm took shape quickly and Turton and Chambers became co-owners. Turton initially looked after funding, sales and distribution, and Chambers was responsible for all aspects of editorial policy, production and publicity. A detailed publishing policy was drawn up, with an emphasis on writers and books that are “unusual, innovative, in touch with the literary movements and the thinking of our times.”<sup>26</sup> Quality was the goal, not quantity or the “production treadmill.” As Chambers recalled in 2011, he had a clear idea of what the press should focus on: “They are all books in the

modernist tradition, which hadn't appeared in English . . . They are so distinctly different and exactly what you need."<sup>27</sup> It is unusual to be able to identify the full extent of Toury's preliminary translation norms so specifically for a publishing house, and it would be impossible to do so without the survival of the archive of Turton & Chambers and therefore the full text of this publishing policy.

Although Chambers kept Turton fully informed throughout their collaboration from 1988 to 92, he held full editorial control over the press in all respects, as will now be explored. Five launch titles were published in autumn/winter 1989–90, including *A Way from Home* by Swede Maud Reuterswärd. These were followed in 1991 by a second Reuterswärd work, *Noah is My Name*, as well as titles each from Swede Peter Pohl (*Johnny, My Friend*) and Norwegian Tormod Haugen (*Zeppelin*).

## **The Role of the Language Consultant at Turton & Chambers**

Chambers was alert from the outset of his publishing project to the disadvantages of editing works in translation with no prior knowledge of the source language. He was already fully aware through his work for *Topliners* and his publishing connections that many (if not most) British editors are monolingual. This factor impacted adversely on one of the primary functions of the editor, namely reading and assessing a book in order to decide whether to take out an option on it and then whether to proceed to commissioning a translation for publication. As he recalled, "all editors are nervous about taking on a book they can't read. . . . The translators have all the power. . . . You don't have the language so [the editor] can't challenge that."<sup>28</sup> He was therefore keen to restore equilibrium within the editorial process and remedied this by using language consultants in addition to translators.

This strategy has not been found in use elsewhere with the post-1950 translated Nordic-British children's literature corpus, other than in instances where the editor needs a competent linguist to make an assessment of a commissioned translation if there are doubts as to its suitability.<sup>29</sup> Chambers' solution was to collaborate closely with experts in the selected source language, firstly to suggest suitable texts, authors and translators. This is not

an uncommon editorial strategy when seeking to publish works in translation, although it is usually undertaken on a more informal basis through existing editorial contacts. Instances of using Nordic-language readers have been found at the British firms publishing Nordic children's literature in translation where comprehensive archival sources survive (Chatto & Windus, Oxford University Press and André Deutsch). However, Chambers took this strategy one step further, as he was aware from translations of his own works that "translators and editors tend to flatten a text by rendering in conventional, familial language an author's quirkiness."<sup>30</sup> In consequence, he additionally asked his language consultant(s) to work intensively on the target text itself under his guidance. He had particular editorial interests in assessing whether the "peculiarities" of original form, word play or content that he was so keen to preserve had been smoothed out to the extent of their being warped and adulterated through the translation process.<sup>31</sup>

Chambers made good use of his existing publishing and educational contacts to source his consultants, with Joke Linders, Elaine Moss and Anthea Bell initially helping to source suitable Dutch and French titles. His long-term mentor and friend Joan Tate was the obvious choice for Swedish titles initially. Tate immediately suggested Reuterswård as a potential Turton & Chambers' author and she later became the translator of both the Reuterswård titles and recommended Laurie Thompson as translator for Swede Peter Pohl. Native-speaker and friend Katarina Kuick had originally suggested Pohl as a potential author for the new press, and acted as language consultant for all three Swedish titles published by Turton & Chambers.

Reuterswård's two texts proved relatively simple to translate, not least as Tate had already completed the translation of *A Way from Home* prior to the formation of Turton & Chambers. Tate was a notoriously prolific translator and completed *Noah is my Name* at her usual swift speed following its commissioning. It was fortunate that Chambers and Kuick mutually recognized that the texts were not perceived as "linguistically difficult," particularly as Chambers was already well aware that working with Tate could be "awkward. . . . There was no argument. And she regarded herself as absolutely fluent in her Swedish, so you couldn't challenge it."<sup>32</sup> Kuick therefore played an important but uncontroversial role as language consultant in the editorial polishing of the Tate texts, but the experience nevertheless

helped Chambers to establish and refine his working methods with his language consultants, which proved an asset when tricky editorial and translational situations latterly arose.

Pohl's work *Johnny, My Friend* proved to be far more challenging for both Chambers and Kuick, and it is only through analysis of primary sources that Toury's operational norms can be identified in considerable detail. The text's frequent timeshifts, the plot's complexity and ambiguity and the novel's intensely strong sense of Swedish place, language/dialect and setting rendered a fluent 'unflattened' English translation as a major challenge. Chambers was a huge fan of the novel, and "anger that such an extraordinary novel hadn't appeared in English was a key factor in [his] decision to be part of Turton & Chambers in the first place."<sup>33</sup> Chambers visited the author with Kuick and negotiated a contract with publisher Norstedts. Experienced translator Laurie Thompson was already known to Chambers and was well up to the challenge, quickly identifying tone, slang, humour and lyricism as key areas for attention. He too visited the author and Pohl and Thompson agreed that making the story accessible to an English audience was the major focus for the work's translation strategy.<sup>34</sup>

Thompson started work on the text and Kuick then visited Chambers to work through the first draft in detail. It was at this point in editorial proceedings that differences between Thompson and Kuick's translational preferences began to emerge. Again, this process can be traced step by step through analysis of the surviving translation drafts and the correspondence between Chambers, Thompson and Kuick, and results in Toury's operational norms being clearly identified through this particular research methodology. Pohl and Thompson had worked out a strategy for replicating the rhythm, tone, flavour and style of the source text as an integral whole, where domestication as a translation technique was not necessarily shunned. If actively retaining foreign names, concepts or other linguistic and cultural elements did not work well in the target language English, then other approaches were considered. Thompson was confident in his ability to make judgements in this respect, as a highly proficient native language writer of English and as an experienced Swedish literary translator and academic. As a translation professional already well versed with the British publishing industry and the extent to which a British readership would tolerate foreignized or domesticated approaches to

literary translation, he was in a strong position to adopt this particular strategy with one eye to increasing potential sales. Kuick favoured by contrast a considerably more literal, foreignized and non-domesticated approach, a strategy shaped partly through her determination that English readers should be exposed to the translated text's source culture to the full extent that Swedish readers are exposed to non-domesticated British and American texts in Swedish translation. As a result, she focused more stringently than Thompson on producing a finished text which was perhaps more palatable to her position as a Swedish speaker (with relatively little professional understanding of the British juvenile literature scene) than to the book's eventual young British reader.<sup>35</sup>

These professional differences became more pronounced as editing progressed and Chambers was required to find a compromise that worked for both translator and language consultant. For example, Thompson was strongly against using original Swedish names throughout the text, whereas Kuick argued vehemently for their retention on all accounts. Chambers steered towards a middle ground, that of keeping the original name for the most part but using a substitute very close to the original in English for more "unusual" names.<sup>36</sup> Although made aware of Kuick's input from the beginning, Thompson had clearly forgotten this policy during the long editorial process and he sometimes felt that the differences in his strategy and that of Kuick created tensions within the translation as a whole. Thompson favoured a more holistic "whole-text" approach, working to create an overall style and register, adding in extra linguistic nuances on occasion to remedy and compensate for the sometimes necessary removal and 'flattening' of these elsewhere in the text.<sup>37</sup> As a result, he felt that Kuick's adherence to "literal accuracy" disturbed his carefully calculated overall tone. Chambers acted as a diplomatic editorial go-between, facilitating discussion and enabling Thompson and Kuick to challenge translation points on a case by case basis.<sup>38</sup> Although challenging and time-consuming as it was for Chambers as editor to find compromise, the finished product largely satisfied the individual perspectives of all three agents concerned in the translation process, and Chambers was content with the result.

## Experiments in Translation Strategy: The Absence of the Language Consultant

Chambers was in retrospect less happy with translation work on the only Norwegian translation for the publishing house, and, again, analysis of the available primary sources helps provide a full picture of Toury's preliminary and operational norms that relate to this particular title. The translation of Turton & Chambers' fourth Nordic title proved less than straightforward, and it is perhaps not entirely coincidental that this work, *Zeppelin*, was the only Nordic title to be commissioned without use of a language consultant.<sup>39</sup> In contrast to the intense collaboration of the editor-translator-consultant team on the three Swedish novels, which had worked well (if slowly at times), the dialogue for *Zeppelin* was entirely two-way. The translator of a pre-existing draft translation and Chambers as editor worked together directly, with no Norwegian language support in place to complete the triangle. The decision not to appoint a language consultant had an impact not just on the preliminary norms associated with the translation project (particularly the selection of the translator) but also on the operational norms found to be in use (namely the approaches within the execution of the translation itself).

Kuick had initially recommended the title for publication and also provided a rough translation of the first five chapters, but her professional input for Chambers ended at that point, as she was not a Norwegian specialist.<sup>40</sup> Unusually, Haugen's publisher Gyldendal Norsk had access to a draft translation by American David R Jacobs, who had already translated *Zeppelin* out of interest as a keen amateur. Chambers was keen to use the Jacobs draft initially in order to appraise the text's potential in the absence of an appointed Norwegian language consultant, who would usually have been expected to help source a suitable and established translator. Chambers harboured some reservations as to Jacobs' linguistic proficiency: Jacobs had only very recently started to learn Norwegian and although he was a well-published author as a science academic and scholar, he did not have the proven experience of writing literary English, which Chambers usually expected as a matter of basic principle. Chambers took nonetheless the unusually bold step to proceed without a Norwegian language consultant and to use the Jacobs translation with relatively little knowledge of the translator or his abilities. Given the care Chambers had taken over his three Swedish translations and over finding

suitable translators, this decision can be viewed as rather more impulsive than his customary measured editorial approach, but was encouraged by Haugen's Norwegian editor, with whom Chambers was in regular phone and letter contact.

With the benefit of hindsight, Chambers did feel he “could have done a better job” on *Zeppelin*.<sup>41</sup> Although Chambers had already realized that considerable editorial input was needed for this particular title due to the challenging form and content of the novel, it became clear quickly during the editorial phases of his work that the quality of the translation was not up to the stringent and meticulous standard of other Turton & Chambers translated works in other languages. Chambers was at this point keen to take on other Haugen titles and was already considering Jacobs' translations provided again by Gyldendal Norsk. He entered into an intense correspondence with Haugen's Norwegian editor. As a result, Jacobs' translations were assessed by an independent and experienced Norwegian translator (recommended by Gyldendal), who expressed reservations as to Jacobs' linguistic abilities. This encompassed both Jacobs' understanding of the Norwegian source text as well as his ability to write in English. Chambers was tasked with the difficult job of writing to Jacobs and pointing out the editorial problems that he was experiencing.<sup>42</sup> He went to considerable pains to explain the boundary between acceptable levels of editing of translated literature, particularly the precise point at which the sheer amount of additional editorial work required in effect demonstrated “that the translator isn't quite up to the job.”<sup>43</sup>

Acutely apparent from problems encountered during the *Zeppelin* translation project was Chambers' own realisation of the importance of the role of a competent and knowledgeable language consultant to the editor. Working for the first time in Turton & Chambers with an inexperienced translator led Chambers to recognise “how valuable are skilled, reliable, highly professional translators like Anthea [Bell] and Laurie [Thompson].”<sup>44</sup> This one-off experimental strategy of using a translator without a language consultant had not been actively formulated and the reasons behind it are not fully apparent from the surviving editorial files. The strategy's practical implementation can nevertheless be demonstrated through use of the available and detailed primary sources. This experiment of Chambers' emerges here as an

unsuccessful and unhappy exception to the usually productive working practice of using language consultants.

## **Translation Strategies at Turton & Chambers: A Positive or Negative Editorial Experience?**

Chambers proved unable to put these problematic experiences with *Zeppelin* to practical purpose once more, by ensuring that language consultants were used for all future commissioned Turton & Chambers translations. The press at that moment in time was pursuing, through Chambers himself, a wide number of potential authors and texts for selection and publication as the press became more established. New translations in languages other than Nordic as well as plans for some reprints were already underway. Chambers was nonetheless increasingly struggling to balance his editorial responsibilities and obligations with his own writing and educational projects. The initial plan to appoint an assistant editor after three years had not materialized<sup>45</sup> and Chambers had also taken on all UK distribution, publicity and promotion from Turton, which was not part of their original agreement. It was with considerable reluctance and in full consultation with co-owner David Turton that Chambers made the decision to wind up the press in 1993.<sup>46</sup>

This decision had inevitably damaging implications for the publication of Nordic children's literature in translation in the United Kingdom, where little other investment was being put into translations of new Nordic titles as alternatives to long-established Scandinavian favourites such as the *Moomins*, *Mrs Pepperpot* or popular Astrid Lindgren titles such as *Pippi Longstocking*.<sup>47</sup> Some general conclusions can nevertheless be drawn here as to the advantages and disadvantages of Chambers' innovative translation strategy for language consultants at Turton & Chambers from the viewpoint of the editor. The role of the editor within the publishing process was fundamental to bringing new translations to juvenile British audiences during this period, so a fuller understanding of Chambers' innovative editorial working practices and their success (or otherwise) is beneficial.

Chambers' strategy of using original language consultants was an unusual one, not encountered elsewhere in other Nordic-British children's literature for the period 1950–2000, as Berry has demonstrated.<sup>48</sup> The strategy stemmed partly

from entirely practical considerations based on Chambers' wish to be as fully involved in the editorial process for translated texts as for works written in his native English. As this was not possible due to his own linguistic limitations, Chambers was able to turn instead to his wide network of European contacts with authors and translators, editors and publishers, educators, librarians and other professionals equally dedicated to providing challenging literary and modernist reading for a juvenile audience. It was a natural step then to approach these contacts to ask for recommendations for suitable authors and texts, as well as for specialists and experts in specific European languages. Some of these language experts became translators, some were appointed as consultants to work in a sub-editorial capacity with Chambers as lead editor, and some were able to fulfil both functions.

Many of the decisions that Chambers made as to which individual took on which role at which stage for a specific work were entirely arbitrary or coincidental. He did not seek recommendations from established centres of expertise such as British universities teaching Scandinavian languages, from UK-based Scandinavian cultural institutions or from the Swedish or Norwegian editors of his selected Nordic authors (as had often previously been the case with other British publishers). He preferred instead to work from within his own field of contacts in which he felt already established through his own professional standing as an author, editor and educator. Tate was known to Chambers as a trusted mentor, fellow author and long-established and prolific Nordic translator. Thompson was brought in by personal recommendation as a friend of a friend. Swedish language consultant Katarina Kuick was a friend of Chambers (initially as a writer of fan-mail and as a Swedish-based admirer of Chambers' own authorship). Kuick's intensely methodical and detailed way of working on a text (particularly for Pohl and Thompson) suited Chambers' editorial preference for balancing domestication with overall tone and style within novels written in forms that were both innovative and radical to a British reading audience.

*Zeppelin* and its translator Jacobs prove the sole exception to the Turton & Chambers' rule of using Nordic language consultants in the absence of a particularly trusted translator (Chambers was sufficiently confident in the abilities of Althea Bell for her to act both as consultant and translator for the French and German titles). Perhaps Chambers had hoped

to speed up the editorial process by using an existing translation, as had already proved so successful with Joan Tate and *A Way from Home*. However, acting against his editorial experiences and instincts proved an expensive and time-consuming mistake. It is perhaps surprising in the circumstances and given Chambers' usual reticence as a monolingual editor to be so exclusively held within the "power" of the translator that he did not ask Haugen's own Norwegian editor or other contacts within Scandinavia/UK for a recommendation for a Norwegian language consultant right from the outset of the project: indeed, one was only brought in when an essentially linguistic crisis point had been reached within Chambers' own editorial work on *Zeppelin*.

It is considered unlikely that editors at many other British publishing houses would have had similar freedom to experiment with using language consultants in addition to translators, or to choose to alter existing successful translator strategies in favour of a new approach. Other publishing case studies identified by Berry within the juvenile Nordic-British translation context feature children's editors primarily working on a monolingual basis, where translation formed an extremely small part of their overall lists. The expense of commissioning a translator and the additional factor of possibly reduced sales of a non-British title would need to be covered or subsidised by publishing successes elsewhere in their lists, so decisions to take on a Nordic author were taken only in conjunction with the firm's senior editorial staff or directors. Second titles would only be taken on if the first was sufficiently popular to predict good subsequent sales.

Chambers, in contrast, enjoyed unusual autonomy in his editorial and directorial capacity at the press. He had absolute editorial freedom in the selection of text, author, translator and illustrator although he was able to (and did) discuss these elements on a regular basis with co-owner David Turton and other key contacts. Even more unusually, he was able to exercise this creative licence without redress to considerations of economic viability which by the late 1980s and early 1990s were becoming a major factor in text and author selection across much of the rest of the British publishing industry. British editors in other firms could research and recommend potential texts for translation and publication, but by this period they usually needed additional sign-off from sales and marketing colleagues who were conscious

of ever tightening competition within a globalising publishing industry. Chambers was able to operate instead within a relatively time-rich environment, working at his own pace and speed and largely without the often-pressurized schedules necessary at larger publishing houses, who needed to work to tight editorial schedules in order to meet complex production, distribution and promotional targets across a range of children's series, audiences and global markets.

A number of factors combined to result in the winding up of Turton & Chambers. The small output of the press, its lengthy editorial procedures and its limited administrative, promotional and distributional capacity eventually made the press too small to operate successfully in a quickly changing and increasingly global publishing landscape. This had the unfortunate and unforeseen consequence of rendering the most distinctive, innovative and noteworthy elements of Chambers' particular editorial practice and emerging house-style counterproductive and economically impractical. Chambers' ability to handpick all agents involved within the publishing process and to control all aspects of production to the finest degree is undoubtedly the most appealing characteristic of the press's operation, which he established successfully over a very short period of time. The procedures and strategies that he developed resulted in a very superior level of translational output, and one which is worthy of further detailed analysis across the full range of languages (including French, German and Dutch), as well as the press's small list of English-language titles.

It remains, however, a matter for future debate as to whether a press producing similarly high quality children's translations within a larger and more established economic, promotional and distributive base would have survived and additionally flourished in similar circumstances. In the twenty or so years since the winding up of Turton & Chambers as a publishing concern, small British independent houses such as Hawthorn Press, Floris Books, Walker Books and Pushkin Children's Books have been successfully translating international children's literature to great acclaim, alongside global British-based imprints such as Bloomsbury, Andersen Press, Oxford University Press, Hodder and Orion. Additional research into the editorial practices within both these small and large firms is therefore welcome in order

to assess recent trends for publishing translations to a profitable and sustainable degree over the last thirty years or so.

## **Conclusion and Future Avenues for Research**

This article has sought to reconstruct and present a publishing history of the Nordic translations for children at Turton & Chambers, 1988–92. A wide range of bibliographical sources as well as archival and oral history sources have been used in combination to reveal both Toury’s preliminary and operational norms present within the selected case study. Many elements of the press’s establishment, its founding principles and its editorial practices are unusual and innovative when compared to working practices encountered in other publishing houses producing Nordic children’s literature in British translation during this period. These include the private funding of the press and the resulting freedom and autonomy of its editor, as well as Chambers’ strongly held views on the need to bring innovative European children’s literature to British audiences and his experimentation with a new editorial practice and translation strategy through his use of language consultants in addition to translators. Although the press proved regrettably short-lived in its period of operation, its combination of vision, innovation and energy make it a worthy candidate for extensive academic study, and additional scholarship in this area would add to the relatively underdeveloped work already available around the publishing history of modern British children’s literature.

It is hoped that the research methodology used within this article can be utilized in a similar manner by others in order to explore the history and context of translated literature in a wide variety of language combinations at the micro-level of analysis, which is possible through rigorous interrogation of bibliographical, archival and oral history primary sources. Although the editorial method of using language consultants alongside translators has been fully addressed within this article, no attempt has been made to undertake a rigorous analysis of the actual translation strategies used across the four Nordic titles (i.e. operational norms): this research would considerably help understand the decision-making processes and the way in which editor, translator and consultant navigated their way towards the final published translation. Another strand for research would be a similar analysis of the Dutch, French and German translations published by Turton & Chambers.

In both cases, the comprehensive archive held at Seven Stories is available to underpin future investigations into preliminary and operational norms. Such research would be welcome as it would add significantly to the modest levels of scholarship that specifically address the twentieth-century history of children's literature translation studies in the UK. There are undoubtedly rich seams of research material to be found within British archives and elsewhere for those who are willing to seek them out.

Charlotte Berry read English Language and Danish at the University of Edinburgh and then trained as an archivist at the University of Wales Aberystwyth. She uses archival sources extensively in her research into twentieth-century British and Nordic publishing and translation history. She completed a part-time PhD at the University of Edinburgh in 2013, entitled "Publishing, Translation, Archives: Nordic Children's Literature in the United Kingdom, 1950–2000." She is currently College Archivist at Magdalen College (University of Oxford), a Board member of the Archives and Records Association UK and Ireland and co-editor of the ARA's journal *Archives and Records*. She is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London, a registered archivist and an Associate member of the Museums Association.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This article is based on Chapter Five of Charlotte Berry, "Publishing, Translation, Archives: Nordic Children's Literature in the United Kingdom, 1950–2000" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2013). This dissertation chapter is the first of two publisher case studies (Turton & Chambers and Oxford University Press) and draws on and quotes extensively from unpublished archival sources, for which there is unfortunately not room within this subsequent shorter article. Many thanks to Aidan Chambers for permission to publish quotes from unpublished archival sources held in British copyright and to Seven Stories, Newcastle, England, for permission to publish from the Aidan Chambers and Nancy Chambers Collection. Thanks also to Dr Sharon Deane-Cox, University of Strathclyde, for translating the abstract into French.

<sup>2</sup> Charlotte Berry, "Fits and Starts': Chatto & Windus and their British Translations of Maria Gripe," in *Beyond Borealism: New Perspectives on the North*, ed. Ian Giles, Laura Chapot, Christian Coijmans, Ryan Foster, and Barbara Tesio (London: Norvik Press, 2016), 172–91; Charlotte Berry, "Keeping the 'Spirit of the Text': A Publishing and Translation History Case Study of Nils-Olof Franzén's Detective Series *Agaton Sax*," *Barnlitteraturforskning*, 39 (2016): 1–25.

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<sup>3</sup> Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995), 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>6</sup> Gideon Toury, “The Nature and Role of Norms in Translation,” in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (London: Routledge, 2000), 202.

<sup>7</sup> Rainer Grutman, “A Sociological Glance at Self-Translation and Self-Translators,” in *Self-Translation: Brokering Originality in Hybrid Culture*, ed. Anthony Cordingley (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 64.

<sup>8</sup> Jan Hokenson, “History and the Self-Translator,” in *Self-Translation: Brokering Originality in Hybrid Culture*, ed. Anthony Cordingley (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 44.

<sup>9</sup> Helen Frank, *Cultural Encounters in Translated Children’s Literature: Images of Australia in French Translation* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2007); Mieke Desmet, *Babysitting the Reader: Translating English Narrative Fiction for Girls into Dutch* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007); Gaby Thomson-Wohlgemuth, *Translation under State Control: Books for Young People in the Germany Democratic Republic* (London: Routledge, 2009); Berry, “Publishing.”

<sup>10</sup> André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>11</sup> Sara Van Meerbergen, “Nederländska bilderböcker blir svenska: en multimodal översättningsanalys” (PhD diss., Stockholm University, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> Berry, “Publishing,” 168. It is not uncommon for very few or no editorial files to be retained at all. For example, no children’s editorial files of any type survive that relate to one of the two biggest publishers of Nordic children’s literature in translation (Hodder & Staughton), 178–80.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter Two.

<sup>14</sup> Van Meerbergen, “Nederländska Bilderböcker,” 221.

<sup>15</sup> Berry, “Publishing,” 112–5.

<sup>16</sup> This is the professional opinion of the author, who has worked with a wide range of publishing and literary collections during her career as a qualified and registered British archivist. The Chambers Collection was deposited at Seven Stories, the National Centre for Children’s Literature in Newcastle, England, in 2016, having been previously located at Aberystwyth University and the University of Reading. The Centre collects a comprehensive range of modern British children’s literature archives, but none, to the author’s knowledge, that to date comprehensively encompasses the area of children’s literature in translation.

<sup>17</sup> Berry, “Publishing,” 414.

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<sup>18</sup> Charlotte Berry, “Unicorns and Witches: The Forgotten World of Irmelin Sandman Lilius,” *Swedish Book Review* 2013/2014 (2013/2014): 40–42, for the fantasy genre; see also Berry, “Keeping,” for the detective and mystery story genre.

<sup>19</sup> Betty Greenway, *Aidan Chambers: Master Literary Choreographer* (Lanham: Scarecrow, 2006), viii.

<sup>20</sup> Lucy Pearson, “The Making of Modern Children’s Literature: Quality and Ideology in British Children’s Publishing in the 1960s and 1970s” (PhD diss., University of Newcastle, 2010).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>22</sup> Pam Harwood, review of *Reading Talk*, by Aidan Chambers, *Books for Keeps* 133 (March 2002), <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/133/childrens-books/reviews/reading-talk>.

<sup>23</sup> Aidan Chambers, *Stories in Translation: A Penguin Booklist* (London: Penguin, 1993); Aidan Chambers, “In Spite of Being a Translation,” in *Reading Talk*, ed. Aidan Chambers (Stroud: Thimble, 1995), 113–37; Aidan Chambers, “Something Zeppelin,” in *Reading Talk*, ed. Aidan Chambers (Stroud: Thimble, 1995), 138–56.

<sup>24</sup> Chambers, “In Spite,” 118.

<sup>25</sup> Berry, “Publishing,” 245 (see Footnote 32).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 246 (see Footnote 36) and Appendix Four (for full Publishing Policy).

<sup>27</sup> Aidan Chambers, interview by Charlotte Berry, 1 May 2011.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> For example, a Swedish expert was brought in to assess the Maria Gripe translations commissioned for Chatto & Windus in co-edition with Seymour Lawrence. See Berry, “Fits and Starts,” 172–91.

<sup>30</sup> Chambers, “In Spite,” 124.

<sup>31</sup> Chambers, “Something Zeppelin,” 126.

<sup>32</sup> Chambers, interview.

<sup>33</sup> Chambers, “In Spite,” 128.

<sup>34</sup> Galley proofs for *Johnny, My Friend*, undated, box WW, Aidan Chambers and Nancy Chambers Collection, Seven Stories: The National Centre for Children’s Literature, Newcastle, UK.

<sup>35</sup> Berry, “Publishing,” 271.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

<sup>38</sup> Full details available in Chambers, “In Spite,” 113–37.

<sup>39</sup> Full details available in Chambers, “Something Zeppelin,” 138–56.

<sup>40</sup> Berry, “Publishing,” 278–9.

<sup>41</sup> Chambers, interview.

<sup>42</sup> Letter, Aidan Chambers to David Jacobs, 2 January 1991, box TT, envelope 2 of 2, Aidan Chambers and Nancy Chambers Collection, Seven Stories: The National Centre for Children’s Literature, Newcastle, UK.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Monthly reports to Australia, Aidan Chambers to David Turton, November 1990, box RR, file one, Aidan Chambers and Nancy Chambers Collection, Seven Stories: The National Centre for Children’s Literature, Newcastle, UK.

<sup>45</sup> Berry, “Publishing,” 287.

<sup>46</sup> The Press continued its sales activities until 1995, but took on no new publishing after 1992.

<sup>47</sup> It is outside the remit of this article to consider fully the state of British translations for children during the 1990s, but it can be pointed out briefly here that Chambers felt strongly at the time (and still does) that a new model of publishing was required for success in this part of the children’s fiction industry, one that has the editorial, promotional and sales resource of a large publisher. See Berry, “Publishing,” 290.

<sup>48</sup> The author would welcome notification of use of this particular translation strategy for any other language combination, period and/or genre.

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