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## Keeping “the Spirit of the Text”

### A Publishing and Translation History Case Study of Nils-Olof Franzén’s Detective Series *Agaton Sax*

*Abstract: This article reconstructs a publishing history of 20th century Nordic-British translated children’s literature, that of the Agaton Sax detective series published by André Deutsch, London, 1965–1978. The methodology of Gideon Toury’s Descriptive Translation Studies forms the theoretical framework in order to identify preliminary translation norms. Bibliographical data, editorial files and personal contact with the editor and illustrator provide the prerequisite material needed for revealing how a British publisher found and translated the series. This article demonstrates how an innovative publishing model created the most successful Nordic detective series for children in British English. Factors found to be crucial to the success of this series in the United Kingdom are the “series factor” and its good fit with Deutsch’s existing children’s list as well as the adopted translation strategy of balancing the “spirit of the text” with the needs of a British readership. Key preliminary norms identified include self-translation by the author of most of the series and the unusual supplementary role of editor Pamela Royds as a second translator. Equally significant is the extensive self-adaptation and writing in English of the eighth and ninth titles of the series respectively by the author. Bibliographical research has not revealed any other instances of self-translation, self-adaptation, new writing and use of second translators within this Nordic-British corpus (1950–2000) and it is likely that this publishing model is rare if not unique within modern translated children’s literature in the UK.*

**Keywords:** publishing history, book editors, children’s literature, translation history, descriptive translation studies, preliminary norms, self-translation, Nils-Olof Franzén, *Agaton Sax*, detective fiction

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This article reconstructs the publishing history and translation back-story of the children's detective series *Agaton Sax*.<sup>1</sup> This successful venture of André Deutsch during the 1960s and 1970s combined self-translation and self-adaptation in a unique collaboration between a Swedish author and a British editor. It also resulted in the longest and most re-issued detective/mystery series in the history of Nordic children's literature in British translation for the period 1950–2000.

This case study is intriguingly unusual within the corpus of British publications of Nordic children's literature during this period, where no other instances of self-translation or self-adaptation have been identified (Berry, "Publishing"). Not only did author Nils-Olof Franzén take an unusually pro-active role in discussing the planned output of his work at Deutsch, he personally took on the English translation of the second to seventh titles, re-wrote large parts of the eighth for a British audience and wrote the ninth and last title first in English. His editor Pamela Royds was employed as a second translator and was responsible for retaining the "spirit of the text" as well as rendering it palatable to a British readership. This occurrence both of the author's contribution as a translator and adaptor and also the regular role of the editor as a second translator are to date unprecedented within the Nordic-British English translated corpus for children during the period 1950–2000. The full extent of this case study's innovative and unusual characteristics therefore merits a comprehensive exploration.

This research utilises an approach to the history of translation based on making use of modern publishing archives, oral history sources and networking contacts. This methodology delivers a full narrative of the publishing history of Franzén's series, with particular emphasis on text selection, self- and collaborative translation/adaptation and the role of the editor.

## Theoretical approaches to reconstructing a translation history

The work of translation scholar Gideon Toury to develop the concept of translation norms within Descriptive Translation Studies is key to the methodology utilised throughout this case study and provides a useful framework for examining the multi-faceted conditions within which (children's literature) translation occurs. The principal aim of this particular branch of translation studies is focused on "describing, explaining and predicting phenomena" and the very establishment of Descriptive Translation Studies is viewed by Toury as prerequisite to the status of the discipline of translation studies as

an empirical science (*Descriptive* 1). Furthermore, he regards translation as an activity inevitably subjected to “constraints of several types and varying degree” and terms these socio-cultural constraints which determine behaviour within translation as “norms” (54).

These translational norms operate in all translations throughout the translating process on every level. Toury identifies two specific types of norm: preliminary norms relating to so-called “translation policy” and the directness of translation, and operational norms relating to “the decisions made during the act of translation itself” (58). Preliminary norms are the focus of this case study, in particular the part of Toury’s model of analysis which identifies factors that dictate text selection within a particular language in a particular point in time (“The Nature” 202). Some attention is also given to translation strategies and operational norms but these do not form the focal point of the case study: much analysis remains to be done in this area.

This concentration on the preliminary norms identified with issues of text selection and translation policy helps to direct attention towards the role of literary agents rather than towards the text itself (Grutman 64). This is achieved by facilitating a wider perspective where primary sources are used “to trace the movement of cultural products” (Cordingley 4) and by concentrating on the “why” – rather than the more traditionally addressed questions of “what” and “how” – of translation (Hokenson). At this point, micro-analysis of strategies used within the translation(s) in question can optionally be added in order to analyse operational norms, but (as Toury envisaged) with the noted advantage of a firmer understanding of the multi-faceted decision-making processes and power dynamics which together make up the publishing mechanisms of translation.

The methodology utilised within this case study is two-pronged and both stages have the aim of identifying the preliminary norms in operation within the translation activity. Firstly, a wider context of the publishing context within which the translation takes place is set through detailed bibliographical analysis. This stage of the research enables analysis of a selected translation activity to be placed from the outset into a wider historical and socio-cultural context and into a particular period in publishing history in which firms, editors, authors, translators, illustrators and other agents all operate.

Secondly, a wide combination of primary sources are assembled in order to understand the decision-making processes taking place within editorial activity for this particular case study. The identification and analysis of these primary sources unveil the voice of the translator, editor and other cultural agents in ways not otherwise

possible via other research techniques when looking back at translation activity over several decades, often beyond living memory. Through accessing historical editorial files and through also conducting current-day interviews and correspondence (if available), it becomes possible to understand in detail all aspects of the editorial role governing the translation publishing process. The initial readers' reports and letters discussing text, translator and illustrator selection have considerable evidential value, particularly given that translation drafts are typically not retained within British publishing firms and their surviving archives.

Intensive and recent bibliographical research (Desmet; Van Meerbergen; Berry, "Publishing") positioned within Toury's model is adding to the delineation and identification of corpora of translated children's literature, taking "a step in the direction of filling in the gap in the knowledge of literary production" (Desmet 21). This collation and analysis of bibliographical data permits (often for the first time) understanding of the precise scope and extent of translations occurring between different language combinations. These scholars also make use of primary sources such as interviews and archives to define and interpret norms operating at different levels within the publishing industry. Following Thomson-Wohlgemuth's model of regarding archives as epitexts, I emphasize macro-scale levels of analysis within the selected corpus, Nordic-British children's literature (1950–2000), utilising a variety of sources in order to build a full picture of the literary system, its agents and its manipulation and rewriting of texts through translation (see Lefevere). As used by Van Meerbergen, archival sources are supplemented with oral history interviews and interactions with surviving agents (e.g. authors, literary estate heirs, editors, illustrators and translators) and as such build on the literary and historical work of Lathey in reconstructing histories of children's literature in British translation within a mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century context. In the author's view, this type of methodology focusing particularly on preliminary norms has not yet generated an intensity of scholarship within the Nordic-British translated children's literature context which is proportionate to the extant archival sources applicable to this area of research. This article seeks to start to redress the balance.

### **The place of Deutsch within translated Nordic children's literature in British translation**

Before issues such as text selection and the collaboration between author, translator and editor can be explored in detail, it is impor-

tant first to be able to reach some understanding of the significance of British publisher Deutsch, its contribution to producing Nordic children's literature in translation and its broader publishing interests. My bibliographical analysis in 2013 of the *British National Bibliography* ("Publishing" 112) enables Deutsch's role here in publishing Nordic children's literature in British translation to be viewed in this crucial wider context. This followed similar collation and analysis of bibliographical data for corpora of translated children's literature by Desmet and Van Meerbergen. This work enabled the corpus of Nordic children's literature in British translation to be constructed for the first time and so enabled basic understanding of the size and diversity of the corpus occurring "at a certain moment in time in a certain sociocultural context" (Van Meerbergen 221) to be reached. This data constitutes the first batch of Toury's preliminary norms. I identified 568 Swedish children's translations published in the UK between 1950 and 2000, out of a wider Nordic corpus of 778 entries (including reprints). The most active publisher of Nordic children's literature during this period was undoubtedly Methuen who was responsible for over one-sixth of the total corpus, leading Puffin/Penguin and Hodder & Stoughton by a large margin and then Oxford University Press, Floris Books, J M Dent and A & C Black, the latter which published some 20 titles apiece.

André Deutsch falls into the next rank alongside Welsh-language press Gwasg y Dref Wen, Burke Publishing and Chatto & Windus who all published Nordic titles within the teen figures. The Deutsch representation within the wider translated corpus is consequently not insignificant, although the publishing house was clearly not a frontrunner of translated Nordic children's literature during the period 1950–2000.

However, the significance of the Deutsch case study is supplemented by the fact that the *Agaton Sax* series was immensely popular throughout its lifespan and remains hard to purchase on the second-hand book market over fifty years later. As will be seen later, the books generated several episodes of a popular British children's television series and helped to establish the reputation of British illustrator Quentin Blake. The series was also partly re-issued in a paperback edition, again an indicator of its success since the vast majority of Nordic-translated titles in the UK during the period 1950–2000 only reached one edition (Berry, "Publishing" 119).

Key to the choice of this series for this particular case study is that the historic archive of André Deutsch's publishing house remains fully preserved at the University of Tulsa. As I have already indicated ("Publishing"), archives of publishing houses in the UK during

the 1950–2000 period have an extremely unpredictable and patchy survival rate (like the majority of British business archives). The archives for the most active publishers in translated Nordic children’s fiction at this time (Methuen, Hodder, Black, Puffin, Dent, OUP) either no longer exist or are significantly incomplete in terms of surviving editorial files. Within this context, the preservation of the Deutsch collection in the USA cannot be underestimated as it makes available a veritable treasure-trove of research data which sheds new light on the editorial and translation history of one of Scandinavia’s children’s literature exports to the UK, the *Agaton Sax* detective series. How did a British publishing house with little prior interest in children’s translation come to take up the option of the series? And given the highly innovative and unusual translation methods developed (with the author as first translator and the British editor as second translator), how did Franzén and Royds collaborate in practice?

### Children’s literature at André Deutsch

André Deutsch (1917–2000) founded André Deutsch Ltd at Great Russell Street, London, in 1951, where his list of authors would later include Laurie Lee, John Updike, V S Naipaul and Jack Kerouac. As Burnett observes in his obituary, “André Deutsch was a classic example of an almost extinct breed – the small, independent publisher whose business was driven by his personal enthusiasm for the books he published and whose identity was almost inextricably bound up with that of his company”.

Children’s books were published from the early days of the firm’s history, notably the *Madeline* picture book series (1950s–1990s) by friend and fellow Austro-Hungarian émigré Ludwig Bemelmans. Today the firm is best remembered as the publisher of British children’s writers Jan Needle, Rosemary Sutcliffe and Ruth Ainsworth. Author Philippa Pearce (1920–2006) was appointed as the firm’s first Children’s Editor in 1960 and remained at Deutsch until her departure in 1967 (Nettell), with an editorial remit of building up a “good fiction series” (Royds, “Re Agaton” 26 Nov. 2010). Pearce had published her Carnegie Medal winner *Tom’s Midnight Garden* in 1959 and had also been a script writer at the BBC and editor at Clarendon Press.

Pamela Royds joined the firm shortly after Pearce and took over Deutsch’s juvenile list as Children’s Editor for six months during Pearce’s maternity leave and departure. Royds remained at the firm until she transferred with the children’s list to Scholastic Children’s in the 1980s and remained there for ten years until she retired. By the

time of Royds' arrival, the *Agaton Sax* series of children's books was newly established on the Deutsch children's list, with the first title *Agaton Sax and the Diamond Thieves* appearing in 1965.

### Nils-Olof Franzén and the *Agaton Sax* "series factor"

Franzén (1916–1997) is known today as a prolific fiction author of historical novels and children's literature, with success with adventure stories ranging from historical to modern, from genre art to pure farce (Toijer-Nilsson 40). He worked at the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation from 1940, becoming Director of Radio (1956–1973), and had interests in music history, translation and literature.

The *Agaton Sax* series was a hit in Sweden by the time it arrived on Pearce's desk at Deutsch. The character's name was based on that of Franzén's literary hero Agatha Christie (Kimmel, "Re Agaton" 23 Mar. 2015). Franzén partly modelled the series' characters on British crime figures such as Sherlock Holmes and Inspector Lestrade, used the UK as a frequent setting for the novels and established close links between Sax and Scotland Yard. By the time the *Agaton Sax* series was published in England, six Swedish titles were completed and a seventh appeared in 1965. Three titles came out between 1966 and 1970.

The *Agaton Sax* series was an excellent fit with the criteria for a new Deutsch children's list as a fiction series which fitted the target age group and had good plot and "feeling" (Royds, "Re Agaton" 26 Nov 2010 and interview). Significantly, mystery stories had a popular established home market in the UK and accounted for 7% of children's translations from the Nordic countries from 1950–2000 (Berry, "Publishing" 131). Although several titles had been published successfully already in Sweden, publishing the first title in the UK was a risk as all new series took time to become established. As Royds remembers, "we tended to publish a book we liked and then stick with the author ... If I liked the manuscript, if it was successful, then we would be happy to do another" (interview).

Two other factors helped to cement the series' long-term British future. Swedish animations of two titles (1972, 1976) were dubbed into English-language versions by famous actor Kenneth Williams. Williams also read two of the series for the popular BBC children's book programme *Jackanory* in 1971 and 1977.<sup>2</sup> Royds remembers that "there is no doubt that it did help all the publishers who got books on *Jackanory*. There was very little television for children except from that" (interview).

The British series was published out of the original Swedish sequence. The final translated volume *Agaton Sax klipper till* (1955) was significantly adapted and re-written by Franzén for the English audience and appeared in 1976 as *Agaton Sax and the Big Rig*. And such was Franzén's interest in the series that he wrote the final volume at the personal request of André Deutsch himself, firstly in English (Kimmel, "Re Agaton" 21 Mar. 2015), and translated it into Swedish for a simultaneous publication in London and Stockholm in 1978 (see fig. 1). The next part of this article will look through the lens of the Deutsch archive in detail at the publishing history of the series.

### The role of the editor in text selection and translation

It is often difficult to establish how a British editor/publisher first came across a title of foreign (children's) literature. Research is necessary in the areas of translation policy, author and text selection in order to identify the second batch of Toury's preliminary norms operational within this particular case study. Thomson-Wohlgemuth and I ("Publishing") both focus our research towards reconstructing understanding of these issues through the identification and analysis of relevant archival sources. This methodology helps to direct attention towards the role of the literary agent and editor in particular (as advocated by Grutman and Lefevere above), as well as towards a better understanding of Hokenson's "why" of translation already noted.

How did the editor become sufficiently familiar with the content and context of a work and its author to be able to make an editorial decision to take out an option for consideration and then formally to commission the title? The British children's literature industry in the 1950s depended heavily on personal recommendation and informal tip offs. As a result, it is not unusual for surviving archive files not to document the first editorial contact but to take up the story later once the connection had been established off-record (see Berry, "Pippi"; Berry, "Moomins").

The case study at Deutsch reflects this scenario and the text selection is undocumented in the editorial files. Royds recalls that her boss Philippa Pearce was sent one of the titles by Scandinavian translator Evelyn Ramsden and that it suited her need for a series for the new Deutsch children's list ("Re Agaton" emails, 26 Nov. 2010 and 15 Sep. 2013). Translator recommendation was a popular method used by British editors who did not have linguistic skills in languages (e.g. OUP's *Fru Sola* series by Irmelin Sandman Lilius, recommended by Hutchinson's *Mrs Peppercot* translator Marianne

Helweg (Berry, "Unicorns") and Pearce and Royds both fell into this category as regards the Swedish language. Ramsden undertook a reader's report on only one of the *Agaton Sax* series before Pearce was sufficiently impressed to commission it immediately as *Agaton Sax and the Diamond Thieves*.

The choice of Ramsden as its translator was a good one as she had already established her reputation as a Scandinavian children's translator with Methuen, then the biggest publisher of foreign children's literature (Berry, "Publishing" 112). *Agaton Sax and the Diamond Thieves* was published by Deutsch in 1965 and Pearce asked Ramsden to undertake reader's reports for the remainder of the series (Ramsden). Unexpectedly Franzén made a work trip to London in 1966 and offered to undertake any further translations himself. As his children remember, "We do not feel that our father was unhappy with the first translation, but we believe that he would have been pleased to do the translations himself, since languages interested him so much" (Kimmel, "Re Agaton" 23 Mar. 2015).

Pearce agreed with the suggestion and wrote to Ramsden to let her know the surprising news which heralded a rare occurrence of self-translation within translated Nordic-British children's literature 1950–2000. The use of author Franzén as the principal series' translator offers an unusual opportunity to explore self-translation as a translation process as part of identifying Toury's preliminary norms and in shedding some light on Grutman's concept of the "agency of the translator" (14).

Royds describes how she took on an editorial-collaborative translation role from the second book onwards until the end of the series and completed the "refurbishing" work in her own time for a separate translation fee (interview). Retaining the "spirit of the text" from the author's formal but basic translation was a priority: as Royds commented at the time in a letter to Franzén, "[Franzén's] meaning is always clear, the only problem is to make the translation fluent, and to insure that the dialogue is really colloquial" (letter 7 Mar. 1967). Franzén travelled regularly to London, at least twice yearly, and was therefore able to work with Royds intensively during these periods (Royds, "Re Agaton" 15 Sep. 2013). He was also able to take part in the promotion on the series, especially for the 1973 launch of Target's paperback issues which Franzén was invited to attend (Royds, letter 6 Jun. 1973). This type of Scandinavian author-translator involvement with a British publisher was exceptionally unusual at the time, with most Scandinavian authors preferring to leave any necessary contacts with the UK to their own home editor (a notable exception

was Astrid Lindgren, herself a children's literature editor in Sweden and consequently a formidable undertaking for all her British editors (Berry, "Pippi"). Although an extra translator was occasionally called in by the editor when problems occurred, the regular employment of a second translator to work systematically on each and every draft was not a regular practice, as publishing houses were generally keen to keep translation costs to a minimum.<sup>3</sup>

### Choosing the illustrator

British children's editors gave careful consideration to illustrations in their translated Nordic titles. Following the precedent set elsewhere in commissioning new British illustrations for translated children's fiction in order to create a strong in-house style,<sup>4</sup> Quentin Blake was selected as the new illustrator of the series as early as May 1964 (Pearce) as Pearce felt "his sense of humour exactly matched the humour in the stories" (Royds, "Re Agaton" 15 Sep. 2013). Blake's illustrative work for children was already known to the British juvenile readership and published by Blackie, Heinemann, Cape, Abelard-Schuman, Faber and Collins although he had not yet started working with Roald Dahl (Blake, *Words*). Nevertheless he had been working consistently within children's literature since his first illustrations appeared in 1960 (in John Yeoman's *A Drink of Water*), and was at that time known for his weekly *Punch* front covers, his work for the *Spectator* and his Penguin covers (Blake, *Words* 20, 118).

As Royds comments, "Agaton Sax [did not] establish his reputation in children's literature but [...] built on it" ("Re Agaton" 15 Sep. 2013): Blake agrees that the illustrations probably added positively to the success of the books and their later adaptation for *Jackanory* ("Re Agaton"). Blake illustrated each of the Deutsch's *Agaton Sax* titles for Royds, as well as some of Michael Rosen's early books. Blake's interpretations of *Agaton Sax* were unquestionably more humorous, quirky, fluid and free in style to those of Lewerth which he had already been sent (Blake, "Re Agaton"). His first commission for Royds was 20 line drawings for the first title in May 1964 and he took on a larger role as the series became more successful, requesting and receiving a pay rise based on its profitability (Blake, letter 23 Oct. 1969). Blake also became involved in the publicity for *Agaton Sax and the League of Silent Exploders* (1974), attending the Deutsch stand and doing drawings on the spot at Heffers' Bookshop in Cambridge in autumn 1973 where the paperback Target editions "sold like hot cakes" (Royds, letter 16 Nov. 1973).

## Author and editorial collaboration

Editorial files reveal the innermost workings and steps of the often intense partnership between author, editor and (in this case study) translator, to a level of detail and precision that oral reminiscence in later years cannot hope to replicate. Yet precisely this level of detail and precision is required in order to identify Toury's preliminary norms for the *Agaton Sax* series. As Thomson-Wohlgemuth comments, archival sources can "reveal a fascinating picture of the processes, strategies and conditions around the translation and production of children's books" (41). The editorial files for the *Agaton Sax* series at Deutsch prove no exception: they provide a blow-by-blow account of the working methods, decision-making and often protracted timescales involved in bringing a translation to launch.

Royds took a very proactive role in working with her author-translator. Mindful that foreign titles had already been through a rigorous editorial process in their home country, British editors usually kept discussions with their chosen translators to a minimum and often had little contact with the author's editor abroad. As a result, it was uncommon (although not unheard of)<sup>5</sup> for a Scandinavian children's author-translator to collaborate so extensively with their British editor. Franzén and Royds worked unusually rigorously on the British version of the *Agaton Sax* series. With the protracted exception of Franzén's first translated volume, the translation and editorial processes typically took between eighteen months and two years before publication, with the next five titles appearing annually on the same translation model.

According to Royds, Franzén himself suggested the next title for inclusion in the series in the UK and enjoyed taking a pro-active role in discussing the publication order (interview). In 1972, Franzén was actively considering extending the series, given the popularity of the four part animated Swedish TV series of *Agaton Sax and the Max Brothers* then broadcasting. He initially proposed two titles (letter 25 Mar. 1972) and discussed these with Royds over a six month period (letter 8 Oct. 1972), before later substantially adapting one of these from the Swedish original and writing the last book of the series entirely in English.

The editorial correspondence shows a variety of working methods. Initially, it seems that Franzén sent his translation double-spaced in short chunks, Royds revised by hand and sent the copy back, and Franzén then retyped a final draft with her corrections and amendments (letter 27 Feb. 1967). On most subsequent occasions, he completed most of his translation in one block before sending it to Royds

for her translation and editorial input (letter 30 Oct. 1968). As Franzén commented in 1967 on *Agaton Sax and the Scotland Yard Mystery*, he found this creative experience of translating his own work more enjoyable than actually writing it (letter 27 Feb. 1967) and he was hugely admiring and appreciative of Royds' skill and contribution throughout their collaboration.

### Translation strategies for preserving “the spirit of the text”

Often the decision-making and strategies undertaken by a translator can remain a tantalisingly invisible process. The work of Van Meerbergen gives some indication of the full extent of this type of analysis of operational norms. As this case study focuses on preliminary norms, a similarly detailed analysis of translation strategies is not attempted in this article: here only a flavour of the potential research material available is given in order to highlight possible areas of research activity within the Nordic-British children's literature setting. As already discussed, the study of editorial files can help to add new dimensions to the understanding of the translation activities. This is particularly significant in the case of Deutsch, where the translation drafts do not survive.

The most frequent topic in Royds and Franzén's regular correspondence was undoubtedly adhering to the original “spirit of the text”, a phrase which Royds coined in 1967. They were both keen to keep the language close to the original source where possible, but to also take a proactively flexible approach to ensure the English translation worked for the British juvenile audience with which Royds was so familiar. Readability, fluency, idioms and colloquial dialogue remained constant priorities throughout their collaboration on the series and were minutely discussed on a regular basis.

Translating the book titles from Swedish to English often proved challenging. Franzén needed to explain to Royds the cultural specificity of *Agaton Sax och Byköpings gästebud* “which is an allusion to a famous episode in Swedish history, Nyköpings Gästabud, a royal banquet” (letter 5 Oct. 1969). *Agaton Sax and the Criminal Doubles* was used, losing the Swedish reference but signposting the title's popular detective genre, reflecting the compromises which Royds had to take from an editorial perspective in order to render the text attractive to British children unfamiliar with Sweden. Cultural markers could prove difficult in translation, and Royds would suggest alterations, such as inserting Nelson and Trafalgar as historical references and advising on the colour of sailors' uniforms for *Agaton Sax and the*

*Scotland Yard Mystery* (letter 13 Jun. 1967). In the final title, *Agaton Sax and Lisington's Grandfather Clock*, she asked the author for a sketch of the clock so that Blake could accurately pitch the illustrations and so that she could translate the title accurately (letter 15 Apr. 1977).

Puns and word-play were often tricky, such as Franzén's term "intrasslingsnack", a made-up language used in the second title *Agaton Sax and the Scotland Yard Mystery*. Personal names were also discussed in detail, such as the British names for the Rogues' Gallery in the same title which were based on Blake's drawings, but in some ways this was a less problematic area since Franzén often used English names in the original Swedish version. Geography was closely monitored, with Royds advising in minute detail to ensure that the British settings were as authentic as possible. For example, Royds went to considerable trouble to consult a Scottish friend (Anon) to write a detailed response to Franzén's questions about Scottish locations in order to find suitable towns in which to set his heavily revised and rewritten *Agaton Sax klipper till* into *Agaton Sax and the Big Rig* (Franzén, letter 29 Jan. 1975).

The intention of all this collaborative energy, often over long periods, was to produce a final text which was both appealing in terms of plot but also sufficiently familiar in genre and setting to a juvenile British readership: it was in her role as second translator on the series that Royds was best able to fulfil these aspects of her editorial function.

### **Innovation and new models of publishing: self-adaptation and new writing**

The *Agaton Sax* series proved to be one of the best commercial successes of Deutsch's children's list and the British editorial staff were understandably keen to continue the profitable streak. By 1972, Royds and Franzén were actively discussing the continuation of the series, looking at an eighth title. In 1974, *Agaton Sax klipper till* was identified as the most obvious title and the author offered to adapt it (letter 8 Jan. 1974). This was an unusual publishing strategy not found elsewhere within Nordic-British translated children's literature of the same period: within this context of self-adaptation, it is pertinent to raise Grutman's question as to whether (self-)translation is best regarded as "rewriting" and precisely where the boundaries between texts lie (24).

It is clear from the editorial files that the author undertook the vast majority of the adaptation work, and that Royds' contribution was

again in the translation/editorial dimension once the manuscript had been delivered. Franzén sent his manuscript complete in January 1975 (letter 29 Jan. 1975). Royds commented that "AS AND THE BIG RIG is virtually a new book. I feel sure that you told me that you had re-written the plot and kept only the Scottish setting", proposing that the phrase "adapted from" should be used on the copyright page (letter 14 Nov. 1975).

Close comparison of the Swedish and English versions reveals that considerable self-adaptation was carried out, where the original 16 chapters (114 pages) have been revised into ten chapters in the Deutsch edition (126 pages). Although the plot can be loosely traced throughout the early stages of the adaptation (with most of the major plot developments and characters retained), extensive deletion, omission and addition occur throughout in a complex sequence. In particular, the final three chapters are especially altered, presenting the more dramatic and action-filled finale on a Scottish oil rig instead of the original castle setting. Inspector Lisington features prominently (where he is omitted entirely from the Swedish edition) and Aunt Matilda also makes a Scottish appearance (she remains in Sweden entirely in the original).

Company head André Deutsch himself was keen to continue to build on the success of the series and its innovative latest title. With Royds previewing *Agaton Sax and the Big Rig* at the 1976 winter sales' conference as the final title in the series, Deutsch "exploded" and demanded more brand new titles from Franzén, preferably on an annual basis (Royds, letter 12 Jan. 1976). The request from the sales reps was that the setting should be British with Lisington as a major character and Royds' view was that "Lisington, London and Scotland Yard are all good bets" (letter 12 Jan. 1976).

Franzén was flattered, responded enthusiastically to André Deutsch's challenge a few weeks later and was quick to suggest a rough plot. Author and editor fell into their accustomed pattern of collaboration and consultation, with the work for Royds no different than for the previous volumes, and the title was soon completed to their usual stringent standards.

It should be noted that this type of publishing model was not readily accepted by Franzén's Swedish publisher who fought to retain international publishing rights and some level of control over this new and unprecedented partnership. Franzén insisted however that the English version would be published first by Deutsch and this was reluctantly agreed by Bonniers: the Swedish edition appeared

a little later in 1978 (Franzén, letter 19 Dec. 1976). It has not proved possible through archival and bibliographical research to locate any other instances of prior publication in Britain of a title by a Nordic children's author during the period 1950–2000. It appears therefore that this publishing practice is certainly extremely rare if not unique, although other examples may eventually surface as a result of future archival explorations of Nordic-British children's translation.

## Changing editorial priorities at Deutsch

And here the story of the series ends somewhat abruptly. Given the sustained enthusiasm for *Agaton Sax* as demonstrated by author, Children's Editor and company owner over some fifteen years, it remains unclear from the surviving editorial files and from Royds herself as to how and why the publisher's interests in the series ended in this way. The series was on a British roll of success and a higher media profile was likely following the beginning of Blake's own illustrative collaboration with Roald Dahl at precisely this period (Alderson).

One untranslated Swedish title remained, namely *Agaton Sax och de okontanta miljardärerna* (1967). However, as Franzén commented towards the end of the series and before Deutsch's commissioning of new title *Agaton Sax and Lispington's Grandfather Clock* (1978), "there is one Swedish title that I have not offered you; I remember saying to you a couple of years ago that I was not quite happy with that one" (letter 19 Dec. 1976). Further detail on this omission is not available from the editorial files and one can only speculate as to the reasoning behind this surprising editorial decision.

The huge success of the Swedish translations of *Agaton Sax* did not persuade Royds to take on any translated titles from other children's authors, from Scandinavia or elsewhere. Other publishing houses such as OUP had benefitted hugely in reputation and profits from their gamble with the unknown Swedish newcomer *Pippi Longstocking* in the 1950s and then went on to publish other Scandinavian titles with some success (Berry, "Pippi"; Berry, "Unicorns"). Intriguingly, as Royds recalls, "André [Deutsch] wasn't particularly interested in translations because he was not English. He was looking for good literature" ("Re Agaton" 15 Sep. 2013). The firm was not known for publishing non-English-language books, and the editorial team turned its attention to the safer and less labour-intensive English market.

Despite all its efforts to build a sustainable future by building up popular and well-crafted lists over 30 years, Deutsch followed numerous other well-established London gentleman's publishers into break-up and take-over following Andre Deutsch's retirement in the mid 1980s. The Deutsch children's list (and Royds herself) transferred to Scholastic (Royds, "Re Agaton" 26 Nov. 2010). Given the differing editorial priorities of a new owner house, Scholastic's evident lack of commitment to sustaining and building on public interest in the *Agaton Sax* series and the rapidly changing nature of the publishing industry during this period, it is perhaps unsurprising that the hard-back series was dropped altogether from a British print-run.

The continuing presence of the series on the fringes of the British children's literature corpus endures. It is probable that this is almost entirely due to the added factors of short-lived televised fame on BBC's *Jackanory* (now available online) and to the beneficial associations with illustrator Quentin Blake. Blake achieved international fame during the 1980s and 1990s as the best known illustrator of Roald Dahl and has since become one of the most high-profile British illustrators.

Despite the British series of *Agaton Sax* being fixed at nine titles, the final tally was in all respects a very healthy size for a non-English series within the wider Nordic children's literature corpus in the UK during the period 1950–2000. As such, it stands alongside other established fiction series such as *Kulla-Gulla*, the *Moomins*, *Mrs Pepperpot*, *Aurora*, and Astrid Lindgren's *Bullerby*, *Emil* and *Lotta* series (Berry, "Publishing"). Analysis of the translated Nordic corpus as a whole suggests that the series factor in itself was a more crucial factor in its British publishing success than its mystery and detective genre. According to the *BNB*, only one title, *The One Eyed Bandits*, from Hans Peterson's popular *Hammer and Tongs* detective series was published in the UK, which already had English-language detective and mystery series in ready supply across its juvenile market (e.g. Enid Blyton, *Nancy Drew*, *Hardy Boys*). Only four such Nordic series made the transition into British English translation (the others being Åke Holmberg's *Tam Sventon*, Jens K Holm's *Kim*, Hans Peterson's *Magnus* and *Agaton Sax*). Of this quartet, *Agaton Sax* remains the only such series in which the majority of its titles were translated for the British market and where paperback re-issues were published. It similarly far outstrips the other three series by the final length of its titles when compared to the four, two and five books listed respectively in the *British Library Bibliography*.

## Conclusion

The primary aim of this case study has been to paint a detailed picture of the publishing history of the British translations of *Agaton Sax*. This has revealed for the first time a fuller understanding of the intricate and intensive work undertaken by its editor, translator/author and illustrator within the Deutsch Nordic-British publishing context.

This article continues my work and that of Desmet, Van Meerbergen and Thomson-Wohlgemuth in using the full range of bibliographical, archival and oral history sources available for this particular case study within Toury's Descriptive Translation Studies' framework. This methodological approach around preliminary norms fits in well with addressing Grutman's emphasis of the role of agents within the literary publishing process and responding to Cordingley's interests in how cultural products are created and move around. This research has enabled the identification and analysis of the most significant preliminary translation norms found in the publishing industry and its agents, namely the factors dictating text selection and translation policy. Through micro-level analysis of archival and other primary sources, Toury's preliminary norms can be confidently identified and serve as a useful pre-cursor to other types of translation and publishing history research. Such thorough identification of preliminary norms prepares the way for rigorous analysis of operational norms of the series (Hokenson's "how" of translation) on a more strongly contextualised basis than would otherwise be possible through study of the final published versions of the original and British versions alone.

The first step towards identifying preliminary norms made use of analysis of bibliographical data across the wider Nordic-British corpus (following Desmet; Berry, "Publishing") and revealed that the translated children's literature genre was not a familiar one at Deutsch. But as the format of *Agaton Sax* as a series closely fitted the criteria for Royds' children's list, the series factor was found to be a significant preliminary norm in the eventual longevity of the series at Deutsch and subsequent paperback re-issues.

As Hokenson observes, "[m]otive is not a common rubric in Translation Studies [...]. Yet it is a loss, eliding an important constituent of translation history" (44). In response, a close analysis of Hokenson's "why" of translation factors within this article results in a new understanding of the preliminary norms active within this area of translated children's literature research. In the case of *Agaton Sax*, a reader's recommendation led to the first option on the

series which was followed up by Ramsden translating the first title and Blake being commissioned as illustrator. Franzén's rare offer of self-translation followed.

These historical and contextual dimensions of the *Agaton Sax* case study respond directly to Hokenson's plea to place "the self-translator in his or her specific historic milieu" (39) through analysis of relevant primary sources. Author and editor utilised a combination of creative and practical approaches to make their division of labour work in reality. Franzén was already intimately familiar with his own characters, plots and settings, more so probably than his own Swedish editor who would ordinarily enter into negotiations with potential editors at foreign publishers regarding new translations. Franzén was thus able to take it upon himself to determine the format and structure of the British versions through discussions with Royds, contributing significantly to the publication order of the British versions of the series and the decisions for self-adaptation and new writing for the final two British titles. Through his continued intervention and interest, the *Agaton Sax* series eventually numbered nine titles – this far outnumbered those of other Nordic children's mystery series *Tam Sventon*, *Kim* and *Magnus* published in the UK.

It seems reasonable to conclude that the success of the series was in part directly attributable to editor Royds' unprecedentedly time-heavy input into the translation process itself and the willingness of her employer to pay her twice, once for her translation work and again for her regular editorial input. These two factors also form important preliminary norms as these practices resulted in successful publishing outputs but with implicit high levels of economic investment (it is not clear from the editorial files whether the author received a translation fee). Royds' deep understanding of the requirements and expectations of her own British readership had an impact on the finished product to a degree far in excess of what was common practice elsewhere within the sector at the time. Such editorial practice was uncommon within translated Nordic-British children's literature during this period, as a British editor would not typically be in a position to combine translation and editorial functions for this language combination. Non-Swedish-speaking British editors would usually have to depend entirely on the skills of their translators for selecting titles and authors, and for producing a finished draft text in line with the British editors' expectations. At Deutsch, Royds could take full part in the discussions about text selection for *Agaton Sax* and could shape the text herself at two interlinked stages (second

translation and editing) to incorporate the full range of elements and qualities necessary for a successful British children's book.

Undoubtedly the most important preliminary norms to be identified within the case study are those of self-translation and second translation. No other instances of this model of self-translation have yet been identified within the corpus of translated Nordic children's literature in the UK during the period 1950–2000. Similarly, no other British editor has been found to have effectively undertaken the role of a second translator on a paid (or any other) basis within Nordic children's fiction translation. It is difficult to comment on the significance of this practice identified within a single case study within a broader corpus, but key contributory factors are undoubtedly the willingness of the author to take on the lengthy task of self-translation and the availability of his own editor to provide the additional linguistic work necessary to bring the text up to publishable standard.

Despite little or no experience of commissioning translations, nevertheless successful translation strategies and editorial practices were developed at Deutsch through work on the *Agaton Sax* series. A much-used practice (and a significant norm) was the editorial and author-translator preoccupation with retaining the all important "spirit of the text". This remained a prominent strategy throughout the series, balanced against the mutual desire to create a readable, fluid and idiomatic version of the original suitable for Franzén's young British audience. Issues such as book titles, word play, cultural markers, geographical and personal names have been highlighted in order to identify problem areas of translation which stimulated the most frequent editor-author debate and discussion.

Hokenson sees "self-translating as a means of exploring the relations between two literatures as a new source of original production" (40). Within the context of the publishing history circumstances presented by the primary sources relating to the *Agaton Sax* series, there is every reason to concur positively with this definition: Deutsch's innovative method of original production resulted in a new British English *Agaton Sax* series far in excess of the usual translation parameters. Examples of this particular publishing model are of course best demonstrated in the self-adaptation of *Agaton Sax and the Big Rig* and Franzén's entirely new work *Agaton Sax and Lisington's Grandfather Clock*, written at the personal request of Deutsch himself and published in England before it was published in Sweden. The nature of the closely interwoven collaboration of two professionals on all aspects of editorial and translation elements of the previous six titles

also fits closely with Grutman's view that "the concept of the original in self-translation is far more fluid than in other kinds of translation" (20).

Happily for the purposes of this particular case study, the available archive, oral history and bibliographical sources combine to permit a full reconstruction of the back-story to the translation of the rotund figure of Agaton Sax and his international sleuthing escapades for a British audience over fifty years ago. It is a story of publishing, translation and editorial innovation which remains remarkably alive and vivid to all those with current-day interests in translation, children's literature and publishing history.

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## Figure One

### *Agaton Sax* series in chronological order by British publication

English translation (André Deutsch)	Swedish original (Bonniers)
Agaton Sax and the Diamond Thieves (1965)	Agaton Sax och de slipade diamanttjuvarna (1959)
Agaton Sax and the Scotland Yard Mystery (1969)	Agaton Sax och det gamla pipskägget (1961)
Agaton Sax and the Criminal Doubles (1971)	Agaton Sax och Byköpings gästabud (1963)
Agaton Sax and the Max Brothers (1970)	Agaton Sax och bröderna Max (1965)
Agaton Sax and the London Computer Plot (1973)	Agaton Sax och den svällande rotmos-affären (1970)
Agaton Sax and the League of Silent Exploders (1974)	Agaton Sax och den ljudlösa sprängämnesli-gan (1956)
Agaton Sax and the Haunted House (1975)	Agaton Sax och vita möss-mysteriet (1957)
Agaton Sax and the Big Rig (1976)	Agaton Sax klipper till (1955)
Agaton Sax and Lispington's Grandfather Clock (1978)	Agaton Sax och den mörklagda ljusmaskinen (1978)
(Not translated/published)	Agaton Sax och de okontanta miljardärerna (1967)

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## Notes

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2 In addition to colour illustrations for the Deutsch book series (Blake, "Re Agaton"), Quentin Blake produced new caption boards for the BBC series (Williams).

3 One such exception was Aidan Chambers' regular use of language consultants at Turton & Chambers. These commented on the translation draft provided by the commissioned translator but did not undertake a full second translation from beginning to end (Berry, "Publishing"). I have not found extended use of consultants elsewhere.

4 At OUP, Richard Kennedy re-illustrated Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Longstocking* (1950) (Berry, "Pippi") and Jos Armitage under the pseudonym Ionicus re-illustrated Irmelin Sandman Lilius's *Fru Sola trilogy* (1976-1979) (Berry, "Unicorns").

5 E.g. Astrid Lindgren (Berry, "Pippi"); Irmelin Sandman Lilius (Berry, "Unicorns").