

# *Issues of Concern in the Study of Children's Literature Translation*

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## **Summary**

The present paper focuses on issues of concern in the study of Children's Literature Translation (ChLT). Attempting an overview from the years when ChLT was much ignored in the academic and non-academic world to the years that attention is paid to ChLT as a scientific field in its own right, the present paper illustrates issues that have generated intense and ongoing discussions. Issues such as the missionary role of ChLT, the theoretical framework of ChLT, the translator's invisibility, low status, profile and royalties, translatability vs. untranslatability, ideology, censorship, manipulation, and ambivalence are visited in this paper. These issues have had a deep impact on key ChLT actors, processes, and products: the child-reader, the translator, the translated text, the translation process, the author, the publisher, etc.

The present text is a modest attempt to join efforts with the international community of scholars, translators, authors, children readers, publishers and other parties with an interest in ChLT, so as for the field to be given its merit in Translation, Comparative, Literary and Interdisciplinary Studies and for the translator –who had for long been much invisible and undervalued –to gain the place s/he deserves in history and society.

## **1. Introductory note**

It is widely accepted that Children's Literature Translation (ChLT) is an area that is relatively novel within Translation Studies (TS) (O' Connel, 2005; Pinsent, 2006; Thomson-Wolgemuth, 2009; 2006; 1998; Lathey, 2010; 2006; etc.). Though the study of Children's Literature (ChL) is

now well established as an academic discipline, the study of its translation has only recently begun. As stated by O'Connell, "Children's literature has long been the site of tremendous translation activity and so it has come as something of surprise to me to discover recently the extent to which this area remains largely ignored by theorists, publishers and academic institutions involved in translation research and training" (in Lathey, 2006: 1). Likewise, Stolt observes that: "in the theoretical works in the subject [translation] one hardly finds anything relevant on this subject [translation of children's literature]" (in Lathey, 2006: 1).

As will be shown in this paper, scholarly and further interest on ChLT was initiated with the demand to read books from other areas of the world. Quoting Jobe in his contribution to the *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*:

*Never has there been a greater demand to be able to read books from other areas of the world [...] children need to read the best literature other countries have to offer. We must meet this challenge by respecting and providing the best in translations or they will be cheated out of part of their global heritage...*

(in Hunt and Bannister Ray, 2004: 521)

This demand, which is historically placed in the years of a turn to the reader in the literary studies' context in general and in the context of ChL in particular, marked the establishment of ChLT, opening new avenues for research. In the following lines, the origins, issues of concern and future perspectives of the study of ChLT are visited.

## **2. Origins and Establishment of Children's Literature Translation**

### **2.1 The Origins of ChLT: From comparative approaches to a scientific area in its own right**

Paul Hazard and Jella Lepman's early pacifist endeavours through ChL contributed significantly to transnational communication, exchange of ideas, and cultural understanding between national children's literatures (c.f. Panaou, 2008). Comparative approaches that focused on the analysis of international literature resulted in an interest in translations during the 1960s and 1970s (Lathey 2006; Pinsent, 2006; O'Sullivan, 2005; etc.). Further momentum towards comparative children's literature was gained with the founding of the International Research Society for Children's

Literature (IRSCL) in 1970 (ibid). The discussion on ChL in comparative contexts was extended during the 1980s, when links were made to TS and the polysystem theory was adopted as one of the first theoretical attempts to contextualise ChL (see 3.2. this paper).

The growing interest in comparative aspects of ChL is illustrated by a series of publications since the 1990s. As noted in the *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature* edited by Peter Hunt and Sheila Bannister Ray (2004) a large percentage of published work derived from international conferences in the field in question: Perrot and Bruno (1993), Ewers, Lehnert and O'Sullivan (1994), Webb (2000) and Neubauer (2002). Well-known Comparative Literature journals such as *Poetics Today* 13:1 (1992), *Compar(a)ison* 2 (1995), *New Comparison* 20 (1995), *META* 48: 1-2 (2003) began to take comparative aspects of ChL into account. In line to the previous, renowned Children's Literature journals like *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* (ChLAQ) and *The Lion and the Unicorn* (L&U) dedicated special issues to ChLT. ChLAQ published a special issue on "International Children's Literature" (Winter 2003-2004, Volume 28, N. 4) and the L&U published special issues on "European Children's Literature Theory" (Number 1, June 1995), "Irish Children's Literature" (Number 3, September 1997), and "French Children's Literature" (Number 1, January 1998), aiming at enhancing research in the field of ChL.

The above is not, of course, an extensive account of the developing momentum of comparative children's literature during the current transitional period from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Ground-breaking research, articles, books, and conferences progressively focus on issues concerning Comparative ChL, highlighting that what happens in one national literature can no longer be studied in isolation to what takes place in the rest of the world (c.f. Panaou, 2008). ChLT is often studied in order to conduct a thorough comparative study, but only as a means to another goal, not enjoying yet the recognition it deserves by Comparative, Translation and Literary Studies. In fact, it is not an overstatement to declare that ChLT follows the steps of ChL which had suffered a low status for a series of years (Lathey, 2010; 2006; Pinsent, 2006; O' Sullivan, 2005, etc.). Thus, the present text is a modest attempt to join efforts with the international community of scholars, translators, authors, children readers, publishers and all parties with an interest in ChLT, so as for the field to be given its merit in Translation, Comparative and Literary Studies, as well as at the interdisciplinary level, including

Educational Sciences with emphasis on Multicultural Education and Language Teaching and Learning, Childhood Studies, Cultural Studies, Contact Studies, Literature, Linguistics, etc.

Although one would think that the establishment of ChL as a genre of literary studies would automatically mean the acknowledgement of all relevant, interdisciplinary or sub-areas (i.e. Children's Literature in Education, Children's Literature and Environmental Studies, Children's Literature Translation, etc.), this was not the case. Quoting Thomson-Wolgemouth in the introduction of her MA Dissertation on ChLT:

*...I was excited to be given the opportunity, within the context of this dissertation, to do some research into the field of children's literature and its translation. Determined to find as much information as possible, I visited several libraries in my search for books and journals. However, I was disappointed not to find the wealth of literature I had expected. There are a few books which deal comprehensively with all the aspects of this field and, of those which do, most date back to the 1960s and 1970s. Many libraries proved to be poorly equipped, without even a stock of the basic background literature. Most publications deal with only one, very specific sub-area, and do not relate it to the whole of children's literature; information tends to be scattered over various locations. Frequently, the literature available deals with the problem of translating for children only by way of analyzing and criticizing the actual renderings of texts. A theoretical grounding has not, as yet, been developed, although everyone seems to agree on the importance of establishing one. (1998: viii)*

Since the situation is even direr in the Greek-speaking academic world, the aim of this article is similar to Thomson's endeavours: In the following lines it will be attempted to enrich the field of ChLT with a comprehensive approach to ChLT, aspiring to function as a reference work that could be addressed to for consultation purposes.

## **2.2 The Establishment of ChLT: An Auspicious Turn to Children's Literature Translation?**

In the beginning of her talk at an international conference, acclaimed translator Anthea Bell (in Pinsent, 2006: 53), observes a promising turn to ChLT: "it is encouraging to see a revival of interest in foreign books for young people", and in her concluding remarks she stresses:

*I am delighted to reflect that in the past three or four years, I must have translated more books for children and young people than in the two preceding decades. We would all here today like to see translated children's literature move out into public view; I do see a distinct tendency that way, and may it long continue.*

(ibid)

Anthea Bell is not the only one observing an auspicious turn to ChLT these days. Lathey (2006) also sees a critical interest developing with an increasing speed over the last thirty years. The boom in TS marked in the 1990s (Metcalf, 1995; Snell-Hornby, 1996; Baker, 1998; Andermann and Rogers 1999; etc.) and the increased interest in ChL (López, 2009) seem to pave the way for a positive turn to ChLT, an area that was for years off the ChL studies and TS map.

Along with the previous statements, further facts, in the English-speaking world at least, provide a promising picture. Initiatives such as the Marsh Prize for Children's Literature in Translation, the catalogue *Outside In: Children's Books in Translation* (Hallford and Zaghini, 2005), the establishment, in several parts of the globe, of research centres and academic departments, which offer courses in ChLT and research opportunities leading to MA and PhD Degrees, etc., mirror an increased academic interest in the study of ChLT. At the moment, several aspects of ChLT start gaining research attention, meeting the "need for multicultural research" (Fernandez López in Lathey, 2006: 52) scholars had been calling for: the cultural other, translation and illustrations, translation and ideology, translator's visibility, the addressee, the publishing industry, adaptation, translation norms and strategies, translation and globalization, media/screen translation, translation and education etc.

### **3. Issues of Concern in ChLT**

#### **3.1 The Missionary Role of Children's Literature Translation**

As pointed out earlier, interest in ChLT appeared from a demand to read books from other 'neighbourhoods' of the globe. This demand resulted in a turn to ChLT, where the focus was the child-reader. This turn opened new pathways for TS and ChL studies and highlighted the contribution of ChLT through its multifaceted role.

In the collections of papers they edited under the title *Children's Literature in Translation: Challenges and Strategies*, Van Coille and Verschueren (2006) emphasize the missionary role of ChLT. Didactic/ pedagogical, cultural/ sociological, psychological, cognitive and academic aspects form this missionary role. These aspects, as revealed historically in the context of ChLT, are critically presented below.

### **3.1.1 The didactic/pedagogical aspect**

*ChL's* perceived *mission* to educate is much conversed in ChL and ChLT studies. Various scholars stress its didactic/ pedagogical role (Lathey, 2010; Klingberg, 2008; Shavit, 1996; Ben-Ari, 1992; etc.). In defining this aspect, Klingberg stresses that, "Didacticizing can be defined as the intention to instruct, i.e. to teach knowledge or/ and moral attitudes and behaviour. This intention is understandably enough an old tradition in children's literature, since it from the beginning had instructional aims" (2008: 15). As underlined in the previous definition, the didactic/ pedagogical aspect does not only refer to instructional/ teaching aims but also to morality, broadening the nature and mission of ChL and ChLT and linking to past years and traditional contexts, where educational aims were also linked to ethics and mores (c.f. Shavit, 1996).

It is well accepted that the best way for a child to assimilate the world and her/his surroundings is through literature – original and translated (Wells, 1986). Besides knowledge of their settings, ChLT can enhance children's literacy skills. In her PhD Thesis on ChLT, Frimmelova indicates that "translated books play a role in the development of a positive reading attitude and may even stimulate the more reluctant readers towards reading" (2010: 28). Quoting Billings and Hoskins, translated literature provides children with "rich opportunities for expanding their textual and visual vocabularies, which can enhance their reading and perception skills in general" (in Pinsent, 2006: 102). This has been the central focus of children's literature for years, starting to decrease in the postmodern years, when equal emphasis is given to aesthetics (Coats, 2001).

### **3.1.2 The cultural/ social aspect**

Besides instructional aims, ChLT also serves cultural aims. Literature is a major carrier of cultural content and a powerful 'medium' for understanding the world (Xeni, 2007; 2006e). ChLT introduces

children to segments of life in other cultures, succeeding in “furthering cross-cultural understanding” (Metcalf, 2003: 324). Mildred L. Batchelder explains: “children of one country who come to know the books and stories of many countries have made a beginning toward international understanding” (in Metcalf, 2003: 324). The translation of children's books from other languages increases the number of truly excellent literary works available to young people and fosters an understanding of both the uniqueness and the universality of human experience. Having an international outlook, ChLT has the ability to move throughout the world, crossing linguistic and cultural borders, making global connections and giving new life to world literature (Bassnet, 1993; O’Sullivan, 2005; Desment in Pinsent, 2006; etc.). Speaking particularly for Britain and the United States as the main nations producing English ChL, Pinsent, asserts that:

*there is an increased understanding that the search for global unity and peace demands a welcome to books from other languages and cultures. Translators who can make such books equally accessible to their young monoglot English-speaking audiences as they are in their source languages should be recognized as vital in the transmission of cultural values.*

(2006: 7)

The previous statement stresses the cultural/ social mission of translation, the contribution of translation theory and practice as a disciplinary area, and the significant role of the translator as a key-actor in the translation process.

### **3.1.3 The psychological aspect**

Besides introducing children to segments of life in other cultures, ChL and its translation into other languages pose a world where children can fulfil their needs, highlighting a further role of ChLT, that of enhancing children’s well-being (Xeni, 2000). Being able to identify with heroes from foreign lands, who have the same needs they have (e.g. the need to overcome anxieties, worries and fears, the need for humour, etc.) children, “laugh, enjoy and learn throughout reading and experiencing heroes’ problematic situations with less stress and more joy, learning in such ways to face their own worries with less stress, anxiety and fear” (Xeni, 2010: 157).

### 3.1.4 The cognitive aspect

Adding the cognitive aspect to the benefits of translated literature for the child-reader, Pinsent underlines that: “increased translation from sources all over the world could be an invaluable way of adding fresh perspectives from unfamiliar cultures for the immense enrichment of young readers, not only in terms of imagination but also of cognitive development” (2006: 226). In cognitive terms, for children and young adults it is easier to assimilate new information when this is presented within the structure of a story (Wells, 1986). The child being interested in reading a translated book from another culture, attempts to make sense out of it by activating cognitive skills such as thinking, analyzing, making comparisons, etc. The cognitive aspect is chronologically a recent finding and it should be seen as a condition for the cultural/ social aspect to be achieved.

### 3.1.5 The academic aspect

Speaking of the turn to ChLT in the Spanish context, as she has witnessed it, Fernandez López, highlights that:

*Translation has meant not only the transfer of the works from those systems that have been traditionally dominant in the field of children’s literature to the Spanish system, which has facilitated the revival of the field by means of new techniques and topics, but also the highlighting of ideological confrontations in studies of translator behaviour.*

(in Lathey, 2006: 42)

From López’s (ibid) perspective, the turn to ChLT further contributed to the academic disciplines of both ChL and TS, as it was the reason for the appearance of new techniques and fresh topics. What is more, this turn to ChLT brought issues of ideology to the surface and put the studies of translator behaviour back in the discussion arena.

The above points, summarizing the contribution and benefits of ChLT, highlight its missionary role. Quoting Bamberger, “thanks to translation, children all over the world can enjoy the same pleasure in reading; appreciate similar ideals, aims, and hopes” (in Lathey, 2006: 2). The missionary role of translation, as seen in the five aspects presented above,



emphasize the importance of ChL and ChLT, placing both in the centre of children and young adults' learning, cognitive development and welfare.

This section also revealed the role of both TS as a disciplinary area that contributes much to interdisciplinarity (education, cognition, culture, psychology, etc.) and the translator as a key-player in the translation process. The significant role of the translator will also be divulged in the proceeding lines, where the major theoretical frameworks that have advanced the thinking on translation and translation practice are explored.

### **3.2 Theoretical Framework of Children's Literature Translation**

ChLT theory, being a 'young' strand of translation theory with origins in comparative studies, counts no more than four decades. During this time, certain theories influenced in one way or another translation approaches, strategies, and norms in the context of ChLT and posed issues of concern in the field. In the lines that follow, key theoretical approaches in ChLT are visited with Itamar Even Zohar, Zohar Shavit, and Hans Vermeer and Katharina Reiss referred to as major contributors in the attempts to theorize ChLT.

#### **3.2.1 Itamar Even Zohar's Polysystem Theory**

The merging of cultural studies with TS in the '70s gave rise to the polysystem theory. Polysystem theory was developed by Itamar Even Zohar, an Israeli cultural theorist who investigated how literature and translation function in certain contexts or systems. To Even Zohar (c.f. 1978a), a polysystem is an entire network of correlated networks –literary or extraliterary– and covers all major and minor literary systems within a society. Every literary polysystem consists of a number of sub-systems that are hierarchically arranged, primary models (innovatory) and secondary models (conservative), canonized and non-canonised types of literature or positions closer to the centre of the system or closer to the periphery. These represent stronger and weaker literatures. The closer to periphery a subsystem is, the lower its cultural status within the entire system. Literary polysystems are not isolated systems but correlate with other cultural systems that can be encountered in the ideological and socioeconomic structures of a society.

Translated literature as a subsystem may hold any position within the system. It can be found either in the centre, representing a significant part of a country's literature, or in the

periphery, representing a less influential part. ChL is one of the parts of the literary system. It usually maintains a peripheral position in the literary polysystem, with low cultural prestige. Similarly to ChL, ChLT upholds a marginal position in the literary system, and remains in the periphery, having little influence. It relies on norms already established by a dominant type with a particular genre. Due to this, ChLT is, according to Even Zohar, ignored and liable to manipulation, while the ChL translator is undervalued and subjected to bad working conditions. Raising ideological issues, Even Zohar stresses the impact of norms on the translators' role and status. Since translators are expected to obey the rules established in the culture and society of the target text (the receiving culture), they will consequently have fewer liabilities in the process of translation. However, according to Thompson-Wolgemuth (1998), wherever translators feel completely free to translate, they will still have their own opinions regarding the text –conscious or unconscious. This point raises the issue of ideology that always intervenes in the translation process. This idea will be developed in section 3.5.

### **3.2.2 Shavit**

Following Even Zohar, Shavit (1981) further developed the polysystem theory and applied it to ChLT. Shavit's contribution is mainly focused on listing five characteristics that distinguish ChLT as a subsystem from other subsystems:

1. Affiliation to existing models: texts which have the form of a source text model, which does not exist in the target culture, may be changed. Such changes occur mainly by deleting elements, to adjust them to models which exist in the target culture.
2. Integrality of texts: in this context translators are allowed to manipulate the fullness of source texts, in order to adapt them to a child's comprehension level or to moral norms.
3. Level of complexity of texts: this characteristic is related to the simplification of texts, meaning that if a text consists of two or more levels –as it happens in the case of ambivalence (see 3.7., this paper) – it is simplified in a single level.
4. Evaluative adaptation (ideological adaptation): in this context texts pose a didactic instrument for ideology transfer purposes.
5. Stylistic norms: these norms indicate a high literary style and are important in ChL for didactic purposes as they enrich children's vocabulary. (1981: 172-177)

What can be said from observing these characteristics is that Shavit manages to touch main factors that come into play in the realm of ChLT: the text, the role of the translator, and translation norms and strategies applied during the translation process. Shavit also contributed to determining the relation between ChL and literature for adults (AdL) by identifying the subsystems of canonized and non-canonised ChL and AdL. According to her findings, all ChL maintains a similar position and behaves similarly to non-canonised AdL. With these findings, Shavit advanced the role and status of ChL and contributed to a great extent to its recognition.

### **3.2.3 Vermeer, Reiss and Skopos Theory**

Vermeer and Reiss are two more scholars with an immense contribution in the theory of ChLT. Being the first who advocated the theory of text types (c.f. 1971 and in Chestermann, 1989), they managed to apply it in ChLT (c.f. 1982).

Skopos theory developed by the “functionalists” (Vermeer, Hönig, Kussmaul, Holtz-Mänttary, Nord and Reiss) had significant applications to ChLT. Having skopos (purpose) as the most important criterion in any translation that depended on the needs and expectations of the target text readers, this group of theorists moved the point of reference from the source text, which was regarded as the “sacred original” (Hönig, 1997: 9) up to that moment, to the reader, placing the child-reader in a central position. In line with advancing the role of the child-reader and the target text, skopos theory assigned a new role to the translator. Being now an “expert” (Thomson-Wolgemuth, 1998: 105), with more liberties at hand, as he is exempted “from the obligation” to reproduce the source text in the target culture the translator has a higher profile and status (Βλαχόπουλος, 2010: 150). In the context of skopos theory, translation is regarded as “a cultural product” and the process of translation as “a culture-sensitive procedure” (Vermeer, 1994: 10) – an aspect linking back to polysystem theory and the “culture turn”.

Skopos theory marked a new era for translation theory and practice. In the context of ChLT, skopos theory managed to introduce changes in all main players: the child reader, the translator, the translated text and the translation process itself. It also raised such important issues such as the status and income of the translator, as well as ideological concerns in the context of TS. In the context of skopos theory the translator is given freedom. However, as Thomson-Wolgemuth (1998) explains, in real life a translator working under commission, has a limited freedom and cannot really reject a project, due to her/his low status, profile and income.

In line with the previous, if the translator does not maintain the norms of the original, the commissioner who has the final word may interfere, thus reducing the translator's freedom.

Since its beginning, translation theory has undergone major changes as an academic discipline. A brief presentation of the main contributors of the theories of ChLT reveals the relationship between theories, approaches, strategies and norms in the field. Comparing ChLT theories with ChL and Translation theories can reveal how parallel the development has been and how akin the "methodological shift from source orientation to target orientation" was (Tabbert, 2002: 303). Quoting Sas:

*Reiss and Vermeer did not one day wake up and decided to start a new theory based on a Greek word. On the contrary, skopos theory is the result of a development in translation studies where the focus shifted from the source text to the target culture... (2010: 67)*

An analysis of the development of theories visited above demonstrates a shift from conservative to liberal approaches. The former approaches focused on the status of ChLT and translation methodology, whereas the latter ones paid attention to the power of the translator as a key-player in the translation process and the readers' interaction with the text. In any case, it can be concluded that translation is not a purely linguistic matter, but is rather affected to a great extent by social, cultural, economic and political factors (Fornalczyk, 2007).

Besides issues of concern deriving from its multifaceted missionary role, or attempts to theorise it, ChLT has had to face further issues of concern that constantly appear and have led to continuing debates in the academic and non-academic world. The translator's invisibility, low status, profile and royalties, and the issue of translatability will be the first issues to approach. The concepts of ideology, censorship and manipulation, and ambivalence will be later on visited as issues presenting further concerns in the context of ChLT.

### **3.3 Translator's invisibility, low status, profile and royalties in the academic and non-academic world in the context of ChLT**

The ChL translator's invisibility, low status, profile and royalties are issues of general concern for both the academic and non-academic world. Each aspect derives from the other; due to

her/his invisibility the translator has a low status and profile and as a consequence unsatisfactory wages.

Pat Pincen underlines that “it is however clear that translators today have a higher profile than any time in the recent past” (2006: 1). Looking back to harder years, Anthea Bell recalls that children’s books “have often been placed in a kind of ghetto –and when you consider the comparative reluctance of the English-speaking world to publish any translations at all, translation in itself has been in ghetto, so translated children’s books have been banished to ghetto twice over” (in Pincen 2006: 48). Speaking from the stand of a well-known translator, Bell, stresses a reality that Billings & Hoskins (in Pincen, 2006) similarly reveal from the point of publishing and marketing of translated books. Seeking to give answers regarding the low status of ChLT, they pronounce the following outcomes: “a perceived lack of interest from the general public; the fact that translated books were costlier to make; the difficulty of knowing from a UK perspective whether a book will do well; the abundance of good UK illustrators; and, most important, a lack of real interest on the part of bookshops in stocking them” (ibid: 103). Translators do not seem to receive much appreciation from publishers. A behavioural pattern of publishers, revealing the inferiority of the area in the fieldwork of literary studies and ‘real market,’ is a lack of respect and understanding of the role and nature of the translating profession (Xeni, 2007). Added to these, is the publishers’ unwillingness to spend money on ChLT, as they consider it a vain investment. To them, translations are “a money-losing proposition” (Goldsmith in Lathey, 2006: 88) that “tend[s] to be expensive, time-consuming, and unsuccessful in the marketplace” (Roxburgh, 2004: 48). Pullman’s (2005) explanatory statement illustrates publishers’ attitude towards ChLT:

*But these days, more and more mainstream publishers are owned by big multi-national corporations that are interested only in profit, and in nothing else whatsoever. And it costs money to translate books, because it’s a demanding intellectual activity and there aren’t many people who can do it well, and publishers are reluctant to spend money on producing books that booksellers won’t sell, and booksellers are reluctant to give space to books that readers don’t want, and readers don’t want books they’ve never seen reviewed, and literary editors won’t review books if the publishers don’t spend much money on advertising. And it all goes round in a circle, and outside the circle is the rest of the world. (Pullman, 2005: 23)*

Throughout the years the translator was little acknowledged, or as Lathey puts it, “belong[ed] to the great disappeared of history” (2006: 209). Being the anonymous, ‘unsung heroes’ or ‘shadowy figures’ (ibid), translators were found nowhere in the translated work: front page, preface, afterword or elsewhere. Quoting Thomson-Wolgemouth,

*rarely were the translators of the stories given a platform to voice their opinions in Afterwords; rather it was the specialists in English language and culture, and the social historians, who provided information and critical comments on the socio-historical background of the story, on the biography of the authors and on the protagonists’ motivations for their actions...*

(in Pinsent, 2006: 228)

Additionally, correspondingly to authors of ChL in days of suffer, translators have been poorly paid (Lathey, 2010; 2006; Pinsent, 2006, etc.). Royalties were low and rates unsatisfactory. Worse than that, many translators witnessed difficult working conditions –and still are. Torstein Hoverstad, the Norwegian translator of Harry Potter, is a living example of a professional translator, who, speaking of his experience of being a literary translator, confesses that to him it feels like attempting something integrally impossible. Although he is successful, he is being badly paid, and remains virtually invisible (Goldstein, 2005).

Reasons for the underestimation of the translation profession and the professional translator are identical to those that apply in the case of ChL. ChLT was seen inferior to adult’s literature translation –a tendency that existed for years concerning ChL– because it was mainly addressed to children that were regarded as a minority, and because the majority of children’s writers are women. Moreover, the way children’s books deviate from conventional literary norms led to evaluation and classification problems. Quoting Hunt:

*Forced to describe themselves in terms of established norms, children’s books do not shape up very well: their narratives are often novellas rather than novels; their verse is doggerel rather than poetry; their drama is improvisation rather than mediated text. As with other forms of literature, genre can degenerate rapidly into formula.*

(1992: 3)

For some, though, the translation profession ought to be a low-profile profession and the translator had better be invisible. As Bell puts it:

*Translation is a low-profile profession, and in my view it ought to be; I adhere to the old school of invisible translation, which is not fashionable today, but I am absolutely delighted if someone says that she or he didn't realize a book was a translation at all [...] the translator's profile **should** be low; the idea is not for the translator to go on an ego trip, but for the reader to have as far as possible the same pleasure from reading a book in translation as readers of the original...*

(in Pinsent, 2006: 48)

When it comes to the translator's invisibility –a controversial term in TS referring to the low status of the translator in the literary scholar world–the 'Harry Potter' series has been a breakthrough. From Minier's point of view, the example of Harry Potter "now provides an exception to the general tendency of translators to remain 'invisible' " (in Pinsent 2005: 119) as Harry Potter translators are well reported.

Things were even harder in the academic world. Significant interest in ChLT has been developing over the last 35 years, the third symposium of the International Research Society of Children's Literature (IRSCL) in 1976 being a turning point, as the first and for years the only ChL academic event dedicated to ChLT and the international exchange of children's books (Lathey, 2006). The proceedings of that symposium, co-edited by Goethe Kligenberg and Mary Orving, along with Klingberg's (1986) publication of the first results of a study on the adaptation of children's books, were for years the only academic references in the field. In the symposium in question, Kligenberg was challenged to list possible areas for further research in ChLT:

- *Statistical studies on which source languages yield translations in different target languages or countries;*
- *Studies on economic and technical problems associated with the production of translations;*

- *Studies of current translation practice and specific problems encountered by translations;*
- *Studies concerning the reception and influence of translations in the target language*  
(Klingberg, 1986: 9)

Many of the above-mentioned research areas have not yet been investigated systematically—or even at all. Stolt underlines that “in the theoretical works on the subject [translation] one hardly finds anything relevant on this subject” (in Lathey 2006: 1) and in the same line O’ Connel comments that this area “remains largely ignored by theorists, publishers and academic institutions” (ibid). As a consequence, acknowledging the fact that ChLT had been for long a neglected area suffering from ignorance and low prestige, the scholar emphasises the need for generating discussions regarding the many issues of the field.

On a critical note, trying to reason the low status of ChLT and ChL translators, O’ Connel blames the academic world, to some extent. As she puts it,

*Academics are as guilty as anyone of contributing to this problem of poor public perception and low prestige. How many undergraduate or for that matter postgraduate programmes in Translation Studies offer students the chance to develop skills in this field in either core or optional courses? [...] If academic institutions involved in translator training were prepared to channel more resources in terms of research and teaching staff into investigations of the specific challenges of this field, it would surely make a difference, just as research into commercial and technical translation in the 1970s and 1980s enhanced the status and conditions of those engaged in that kind of work.*

(in Lathey, 2006: 20)

It should be said, though, that academics are not the only ones to blame as there are further active players in the arena of ChLT: publishers and translators themselves, for instance. What is true, though, is what this paper aims to point out, that ChLT is a promising research field, which should be further explored in the future.

After 1976, which marked the first turning point in the field, the last decade (2000-2010) forms a second turning point, with the contributions of O’Sullivan’s *Comparative Children’s Literature* (2000) and her insights of ChL at an international level, and with Riitta



Oittinen's *Translating for Children* (2000), insisting on a child-centred approach to translation. Proceedings of the 12<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the British Section of IBBY, held in conjunction with the National Centre for Research in Children's Literature (NCRCL) at Roehampton University, were dedicated to "No Child is an Island: The Case for Children's Literature in Translation," hosting works from all key players in the field: translators, authors, publishers, academics, etc. The publication of Lathey's ChLT Reader, *Topics in Translation: The Translation of Children's Literature, A Reader* (2006), provided the academic world with a concrete reference work that reflects the critical interest and increased development of ChLT and the international exchange of children's books from 1976 onwards. Lathey (ibid) succeeded in reminding the academic world of works –not as many in number as the field deserves to have– that seriously and critically addressed issues of ChLT, and at the same time turning attention to the future of ChLT. With this contribution, she also took the chance to stress the needs of ChLT: more studies addressing topics Klingberg suggested back in 1976, along with appropriate tools and methodology, shedding some light to challenges and issues in ChLT. Lathey's (2010) recent book, *The Role of Translators in Children's Literature: Invisible Storytellers*, points to the significance of translations and translators through the years. The book, which as noted in the foreword is "dedicated at furthering original research in children's literature and culture" (Zipes in Lathey, 2010: xi), has a twofold purpose: to "outline the chronology and impact of translators and translation on the history of children's literature written in English, and, wherever possible, to give an account of the motivation and methodology of translators working for a child audience" (Lathey, 2010: 8). It thus highlights the crucial role the translator plays in the translation process, giving him voice and power, and turns the research attention to translation process issues such as the translator's methodology, strategies, and motivation. These are all linked to process-oriented research, an area TS research turned to during recent years, placing the translator at the centre of the research interest.

In what follows, further issues of concern, which refer to matters of a more specific nature in the context of ChLT, will be visited. Thus, translatability vs. untranslatability, ideology, censorship and manipulation, as well as ambivalence are addressed below.

### 3.4 Translatability vs. Untranslatability

The issue of untranslatability is underlined as a primary one, as it governs all issues of concern in ChLT. The complexity of ChLT, makes it anything but a trouble-free matter. It is widely accepted that various ‘delicate matters’ (Bell in Lathey 2006: 232), ‘peculiarities’ (Gile in Baker, 1998: 45), ‘issues’ (Munday, 2008: 4) and ‘problematic areas’ (Leonardi, 2000) or ‘problems’ (Gerding-Salas, 2000) can be encountered in the translation process. Firstly, the translator is preoccupied with a complex activity itself, since translation has for long been described and characterized as a demanding activity. Secondly, the translator should constantly keep in mind that the translated text is addressed to a child reader, a target group of its own idiosyncrasies. Thirdly, cultural differences come frequently into play, especially for the case of the international market level, leading to censorship issues (see 3.5. below) that cause limitations in terms of translation.

The previous led several scholars to question the translatability of ChL. In an article published in *Babel*, Anthea Bell speculates, “Are children’s books translatable?” (in Lathey 2006: 69). And Brigit Stolt, in her contribution “How Emil becomes Michael: On the translation of children’s books,” wonders: “An impossible task then?” (ibid).

In the following lines, issues of concern in ChLT are discussed in the context of the translatability of ChL, which serves as the “raison d’ être” of ChLT studies. What motivated me to embark upon researching this scientific area in the first place, was the belief that ChL *IS TRANSLATABLE* because it *HAS* to be, for itself and for children, the future of our world. This statement is in full accordance with Lindgren’s view: “I believe that children have a marvellous ability to re-experience the most alien and distant things and circumstances, if a good translator is there to help them, and I believe that their imagination continues to build where the translator can go no further” (in Lathey 2006: 69). Issues that have been raised ever since the birth of ChLT, in attempts to fulfil the task to successfully translate literature for children, are critically discussed in the next sections, within the context of child-centred and translator-centred studies: ideology; censorship and manipulation; ambivalence.

### 3.5 Ideology

In the context of Literary and TS, ChL and ChLT pose an important “ideological instrument” (Puurтинен, 1998: 526). In her article in *Meta*, “Translating for Children? – World View or

Pedagogics,” Stolze, starting her thinking with the statement: “What I understand is what I know already,” comments that “the main problem in translation [...] is the translator’s knowledge base and ideology as a person, that will be activated by the textual input” (Stolze, 2003: 214). In her conclusion, stressing once more the issue of ideology in ChLT, Stolze underlines that,

*translation is not only a question of language transfer, of easy reading and of old-fashioned or modern wording. Even ideology reflects in the formulations. Translation is a question of understanding the text and the cultural background, and of deciding about the concrete language formulations to be used that imply decisions on coherence, style and ideology.*

(2003: 220)

Simpson (1993: 5) terms ideology as the taken-for-granted assumptions, beliefs, and value systems, shared collectively by social groups, whereas Thomson (1990: 56) defines it as meaning in the service of power and the use of language to establish and sustain relationships of domination (in Knowles & Malmkjær, 1996: 43). To Halliday (1978), the language of children's literary and non-literary texts is a very influential socialising instrument. Through language, a child learns about customs, hierarchies, and attitudes; therefore the language of literature can promote and reinforce the adoption of all of the above. Language –for instance the lexical and syntactic choices the writer makes so as to describe events, characters and their relationships– can help create and maintain beliefs, values and relations of power. In line with Halliday (ibid), Stephens (1992: 8-9) highlights that every book has an “implicit ideology,” usually in the form of beliefs and values established in society that sometimes is made explicit through clear statements of moral or ethical principles, but most often it remains implicit and thus perhaps more effective and more difficult to challenge.

These statements reveal the powerful role of ChLT and the translator. The translators’ decisions are bound to have a significant effect on the way children experience literature, and the language of translated texts may have some bearing on their language development and acceptance of ideas (Knowles & Malmkjær, 1996). The translator’s ideology governs his choices, decision-making processes and strategies, approach, professionalism and self-image, and reflect on a chain of issues: the translator’s interaction with the Source Text (ST) and the

author, the Target Text (TT), the child- and adult- reader, etc. According to Hervey, the translator's ideology relates considerably to a number of issues:

*In developing a strategy for translating a given ST under given circumstances, translators invariably face a major ideological choice: should their primary task be to represent, as closely as possible, the ideology of the ST, and (in so far as this can be determined) the ideology held by the author of the ST? Or should the TT be substantially adapted to the ideological needs of the target culture, even at the cost of gross ideational distortion of the ST? Similarly, should translators, as paid professionals, serve the (implicitly or explicitly) prescribed ideology of the organisation financing publication of a TT? Or should they insist on their intellectual and moral autonomy in matters of ideology? (Hervey, 1997: 60)*

The issue of ideology in TS is closely related to translation norms and translation strategies and the belief that the translators' decision-making is norm-governed. Ideology is a principal issue in the context of ChLT, and is closely related to censorship and manipulation, which are explored below.

### **3.6 Censorship and Manipulation**

Issues of appropriateness, suitability and usefulness, which are seen as ChL norms, underline that adults are very protective towards childhood and child readers, and are much concerned with their choices regarding what to provide child readers with (Xeni, 2007). For them, what children should have is not a risk-taking matter. Quoting Thomson-Wolgemuth:

*Booksellers and publishers, feeling the pressure from parents, will adapt in order to sell their books; or rather, they will anticipate what it is that parents want and will censor anything that they feel would not meet with parental approval. Authors will adapt to survive in the market and write only "good" books –that is, meaning superficial, sanitized books– avoiding controversial and taboo subjects. What society wants, in the end, are good citizens who function according to society's norms. It will therefore exercise pressure in its citizens, i.e. the people working and bringing up their children, and so the circle closes again. (1998: 26)*

From Meckling's perspective "whoever deals with children's books, deals with the central ideas of the society in which these books are written, sold and read, and he works out how prevailing trends can be expressed in texts" (1975: 42). Similarly, Von Stockar supports that "the traditional pattern is to convey the valid pedagogical, religious, social, political, ethical [...] ideas and models, and in doing so, help children to become well integrated citizens in society" (1996: 25). Lathey writes that "differing cultural expectations of children readers give rise to censorship in the process of translation particularly in the representation of violence and scatological references in which children take such delight" (2006: 6).

Commenting on censorship and manipulation in ChLT, Shavit stresses that "censorship often justifies on pedagogical grounds or resulting from children's assumed incapability of understanding" (1986: 112), and explains that due to the peripheral position of ChLT in the literary system, the translator is authorized to "manipulate the text in various ways by changing, enlarging or abridging or by deleting or adding to it" (Shavit, 1986: 112).

Astrid Lindgren is an example of an author whose translated work was censored. As she writes, she was surprised to find out that scenes from one of her books (*Pippi Longstocking*) were deleted, shortened and changed, because the content was not in accordance with the ideological line of the receiving country. Commenting on that on a critical tone, Lindgren stresses: "It has happened that I have seen a chapter completely censored from the first to the last word. [...] Sometimes, I tell myself that the editors still have to learn a lot about children" (1969: 98-99).

Evidently, censorship and manipulation have always managed to maintain the aspect of pleasure and enjoyment in ChLT. Accordingly, in the context of Literary TS it is assumed that "translating implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose" (Hermans, 1985: 11) and that "rewriters have to be traitors, but most of the time they do not know it and nearly all of the time they have no other choice" (Lefevre, 1992: 13). All in all, for conscious or unconscious reasons, didactic, moral, ethical, religious, social, political, sexual and ideological issues are issues in ChLT where censorship and manipulation is applied so as to preserve the educational, informative, therapeutic, intellectual and entertaining aspect.

### **3.7 Ambivalence**

One of the characteristics of ChL is its ambivalence due to the fact of its dual readership. To Rurvin and Orlati, ambivalent texts are those “written for and received by both adults and children at various textual levels of both production and reception” (2006: 159). In the context of TS, this is a challenge to a translator and an issue of concern in ChLT. Quoting Metcalf: “More children’s books than ever before address a dual audience of children and adults, which on the other hand comes with a dual challenge for the translator, who now has to address both audiences in the translated literature” (2003: 323). The translator is forced to take into account both the child-reader as a primary audience and the adult-reader as a secondary audience. Both readers’ demands and needs are to be considered and cautious practices should be applied, for as Frimmelova underlines:

*Complete omission of ambivalent elements (deleting them, transforming, or adding explanations) can result in the loss of characteristics making the literary text unique. Adults will no longer enjoy the book when reading it aloud; it may lose its linguistic quality. To preserve multiple levels in the text, the conventional one to be simply realised by the child reader; the other one only understandable to adults, is one of the biggest challenges for translators of children’s literature. (2010: 35)*

Ambivalence and dual readership was presented in this section along with translators’ invisibility, low status, profile and royalties, translatability and untranslatability, ideology, censorship and manipulation as issues of concern in ChLT. As previously noted in the research arena of ChLT there is an increasing interest in process-oriented research where translators’ strategies, norms, motivation, and even emotions are additional issues of concern.

#### **4. Concluding Note: Future Perspectives in Children’s Literature in Translation**

Back in the summer of 2000, while struggling for the concluding notes of my Master’s dissertation on “Children’s Needs for Literature and Problems Regarding their Translation,” I was putting words together having a strong feeling of satisfaction and joy, feeling that I had devoted mind and soul in studying an interesting field. My instincts and limited research experience had me thinking of this scientific area as a promising direction of research that ought to be further explored in the future. Ten years afterwards, I find myself reporting how it all

started with ChLT, what has been accomplished and what issues generate ongoing scientific discussions, as ChLT struggles to gain the position it deserves in the realm of sciences.

Today, we can certainly speak with much pride about the “evolution of a genre traditionally marked by its marginal position of all fronts” (Cámara Aguilera, 2008: 8). Quoting Fernandes López: “contrary to the simplistic view that holds the study of ChL as necessarily of less complexity than corresponding studies of adult literature, TS reveal yet again the richness of the field and the need for multidisciplinary research” (in Lathey, 2006: 52). Taking one step further, Jobe sees a current and future focus on ChLT that derives from globalization needs, the most important being to translate the best for children so as to enhance “their global heritage” (in Hunt and Bannister Ray, 2004: 521).

The research avenues arising from globalization, as well as new trends in TS research, will have an impact on the research framework of ChLT. The turn of TS to new technologies, process research, and new methodologies that can effectively support the investigation of translators’ strategies and norms, behavioural patterns, decision-making and emotions while translating, can lead to challenging research pathways and shed some light on aspects of ChLT that have not been thoroughly investigated yet. Research topics such as translators’ attitudes, behaviour, emotions, feelings and choices as they translate ChL or children’s attitudes, emotions, motivations and reactions as they read translated ChL, are issues that could be studied in an attempt to further advance this promising scientific field.

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