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Translating and Rewriting: The *Septem Sapientes* in Medieval Sweden

MASSIMILIANO BAMPI, VENEDIG

Few medieval literary works have enjoyed as much popularity as that gained by the so-called *Septem Sapientes*,¹ a collection of tales of Oriental origin that spread throughout all Europe during the Middle Ages. Though there can be no doubt that this work has its deep roots in the East, where it is generally known as *The Book of Sindbād*, there is no scholarly consensus as to where the collection ultimately derives from: according to most scholars, it originated in India, while others lean toward the hypothesis of a Persian origin.²

Nevertheless, what is indisputable is that in crossing the cultural borders between East and West the narrative material making up the collection underwent a number of radical changes whose origins we are unfortunately not able to trace with any certainty.

The differences between the Eastern and the Western versions are such as to justify a sharp division into two distinct major branches. The first one encompasses all the Eastern versions, a version in Greek and one in Spanish. The second branch contains the Latin *Dolopathos* and the considerable number of Western versions, whose very existence attests to the fact that this textual tradition was subject to some degree of reworking also throughout its dissemination in medieval Europe.

In its basic form, the *Septem Sapientes* tells the story of a young prince who is sentenced to death by his own father who believes in the treacherous words of his wife. The woman, who is the prince's stepmother, aims at inheriting her husband's power together with all his possessions, and for this reason she accuses the prince of trying to rape her. In order to postpone the execution each of the seven sages who educated the prince tells an exemplary story that should illustrate to the emperor the mischievous slyness of women. The empress, in her turn, tells stories that should convince her own husband to carry out the death sentence. On the eighth day the prince speaks in his own defense, and the empress is put to death.

¹ In this paper the Latin term adopted by Blomqvist, Gunnar. 1941. *Schacktavelslek och Sju vise mästare. De ludo scaccorum. De septem sapientibus. Studier i medeltida litteraturhistoria*. Stockholm, and more recently by Roth, Detlef. 2004. *Historia septem sapientum: Überlieferung und textgeschichtliche Edition*, I-II. Tübingen, has been used to refer to the whole Western branch of the reception of the *Book of Sindbād*.

² A general introduction into the *Septem Sapientes* and into the discussion about the origins of the *Book of Sindbād* is given in Steinmetz, Ralf-Henning. 2000. "Exempel und Auslegung: Studien zu den Sieben Weisen Meistern." *Scrinium Friburgense* 14. Freiburg/ Schweiz, 6–18.

Scholars have distinguished eight different groups (customarily indicated as A, D, H, I, K, L, M, S) into which the Western branch can be divided. Such a distinction is based primarily on a number of differences regarding some major structural aspects such as the names of the characters, the types of tales and their sequence within the narrative framework.

Of the groups listed above, Group A and Group H undoubtedly enjoyed more success than any of the others. Furthermore, these two groups are closely connected since it has been convincingly argued that the most influential version of Group H, the *Historia septem sapientum* (henceforth *Historia*), was derived from a prose redaction of the *Roman des sept sages de Rome* (henceforth *Roman*) belonging to Group A.

The number of manuscripts and printed editions of the *Historia* and of the *Roman* attested in many European cultures clearly points to the interest that these two works aroused, both in the Middle Ages and beyond.

The present paper will focus on the reception of this popular collection of stories in medieval Sweden.³ The first relevant aspect to mention is that three different Old Swedish redactions have survived, two of them (customarily indicated as A and B) belonging to Group A, one (C) to Group H. The second major aspect is that they are translated texts. What is more, scholars generally agree that they all derive from different source texts. In particular, it has been acknowledged that A was translated from a Latin exemplar, probably from the only Latin redaction (henceforth L) found in Sweden and preserved in Cod. Ups. C 7, or from a text very close to it. As far as C is concerned, it has been persuasively argued by Schöndorf that it is based on a Middle Low German redaction, very probably the one that has come down to us in the incunabulum printed in Lübeck by Lucas Brandis around 1478. As regards B, it can be safely assumed that the source text from which it derives was written in Latin. However, there are convincing reasons to think that this Latin exemplar cannot be the same as the one from which A was translated.

The following analysis of A and C as translated texts will rest on two major pillars.⁴ First, it will be necessary to define which notion of translation has to be taken as valid for the culture in which the target text was produced. To this end, the methodological approach of *Translation Studies* will be employed. Second, as both texts have been handed down to us in miscellaneous manuscripts, an overview of the codicological context in which each redaction is placed will be given. The first aspect tells us what one should expect of a translated text, especially as regards its relation-

³ The observations presented in this article are based on a more extensive study of the reception of the *Septem Sapientes* in medieval Sweden, where also the question of the identification of the source texts of A, B, and C is fully discussed. See Bampi, Massimiliano. 2007. *The Reception of the Septem Sapientes in Medieval Sweden between Translation and Rewriting*. Göttinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik 744. Göttingen.

⁴ The choice to focus on A and C, and to exclude B from the analysis, is due to the fact that while in the case of A and C the source texts from which they were translated have been identified (albeit with some more caution as regards A), in the case of B it is not known – as yet at any rate – from which source text it was translated. However, in the following sections some observations on the codicological context and on the use of B will be made.

ship with the source text. The second aspect provides us with clues to understand how the text in question is likely to have been used. Moreover, these very clues enable us to adequately assess the features of the target text as compared to the text from which it originates.

Translation as Fact of the Target Culture

As Susan Bassnett, one of the leading figures of *Translation Studies*, puts it,

[t]he purpose of translation theory, then, is to reach an understanding of the processes undertaken in the act of translation and not, as is so commonly misunderstood, to provide a set of norms for effecting the perfect translation.⁵

As a matter of fact, the most innovative contribution made by *Translation Studies* to the discussion about translation and translation theory is that it fosters a descriptive (and interdisciplinary) approach to translation as opposed to the essentially prescriptive and normative stance of previous studies. Broadly speaking, from such perspective a translation is not measured by the standard of its degree of adherence to the source text. Indeed, scholars are primarily concerned with investigating the very nature of the translation process. Special attention is devoted to understanding the mechanisms that govern the adaptation of the text to be translated to the new reception context.

A crucial theoretical contribution to the development of *Translation Studies* has been made by Itamar Even-Zohar, who in the early 1970s began to develop and to give shape to the so-called *polysystem theory*,⁶ at the core of which lies the concept of *polysystem*. This is defined as “a heterogeneous, hierarchized conglomerate of systems which interact to bring about an ongoing, dynamic process of evolution within the polysystem as a whole”.⁷ The elements that make up a polysystem compete with each other for the dominant position. Accordingly, one of the major characteristics of the polysystem is that it has a centre and a periphery.⁸

The literary polysystem is understood as part of a broader, socio-cultural polysystem and is made up of different systems encompassing various genres and types of text. Among these systems is also the system of translated literature, seen as part of

⁵ Bassnett, Susan. 1991. *Translation Studies*. London and New York, 37–38.

⁶ This theory was illustrated and developed in a series of papers published over two decades, from the end of the 1970s to the end of the 1990s. Even-Zohar’s latest contributions represent a review of the theoretical framework and treat some specific aspects of the model whose load-bearing structure remains unchanged. See in particular Even-Zohar, Itamar. 1990. “Polysystem Theory.” *Poetics Today* 11, 9–26, and Even-Zohar, Itamar. 1990. “The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem.” *Poetics Today* 11, 45–51.

⁷ Shuttleworth, Mark. 1998. “Polysystem Theory.” *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*. Edited by Mona Baker. London and New York, 177.

⁸ Even-Zohar points out that “with a polysystem one must not think in terms of one center and one periphery, since several such positions are hypothesized” (“Polysystem Theory”, 14).

the wider network of intersystemic and intrasystemic relationships that strongly contribute to the development of a culture, as was hinted above.

Though translated literature tends to be a peripheral system, being subject to the influence exerted by central systems, Even-Zohar identifies three sets of circumstances where it occupies a primary position:

- a. when a polysystem has not yet been crystallized, that is to say, when a literature is “young,” in the process of being established;
- b. when a literature is either “peripheral” (within a large group of correlated literatures) or “weak,” or both;
- c. when there are turning points, crises, or literary vacuums in a literature.⁹

The very concept of translation changes according to the position of translated literature within the polysystem. For instance, when translation plays a primary function the boundaries between original works and translated texts tend to fade, and the definition of translation becomes freer in that it comes to include imitations and adaptations:

And even the question of what is a translated work cannot be answered *a priori* in terms of an a-historical out-of-context idealized state: it must be determined on the grounds of the operations governing the polysystem. Seen from this point of view, translation is no longer a phenomenon whose nature and borders are given once and for all, but an activity dependent on the relations within a certain cultural system.¹⁰

Another Israeli scholar, Gideon Toury, has contributed a great deal to the development of what has been called the target-oriented approach.¹¹ He understands translation as a norm-governed activity and is concerned with analysing it in its socio-cultural dimension, in which constraints of several types and varying degrees play a decisive role. In particular, the occurrence of various shifts in the translated text reflects target norms whose analysis might help us understand what kind of dynamics operate in the whole process of translation, from the very choice of the text to be translated to the final outcome.

From this perspective, translation is seen in all its complexity, both as a process and as its product. What is more, it is viewed in its movement, not only *inter-culturally* from one context into another, but also *intra-culturally*, as part of the development of a literary polysystem across time.

One of the most interesting and noteworthy representatives of the descriptive trend that grew out of the dialogue with the target-oriented approach developed by Even-Zohar and Toury is the Belgian scholar André Lefevere. Although he progressively distanced himself from the polysystem theory, he successfully developed some of the basic theoretical assumptions of the target-oriented approach.

In particular, in Lefevere’s view every translation is understood as a rewriting:

⁹ Even-Zohar, “The Position of Translated Literature”, 47.

¹⁰ Even-Zohar, “The Position of Translated Literature”, 51.

¹¹ See especially Toury, Gideon. 1995. *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia.

Translation is [...] rewriting of an original text. All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society. Rewritings can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices and the history of translation is the history also of literary innovation, of the shaping power of one culture upon another.¹²

In this rewriting process a key role is played by the concept of authority, by which is meant “not only the authority of the patron, the person, or institution commissioning or publishing the translation, but also the authority of a culture viewed as the central culture in a given time or geographical area, and the authority of the text.”¹³

Hence, translation as an intercultural communicative operation should be contextualized twice, both in the culture from which it derives and within the boundaries of the culture into which it is imported. Furthermore, the adoption of such a critical standpoint enables us to view translation as a complex semiotic phenomenon, the final outcome of which depends not only on the translator as mediator between two cultures, but also on the dynamics governing the functioning of the target culture as a whole.

Although no specific attention is dedicated to the Middle Ages in the descriptive approach outlined above, I think that its major principles can be profitably applied to the study of medieval translation. Such an application is made possible first and foremost by the fact that within this approach a historically determined notion of translation is advocated, according to which every descriptive and theoretical effort in analysing translations needs to be linked to a specific culture in a specific moment of its development.

In addition, understanding translation as rewriting makes such an approach suitable to address the specificities of medieval translation. Although for the Middle Ages no uniform notion of translation can be assumed, one can nevertheless observe that, especially in the realm of narrative literature, translation very often entails varying degrees of reworking of the source text, which can come to yield real rewritings. A factor that certainly contributed to allowing and supporting such a practice of reworking and rewriting is that in the Middle Ages the very notion of authorship was conceived of quite differently from what is current today. Indeed, the fact that a considerable number of literary works had no known author had weighty implications for the attitude of the translator, who felt less bound to fidelity to the source text.

The attitude that free reworking was generally acceptable, which applied also to the process of copying, often gave rise to a series of variants and redactions which broadly corresponded to the intent, or to the necessity, to adapt the text to new historical, social, ideological, and cultural contexts. Hence, what Paul Zumthor calls the

¹² Lefevere, André. 1992. *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*. London and New York, xi.

¹³ Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting*, 115.

mouvance of the medieval text also significantly affects the practice of translation in the Middle Ages.¹⁴

Accordingly, both the translation and the transmission processes affect in varying degrees the way in which a medieval text has been made known to us.

This methodological approach may be profitably employed to address the question of the relationship between literature in Latin and literatures in the vernacular. It is well established that the differentiation between the use of Latin and the vernaculars in the Middle Ages mirrors a sharp distinction on the socio-cultural level which corresponds to a contraposition, within the same polysystem, between *litterati* and *illitterati*. Such a contraposition entails a difference in status between the cultures involved – be it between Latin and one or more vernacular cultures, or between vernacular cultures with a different status, e.g. a central one vs. a peripheral one –, a difference which can be viewed in terms of authority as pointed out by Lefevere. In other words, it is of crucial importance to take into proper consideration the authority of a culture, and of a single text, when a medieval translated text is analysed, because this helps us evaluate in a proper manner all the features of the target text.

All these aspects, I think, argue for the adoption of the critical standpoint advocated by *Translation Studies* for analysing medieval translation, as I hope to show in the sections to follow.

Sju vise mästare: *the Septem Sapientes in Medieval Sweden*

Let us now delve more deeply into the manuscript tradition of the Old Swedish redactions of the *Septem Sapientes*. Before drawing attention to the characteristics of A and C as translated texts, it will be useful to give a brief overview of the codicological contexts in which the three texts appear. As was mentioned earlier, this will provide us with clues to how A and C are likely to have been used and interpreted within each reception context. Such clues will be subsequently employed to help us elucidate the specificities of each translation of the *Septem Sapientes* into Old Swedish. Indeed, knowledge of the socio-cultural features of the milieu within which a manuscript is likely – or is known – to have been used enables us to evaluate in a proper manner the cultural and/ or ideological implications of the deviations which appear in the target text as compared to the source text. The assumption underlying the interpretation of such context is that an editorial concept must be supposed for the whole manuscript, and that groups of texts within the codex are likely to have served the same purpose.

The three Old Swedish redactions of the *Septem Sapientes* (henceforth *Sju vise mästare*, as they are customarily called in Old Swedish studies) are preserved in the following manuscripts:

¹⁴ Zumthor, Paul. 1972. *Essai de poétique médiévale*. Paris.

- A. Cod. Holm. D 4 (ff. k xxv–l xiiij), Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket. First half of the 15th century;
- B. Cod. Holm. A 49 (ff. 189^r–209^r), Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket. First half of the 15th century;
- C. Cod. AM. 191 fol. (ff. 126^r–137^v), København, Den Arnamagnæanske Samling. Before 1492.¹⁵

All three codices are miscellanies. As regards the social and cultural environment in which they were used, while B can be linked with certainty to the Birgittine nunnery of Nådendal, in Finland, both A and C pose a number of problems.

Cod. Holm. D 4 has been described as one of the most intriguing Swedish miscellaneous manuscripts.¹⁶ As a matter of fact, while it is widely acknowledged that this codex was compiled at the scriptorium in Vadstena – i.e. the most important cultural centre of the late Middle Ages in Sweden – if one looks at its contents it becomes doubtful whether it was actually used within the monastery, as its provenance would suggest, or whether it is more likely to have been commissioned by someone living outside the walls of Vadstena.

Interestingly, this codex encompasses a considerable number of texts belonging to extremely different genres, both secular (e.g. the three *Eufemiavisor*, a translation of two branches of *Karlamagnús saga* customarily known as *Karl Magnus*, *Konung Alexander* to cite but the major works) and religious (mainly psalms and prayers). Among the secular genres, texts used for practical reasons (e.g. The Farmer's Almanac, veterinary notes for cattle, a tract on digestion and one on urinoscopy) are conspicuous. The texts in the manuscript are written in three different languages: Latin, Old Swedish, and Middle Low German. Such multilingualism suggests that the owner of the manuscript must have been a learned person. Despite the uncertainty surrounding the identity of the owner of D 4, scholars are at present inclined to consider it as having been owned by a layman, possibly someone belonging to the Swedish aristocracy. Yet it cannot be ruled out, as suggested tentatively by Carlquist, that the owner was a priest who used the codex partly for his pastoral activity and partly for his own interests.¹⁷ If one turns one's attention to the section of the codex in which redaction A of *Sju vise mästare* appears, it is immediately apparent that the text is part of a homogeneously religious section (ff. 231^r–294^v). Assuming that the sequence of texts in this latter part of D 4 is the same as was when the codex was compiled, as is the scholarly consensus, it can be deduced that our text was probably used

¹⁵ Since Klemming's edition, the three manuscripts of *Sju vise mästare* have been customarily indicated with the letters A, B and C. Henceforth they will be referred to in this abbreviated form. See Klemming, Gustav Eduard (ed.). 1887-1889. *Prosadikter från Sveriges medeltid. Samlingar utgivna av Svenska fornskriftsällskapet* 28 (Serie 1). Stockholm.

¹⁶ For a presentation of the manuscript and an overview of the main critical positions on its use see Carlquist, Jonas. 2002. *Handskriften som historiskt vittne. Fornsvenska samlingshandskrifter – miljö och funktion*. Stockholm, 97–103.

¹⁷ Carlquist, Jonas. *Handskriften som historiskt vittne. Föredrag vid Svenska språkets historia*. Unpublished paper.

as a means for the spiritual edification of the addressees. This would be in tune with what is known about the possible source text of *Sju vise mästare-A*. Although nothing certain can be said about the actual relationship between L and A, a close comparison between them enables us to safely assume that the Latin redaction preserved in Cod. Ups. C 7 is either the very source text or very similar to the text used by the Swedish translator, as was mentioned above. The manuscript in which L is preserved is entirely written in Latin and is exclusively made up of religious and theological texts (among them sermons and a considerable number of *exempla*); as to its provenance, scholars agree that it was certainly compiled at the *scriptorium* of Vadstena abbey, and that it was intended to be used by the monks.¹⁸

AM 191 fol. is no less fascinating than D 4. A note on f. 49^v indicates that the chaplain of the Cistercian nunnery in Askeby was its owner, at least around 1492.¹⁹ What makes the manuscript extremely intriguing is that its contents point more to a lay milieu rather than a religious one, as one would expect. In particular, a considerable part of the texts contained in AM 191 invites comparison with two of the most important Swedish miscellanies (Cod. Holm. D 3 and Cod. Holm. D 4 a) which are known to have been owned by two noblewomen, namely Elin Gustafsdotter Sture and Märta Ulfsdotter.²⁰ The *Codex Askabyensis* (as AM 191 is also known) preserves *Karl Magnus, Flores och Blanzeflor*, some chronicles (i.e. *Erikskrönikan*, *Lilla rimkrönikan*, and *Prosaiska krönikan*) alongside religious and edifying texts such as a number of prayers, mostly dedicated to the Virgin Mary, *Schacktavelslek* and excerpts from *Siælinna thröst*.²¹ A solution of the dilemma regarding the relationship between what is known about the ownership of the manuscript and its contents can be attempted by either supposing a noble commissioner, as advocated by Wiktorsson,²² or by assuming that AM 191 was the chaplain's "private library", as suggested by Carlquist.²³ If the second interpretation is accepted, one should also think of a distinction between texts used by the chaplain for his own pastoral activities (i.e. not only prayers, but also collections of *exempla*) and texts addressing his own interests. Furthermore, a closer look at the social composition of the nunnery in Askeby provides us with further clues to how some of the texts in the codex might have been used. Though very little is known of the nunnery where the chaplain carried out his

¹⁸ For a description of the codex and its main paleographic features see Andrén, Carl Gustav. 1963. *De septem sacramentis. En sakramentsutläggning från Vadstena kloster*. Lund, 62–72.

¹⁹ For a presentation of the manuscript see Carlquist, *Handskriften*, 109–113.

²⁰ On both manuscripts see Åström, Patrick. 1997. The Manuscripts of Skempton. *Master Golyas and Sweden. The Transformation of a Clerical Satire*, edited by Olle Ferm and Bridget Morris. Stockholm, 235–256.

²¹ Both *Schacktavelslek* and *Siælinna thröst* have been translated into Old Swedish from Middle Low German exemplars. In the case of *Schacktavelslek*, however, the translator also made use of a Latin exemplar of the *Liber de moribus hominum et de officiis nobilium super ludo scaccorum* by the Dominican Jacobus de Cessolis, as Blomqvist (*Schacktavelslek*) demonstrated.

²² See Wiktorsson, Per-Axel. 2007. *Äktenskapsvisan. En lustig visa om samgåendets vedermödor*. Stockholm, 13–15.

²³ See Carlquist, Jonas. 2002. *Handskriften som historiskt vittne. Fornsvenska samlingshandskrifter – miljö och funktion*. Stockholm, 112.

pastoral work, we can safely assume that it shared the major characteristics that can be observed for Swedish nunneries of the Middle Ages. Such religious foundations are known to have hosted mainly aristocratic women.

According to James France, Swedish Cistercian nunneries,

offered an acceptable refuge for members of the higher social strata. They were largely the preserves of the nobility and even royalty, for whom a religious vocation might only be a secondary consideration. Whereas boys were not allowed in Cistercian abbeys, young girls of a certain class were frequently raised in convents.²⁴

If so, it is tempting to assume that the texts in AM 191 which are also preserved in both D 3 and D 4 a were copied and used to address the noblewomen living within the nunnery, with the main aim of providing them with material for their moral instruction. *Sju vise mästare-C* appears to belong to this category, as the opening section of the collection unambiguously reveals:

[...] thaa skal man märkia ath j tänna bok warda rörda warastogha istorior ssom fordom waaro skedda och warda här aandeligha wtttydda oppaa thet wy maagom aaterwända ath synda och bättra waart syndogha liwerne.²⁵

[it has to be noticed that this book tells true stories which happened in the past, and which will be interpreted spiritually so that we can give up sinning and improve our sinful lives]

tänna istoria warder aandeligha wtttydh som här framdelis fins j tänna bok.²⁶

[This story will be interpreted spiritually, as will be shown in this book.]

An exemplary reading can be assumed for other texts in the manuscript: for *Schacktavelslek* and the two excerpts from *Siælinna thrøst*. Furthermore, also *Flores och Blanzeflor* and *Karl Magnus* lend themselves to a similar kind of reading. Indeed, as Lars Lönnroth points out with reference to chivalric literature in medieval Sweden,

riddardikten erbjöd inte bara verklighetsflykt utan också mytiska och moraliska förebilder av ett slag som delvis var kalkerade på den religiösa latinlitteraturens mönster men samtidigt utgjorde ett mer sekulariserat alternativ till dessa. Spelet med religiösa förebilder ger den romantiska underhållningslitteraturen en raffinerad tvetydlighet och legitimerar den samtidigt i vissa mån ur kyrklig synvinkel, så att världsligt författarskap kan framstå som en Gudi behaglig gärning.²⁷

As regards Cod. Holm. A 49, it has been acknowledged that the manuscript was compiled partly in Vadstena and partly in Nådendal.²⁸ The first part, written down in Sweden, comprises texts belonging to the hagiographic genre written in Old Swed-

²⁴ France, James. 1992. *Cistercians in Scandinavia*. Kalamazoo, 171.

²⁵ Redactions A and C of *Sju vise mästare* will be quoted throughout from Klemming, *Prosadikter*. The emphasis is mine throughout. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated. Klemming, *Prosadikter*, 221.

²⁶ Klemming, *Prosadikter*, 221.

²⁷ Lönnroth, Lars. 1987. "Det höviska tilltalet." *Den Svenska Litteraturen. Från forntid till frihetstid. 800-1718*. Ed. by Lars Lönnroth and Sven Delblanc. Stockholm, 94.

²⁸ See Carlquist, *Handskriften*, 79–84.

ish. The second part is more heterogeneous, albeit still made up almost exclusively of religious texts, and contains texts written both in Old Swedish and in Latin. *Sju vise mästare*-B ranks among the texts which are to be found in the younger section written in Finland.

The fact that this Old Swedish redaction of the *Septem Sapientes* is preserved in a manuscript containing religious texts strongly suggests that it served the same religious purpose as the other texts in the miscellany. As was the case for AM 191 fol., it can also be assumed here that the text was used mainly as a collection of *exempla*. The fact that no religious interpretation of the stories can be found in it could be accounted for by assuming that the *exempla* were not read individually by the nuns, but were probably used by the monks in their preaching activity.

From the above we may conclude that the three surviving exemplars of *Sju vise mästare* that have survived are likely to have been used for the same purpose, i.e. to provide material for the moral instruction of their addressees. In what follows the translation strategies which gave rise to the redactions A and C of *Sju vise mästare* will be analysed in the light of this conclusion.

Sju vise mästare: Redaction A

As was mentioned earlier, there are good reasons to think that L can be safely taken as a term of comparison in order to determine and examine the specific features of A as a translated text.

Although in some cases, as already pointed out by Blomqvist,²⁹ a convergence between A and the French prose redactions of the *Roman* (henceforth F) is discernable, the divergences between A and L are nevertheless not of a kind such as to cast doubts on the reliability of L. Indeed, it cannot be excluded that the Swedish translator also made use of a French version (written or oral) alongside the Latin text.

On the whole, however, all the deviations in A as compared to both L and F can be defined as minor ones, as they regard details in the narration and do not affect the meaning of the text.

The comparison reveals that the translator changed the source text by omitting, amplifying, substituting, and reformulating some passages; in most cases, these changes are introduced to enhance the cohesion of the narration.

Some major examples of the translation strategies will be given below:

1.

L:

Ego sum vunus miles qui lucrari jndigeo Nam de partibus meis exulaui et expulsus sum ·
eo quod vunum militem interfeci³⁰

²⁹ See Blomqvist, *Schacktavelslek*, 247–263.

³⁰ The Latin text is quoted throughout after Blomqvist, *Schacktavelslek*. (Blomqvist, *Schacktavelslek*, 287.)

[“I am a knight who needs to earn money. Indeed, I was driven out of my country because I had killed a knight”]

A:

Herra iak är wtlaghder aff mit land oc thörff iak widh at forthiäna päninga³¹

[“My lord, I was expelled from my country and I need to earn money”]

In this case I think it is probable that the translator decided to omit the reference to the reason why the knight was expelled from his country because this piece of information is placed within a discourse in which he is trying to gain the king’s trust in order to join his retinue.³²

2.

L:

Mox fecerunt fieri copiosum ignem vbi proiecerunt intus dominam illam prauissimam et pro excogitata malicia recompensam debitam est sortita . . . Tu autem domine misere-
rere nostri³³

[And soon they had a big fire lighted into which they threw that wicked woman. This was a just reward for her malicious deception. And you, our Lord, have mercy on us]

A:

Tha läto the genast wardha en stoor eld ther kastadho the. the onda qwinnona wti. oc ther fik hon siin rätta löön fore the ondzsko oc ond wilia ther hon haffdhe til kesarins son at fordarffwa honum. oc kesarins son bleff fri oc fräls aff allan wanda *Swa frälsir oc gudh alla the som i rättom stykkiom wilia liffwa*³⁴

[Then they had a big fire lighted into which they threw the wicked woman. Therewith she got the just reward for the malice and for the bad will she showed against the emperor’s son, because she wanted to ruin him. And the emperor’s son was set free from all worries. So may God set free all those who want to live righteously]

Here the Swedish text expands the generic final invocation to God in L by drawing a parallel between the salvation of the prince and the salvation which God bestows on all those who live righteously. This example of amplification gives support to the hypothesis that the tale collection preserved in D 4 was probably intended to provide a means for moral edification, as was seen above.

³¹ Klemming, *Prosadikter*, 163.

³² F contains the same reference to the killing of the knight: “*car je n’ose en mon país demorer pour ce que je y ai un chevalier ocis.*” (because I do not dare to live in my country since I have killed a knight). F is quoted throughout after Runte’s edition *Les sept sages de Rome: An On-Line Edition of French Version A From All Manuscripts*.
[URL: <http://myweb.dal.ca/hrunte/FrenchA.html>]

³³ Blomqvist, *Schacktavelslek*, 292.

³⁴ Klemming, *Prosadikter*, 172.

3.

L:

o filia quem amabis Respondit presbyterum istius ville qui me dudum requisivit Cui mater Amabis tu presbyterum · vtique mater nam militem non amabo quia michi illuderet et a me dona peteret³⁵

[“Dear daughter, whom will you love? She answered: the priest of this town who has wooed me for a long time. And the mother replied to her: Will you love a priest? And the daughter said: I will not love any knight because he would deceive me and would demand pledges from me”]

A:

Modhorin spordhe henne. hwem hon wille elska Hon swaradhe En prest her i stadhin som mik länge haffwer bidhith Riddara wil iak ey elska for thy at preste pläggha mästa elskogh³⁶

[The mother asked her whom she wanted to love. She answered: “A priest in town who has wooed me for a long time. I do not want to love knights because priests are the best lovers”.³⁷]

This instance of textual modification is particularly interesting since it provides us with a possible clue to the cultural milieu in which the Latin text is likely to have been translated into Old Swedish. The lasciviousness of secular priests was frequently the object of fierce criticism on the part of both the mendicant orders and of the Brigittine monks in medieval Sweden, as a number of attestations in the sermons indicate. This would enhance the hypothesis that a monk from Vadstena abbey was in charge of translating the Latin *De septem sapientibus* into vernacular. As to the context of use of A, this addition would make the hypothesis of a priest as the owner of the manuscript less probable.

4.

L:

Cumque mane surrexissent vocauit imperatrix dominum suum . dicens domine scitis quare fit festum quod vocatur in gallico *feteafous*³⁸

[And when they got up in the morning, the empress called his king and said: My lord, do you know why there is a feast which is called *feteafous* in French?]

³⁵ Blomqvist, *Schacktavelslek*, 277.

³⁶ Klemming, *Prosadikter*, 140.

³⁷ F reads as follows: [...] Je n’ameroie pas un chevalier, car il se gaberoit de moi et s’en vanteroit et me demanderoit mes gages a engagier [...] [“I will not love a knight, because he would make a fool of myself, he would brag, and would demand pledges from me to engage myself”].

³⁸ Blomqvist, *Schacktavelslek*, 285.

A:

Om morghonin sagdhe keserinnan til kesarin. Herra witin i hwi the hælgdhin är pa walske tungo som heter *folskamanna hælgdh*³⁹

[In the morning the empress said to the emperor: “My lord, do you know why there is a feast which is called the feast of the fools in French?”]

As regards this instance of substitution, it is probable that this kind of intervention in the translated text should be read as resulting from the necessity of making comprehensible those elements that otherwise would have appeared obscure in the target language.

A further major feature of A as compared to L is that each story in the collection is introduced by the phrase *oc ther mz byrjadhe han/ hon sit äwintyr* [“and therewith he/ she began his/ her story”]. The choice of the word *äwintyr* to translate the Latin *exemplum* and *fabula* is overtly suggestive of texts belonging to the realm of chivalric literature, and especially of the *Eufemiavisor*, where it is widely used to refer to the narration of the adventures and deeds of the knightly protagonists. By employing this term the translator presumably meant to highlight the entertaining value of the stories. Nevertheless, this is not to deny the edifying purpose which has been tentatively established on the codicological and textual evidence presented earlier. Assuming that *Sju vise mästare* was intended as a collection of *exempla*, a comparison with other such collections (e.g. *Siælinna thrøst*) clearly suggests that entertainment could be, and very often was, a major means to achieve an edifying aim.

Sju vise mästare: Redaction C

In 1992 K.E. Schöndorf⁴⁰ published a detailed study providing weighty evidence that the redaction of *Sju vise mästare* preserved in AM 191 was translated in all probability from an incunabulum printed by Lucas Brandis in Lübeck around 1478.⁴¹

Schöndorf’s study emphasizes the overall accuracy of the translation as compared to the source text, but at the same time points out a number of divergences which demand further consideration, as advocated by Schöndorf himself. Some of them, in particular, have important implications on a cultural and ideological level, as will be shown below.

However, at least two major aspects make the analysis of the translation strategy of C more precarious than the foregoing analysis of Redaction A.

Firstly, we do not know anything about the identity of the translator. In particular, it is not possible to ascertain, as matters now stand, whether the chaplain, as both the main scribe of the codex and its owner, was responsible for the translation. Sec-

³⁹ Klemming, *Prosadikter*, 158.

⁴⁰ Schöndorf, Kurt Erich. 1992. “Die altschwedische Version C von *Sju vise mästare* und ihre mittelniederdeutsche Vorlage.” *Niederdeutsch in Skandinavien*, III. Hg. von L. Elmevik und K.E. Schöndorf. Berlin, 49–69.

⁴¹ Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, AC II, 25.

ondly, although the note on fol. 49^r in AM 191 informs us that *Sju vise mästare* was among the texts included as part of the first book of the codex, a scrutiny of the hands that wrote the texts clearly reveals that the hand that copied our text is not the same as the one that wrote the other texts in the miscellany, i.e. that of the chaplain. Thus the extant *Sju vise mästare* is certainly a later copy but it is not possible to determine whether the text underwent some changes when it was copied for the second time.

Bearing such caveats in mind, the following section aims to make some observations about the major characteristics of C by singling out some significant passages where a rewriting of the source text is apparent. Most of the changes which are likely to have been made by the translator appear to derive from the intention to enhance the cohesion of the narration and to avoid redundancy, either by omitting minor details or by adding explicatory elements.

On the other hand, some changes appear to be due to the necessity to adapt the text to a different audience from the original one.

The first major difference between the Lübeck incunabulum and C is that the long prologue opening the collection in the Middle Low German redaction is omitted in the target text. The prologue provides a strictly religious framework within which the stories have to be understood and contains a number of learned references to both the Bible (e.g. the prophets) and to prominent figures of the theological thought (mainly the Church Fathers).

The translator, however, retains the reference to how the stories must be interpreted, and this becomes the opening section of the Old Swedish redaction.

This instance of omission is particularly interesting because it may tell us something about the intended audience of the text in question. Indeed, the expunging of a section full of learned references invites comparison with other works meant to provide material for the moral and religious instruction of the addressee, especially with the so-called *Fornsvenska legendariet*, an Old Swedish translation of the *Legenda aurea* with some major additions. In these works, as in our text, a general tendency to delete such learned references can be observed, as Carlquist points out.⁴² According to him, this is a recurrent characteristic of translations of religious works from Latin into the vernacular which were intended for a different audience than that of the Latin redaction.

The same can be said, *mutatis mutandis*, for C. Indeed, this very deviation is likely to have been prompted by the necessity to adapt the text to the cultural level of the addressees of the target culture, which appears to be not as high as that of the source culture.⁴³ As was seen above, the overall analysis of the manuscript in which our text

⁴² Carlquist, Jonas. 1996. *De fornsvenska helgonlegenderna. Källor, stil och skriftmiljö*. Samlingar utgivna av Svenska fornskriftsällskapet 81 (Serie 1). Uppsala.

⁴³ Although nothing certain can be said about the recipients of the Lübeck incunabulum, the very fact that the collection is provided with *moralizationes* and *reductiones* and that the prologue contains such learned references enables us to assert, at least, that the Middle Low

is preserved suggests that the texts making up the miscellany were intended for a lay audience, probably consisting of noblewomen, which was not well-versed and probably not interested in the learned tradition contained in the prologue of the *incunabulum*.

Another major change is the way in which characters belonging to the aristocracy, and especially the protagonists, are portrayed in the target text. Indeed, there are at least two passages in which the translator added or omitted details so that the description of such characters would be in line with that which can be considered the standard model of description as codified in courtly literature. These are by far the most prominent characteristics of the target text:

Lü:

We deme daghe dat ick ye wart ghebaren/ dat ik also eddel byn⁴⁴

[“May the day be cursed when I was born a noble”]

C:

wee then dagh jak födh war⁴⁵

[“May the day be cursed when I was born”]

Lü:

do wart he vertornet/ unde quam van sik suluen⁴⁶

[Then he got angry and lost his temper]

C:

thaa wart han saa wreder ath han nästan miste sinnen⁴⁷

[Then he got so angry that he nearly lost his temper]

In the first example, in Lü the stepmother curses herself after learning that the emperor has decided to postpone the execution of his son for the second time. The omission in the target text can be accounted for by assuming that the translator judged the curse as inappropriate for a person who, albeit overtly presented as a greedy figure, is a noblewoman.

Other examples of the same kind of attitude towards the representation of nobles can be found in other translated texts of medieval Swedish literature. One can be found in *Namnlös och Valentin* (*NoV*), a romance in prose translated into Old Swedish from a Middle Low German verse exemplar (*Valentin unde Namelos*, *VuN*):

VuN: des koninges moder ôk so sprak/ van torne er dat swêt útbrak⁴⁸

German redaction was intended to be addressed to an audience (or to a readership) with a higher cultural background than in the case of C.

⁴⁴ The Middle Low German text is quoted after the *incunabulum*. The numeration used here to refer to the Lübeck version is the one used in Schöndorf, *Die altschwedische Version*. (11b).

⁴⁵ Schöndorf, *Die altschwedische Version*, 241.

⁴⁶ 7a.

⁴⁷ Klemming, *Prosadikter*, 230.

[the king's mother also spoke/ because of the anger she began to sweat]

VuN: de vrowe der dinge sere irscrak/ van leide er dat swêt útbrak/ se sprak wenende to her Valentîn⁴⁹

[the lady was frightened by all this/ because of the sorrow she began to sweat. She spoke in tears to sir Valentîn]

NoV: [...] och wart saræ bedrøffuit och gik gratandis till herra Falantin⁵⁰

[and she became very sad and went in tears to sir Falantin]

In *Valentin unde Namelos* both the queen of Hungary and the daughter of the duke of Greece are described as sweating. Interestingly, the Swedish translator expunged this description because he probably judged it unsuitable for the representation of two noblewomen.⁵¹ Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the queen of Hungary is presented as a wicked character in the story, as is the empress in *Sju vise mästare*. Despite the overtly negative role played by both women, their nobility calls for proper treatment in the text.

Another instance of the same kind of attitude towards the depiction of noble characters is to be found in *Flores och Blanzeflor*,⁵² one of the three *Eufemiavisor*, which was probably translated from Old Norwegian *Flóres saga ok Blankiflúr*.

N-Fl: Konungr spurði, hvað manna hann væri, “er þú þorðir at ganga hingat í turninn og leggjaz með Blankiflúr? Ok þar fyrir skaltu deyja ok hon, sú hin vándá púta, er hjá þér liggr.” Nú kom Flóres í hug, hvílíka sælu þau höfðu heima eðr hvat nú var fyrir augum, og mælti Flóres til konungs: “Herra”, sagði hann, “kallið eigi Blankiflúr pútu, þvíat engu fá þér slíka í yðvarri borg.”⁵³

[The king asked what kind of a man he was, “you who dare to come here to the tower and sleep with Blankiflúr? And I swear for God's sake that you will die, you and the wicked whore who is lying beside you.” Now Flores remembered how happy they used to be at home and thought of what was appearing before him right now, and said to the king: “Sir”, he said, “do not call Blankiflúr a whore, because there is no woman like her in your castle.”]

S-Fl: tha mælte om thæn konung rik: / “Hwa æst thu, læt mik thet forstanda,/ ther thik thordhe thetta tagha til handa,/ gøra vith mik tholik oæra,/ sofua medh miin hierta kæra?/ Iak swær om alla gudha iak a,/ ij skulin ondan dødth hær fa;/ then skamlikasta iak kan radha,/ tha skulin ij hær tagha badhe;/ the onda quinna hær ligger hos thik/ swa hadhelika hafuer swikith mik.”/ Flores sagdhe til konungin tha:/ ”Talin the quinno ey

⁴⁸ Both the Middle Low German and the Old Swedish texts are quoted from Wolf, Werner (ed.). 1934. *Namnlös och Valentin. Kritische Ausgabe mit nebenstehender mittelniederdeutscher Vorlage*. Samlingar utgivna av Svenska Fornskriftsällskapet 52 (Serie 1). Uppsala. (Werner, *Namnlös och Valentin*, 7, ll. 75–76.).

⁴⁹ Werner, *Namnlös och Valentin*, 127, vv. 2071–2073.

⁵⁰ Werner, *Namnlös och Valentin*, 126.

⁵¹ In the first example from *Namnlös och Valentin*, which refers to the king's mother, the sentences have been completely reformulated so that no equivalent passage can be found in *Valentin unde Namelos*.

⁵² As was mentioned above, *Flores och Blanzeflor* is among the texts preserved in AM 191.

⁵³ Quoted from Kölbing, Eugen (ed.). 1896. *Flóres saga ok Blankiflúr*. Halle, 68.

illa op a/ for idher eghin konungxlik æra!/ Hon ær ey værdugh skyld at bæra” (ll. 1660–1674).⁵⁴

[Then the mighty king said: “What are you, tell me, who dared to come here and to commit such a shameful act, you who dared to sleep with my beloved? I swear upon all the gods I have, you will suffer a terrible death; the most shameful death I can give you both; the wicked woman who is lying beside you has hatefully fooled me.” Flores said to the king: “Do not speak so badly of this woman on your royal honour. She does not deserve to be blamed.”]

In this passage, the target text tones down the accusatory words pronounced by the king, both because the young woman – a noblewoman – cannot be addressed in this manner and because such a behaviour does not suit the behaviour a king should display. Indeed, Flores reproaches the king by appealing to his royal honour.

As regards the second example from C presented above, the same attitude on the part of the translator is discernable.

In the Middle Low German redaction, the emperor sees her wife bleeding and with her clothes all torn and is fooled by her into believing that his own son has tried to rape her. As a consequence, he gets so angry that he loses his temper. The Swedish translator added an adverb (*nästan*, “almost, nearly”) to reduce the consequences of the outburst of anger of the emperor, probably because he thought that a lack of control would not fit well with the ideal image of a ruler.

A further example that might be taken as attesting the same stance of the translator in describing the behaviour of members of the aristocracy can be found in the framework story. Some time after the death of his first wife, the emperor is invited by his counsellors to think about the possibility of getting remarried because of the danger of having just one son as his own heir.

Lü:

Here dat mach nycht bestaen dat gy ane vrouwen leuen · Gy hebben nycht men enen sone/ dat were varlick dat he storue/ gheschege dat/ so stunde dat koninkrike erueloes/ vnde stunde groet ghebreke vp · hijrumme so bedenket iw vmme ene vrouwe⁵⁵

[My lord, you cannot live without a wife any longer. You have got but one son; it would be very dangerous if he died. Should this happen, the kingdom would be without a heir, and this would cause great turmoil. For this reason, you should consider getting married]

C:

Herra thz kan ekki wara ath j lefuen wtan hustru j hafuen ekki wtan en son thz waare farligit om han bliue döder skedde thz thaa stode rikith wtan arua och worde stor trätta om her om betänken edher om ena hustru thz *bidiom wy alla edher*⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Quoted from Olson, Emil (ed.). 1921. *Flores och Blanze flor. Kritisk upplaga*. Samlingar utgivna av Svenska fornskriftsällskapet 46 (Serie 1). Stockholm, 105–106.

⁵⁵ 4b.

⁵⁶ Klemming, *Prosadikter*, 224.

[My lord, you cannot live without a wife any longer. You have got but one son; it would be dangerous if he died. Should this happen, the kingdom would be without a heir, and turmoil would follow. For this reason, you should consider to get married, we all ask you this]

The addition in the target text appears to serve the purpose of moderating the slightly impository tone of the counsellors addressing their emperor. Interestingly, the formula added in the Old Swedish redaction is widely attested, especially in the *Eufemiavisor*. Following are a couple of examples taken from *Herr Ivan*.⁵⁷

Herr Ivan:

“Thy wil iak gærna thakka thik,/ thu loot ok ække brista a mik./ Mit æwintyr wil iak ey længer sighia;/ iak bidher mina frw, lofuer mik at thighia” (ll. 133-136);⁵⁸

[“Hence I want to thank you,/ since you did not leave me out./ I do not want to tell you my adventure any more;/ I implore you, M’lady, permit me to remain silent.”]

“Thet ware mik alt off thwnkt at bæræ,/ thetta æwintyr at sighia hæræ;/ for idhra bøn skal thet tho væra./ Bidher iak ok alla ther til lydha/ hwath miin ordh hafua at thydha.” (ll. 150-154)

[“It would be too difficult for me to bear/ telling of this adventure here./ Still, at your request it will be done./ I ask all of you to listen to/ what my words have to convey.”]

The foregoing analysis of the translation strategy of *Sju vise mästare* reveals the considerable attention this text devotes to describing the behaviour of its noble protagonists. The significance of this becomes clear if one looks at the overall codicological context in which the text occurs. As a matter of fact, a number of texts in the manuscript share *Sju vise mästare*'s interest in this topic. The best example is certainly *Schacktavelslek*, a text in which all the social classes are described as pieces in a game of chess. Illustrative *exempla* present the virtues which the representatives of all classes should possess. Particularly interesting for our purposes is the section of the text on the nobility. After fully describing how the righteous king should behave, *Schacktavelslek* focuses on the queen, the knights and the bishops.⁵⁹ Therefore the depiction of the contemptible behaviour of the empress in *Sju vise mästare* and the description of the qualities of the queen in *Schacktavelslek* are likely to have been read together. If we stick to the hypothesis that some of the texts in AM 191 could have been used by the chaplain for the moral instruction of an audience of noblewomen, a didactic interpretation of the moral demeanour of the only female character in the story, the empress, as a representation of negative behaviour for the nuns would be plausible. This would be consistent also with a reception within an aristocratic milieu outside the walls of the nunnery, as suggested by Wiktorsson.

⁵⁷ The same kind of formulae can be found in *Flores och Blanzeflor*. See, for instance, ll. 436–437 and ll. 1705–1708.

⁵⁸ *Herr Ivan* is quoted from Noreen, Erik. 1931. *Herr Ivan. Kritisk upplaga*. Samlingar utgivna av Svenska fornskriftsällskapet 50 (Serie 1). Uppsala. The translations are taken from Williams, Henrik, and Palmgren, Karin (eds.). 1999. *Hærra Ivan*. Norse Romance Volume III (edited by Marianne Kalinke). Arthurian Archives. Cambridge, 17.

⁵⁹ Interestingly, *Schacktavelslek* is preserved also in D 3.

A number of texts in the codex appear to share an interest in kingship, and so also enter into a dialogue with *Sju vise mästartare*. In addition to *Schacktavelslek*, one should mention *Karl Magnus*, the *exemplum* from *Siælinna thrøst* about the life of Alexander the Great, and *Dikten om kung Albrekt*. As I have tried to show elsewhere, if an intertextual reading is assumed, one is able to see how these texts in the manuscript propose different models of kingship (Charlemagne, Alexander the Great, Darius, Albrecht von Mecklenburg) to the audience to which they were addressed.⁶⁰

Translating and Rewriting: Some Observations on A and C

The overview of the major characteristics of A and C as compared to their source texts – or to texts which are held to be close to the very source texts – enables us to draw a comparison between the two translation strategies, and to propose some thoughts on the cultural implications of the differences brought to light by such a comparison.

Broadly speaking, we have seen that whereas no major change is to be found in A in comparison with L, C shows a number of deviations from its source text that reveal an intention to adapt the text to a different context of reception. The absence of significant differences between A and L is as revealing as the presence of divergences in C from the Lübeck incunabulum for our understanding of how these two redactions are likely to have been used.

The different attitude of the translators towards their source texts can be profitably viewed in light of Toury's descriptive model of translation:

[a] translator may subject him-/ herself either to the original text, with the norms it has realized, or to the norms active in the target culture, or, in that section of it which would host the end product. If the first stance is adopted, the translation will tend to subscribe to the norms of the source text, and through them also to the norms of the source language and culture. [...] If, on the other hand, the second stance is adopted, norms systems of the target culture are triggered and set into motion. Shifts from the source text would be an almost inevitable price. Thus, whereas adherence to source norms determines a translation's adequacy as compared to the source text, subscription to norms originating in the target culture determines its acceptability. Obviously, even the most adequacy-oriented translation involves shifts from the source text.⁶¹

Though both A and C are rather close to their source texts, in C a stronger tendency towards the pole of acceptability is discernible. On the textual level, such a stance corresponds to a higher degree of re-writing of the source text which is achieved mainly through omissions and additions that affect the description of characters belonging to the aristocracy. Such a rewriting, I believe, has been prompted by the

⁶⁰ See Bampi, Massimiliano. 2008. "In Praise of the Copy. Karl Magnus in 15th-century Sweden." *Lärdomber oc skämptan. Medieval Swedish Literature Reconsidered*. Ed. by Massimiliano Bampi and Fulvio Ferrari. Samlingar utgivna av Svenska fornskriftsällskapet 5 (Serie 3). Uppsala, 11–34.

⁶¹ Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies*, 56.

necessity to make the text acceptable to an audience whose ideology still revolved around the values which nourished courtly society and which were depicted in chivalric literature. The evidence supporting this view derives first and foremost from a proper consideration of the conditions of transmission of the translated text, and is subsequently viewed against the textual data yielded by the comparison between the source text and the target text.

The fact that A is closer to the pole of adherence can be accounted for by considering at least three major aspects: the authority of the culture from which the source text originates, the fact that the recipients of both texts (L and A) are likely to have belonged to essentially the same group (i.e. the laity), and also the fact that, as far as we can judge, both the source text and the target text appear to have served the same edifying purpose. In the case of L, the initial recipients were certainly monks, who might have used these and other illustrative stories in their pastoral activities with the *illitterati*.

The analysis of the translation strategy has also provided us with evidence that enables us to address the question of the position of these texts in the system of translated literature. It is certainly safe to assert that both A and C occupy a secondary position and play a conservative role because they contribute to preserving the established code. This is made obvious by those clues in the texts which point to an influence exerted, among other things, by other translated texts.

In particular, in the case of C it has been observed that where the text deviates more substantially from the source text, a remarkable convergence with the *Eufemiavisor* can be detected, especially in terms of operational norms. As was seen earlier, both A and C have come down to us in manuscripts preserving also the *Eufemiavisor*. Yet this does not account for the fact that the three translated romances, which came into existence at the beginning of the 14th century, appear to represent some sort of standard even for texts which were translated so much later and which were meant to address an aristocratic audience.

As to this point, in addition to redaction C of *Sju vise mästare, Namnlös och Valentin* demands some attention. Itself a prose translation from around the middle of the 15th century based on a Middle Low German verse text, as was mentioned earlier, it survives in only three manuscripts (D 3, D 4 a, and K 45), all containing at least one of the *Eufemiavisor*. Although a remarkable degree of influence from the Middle Low German source text has been detected, Wolf has also identified a number of passages in the text that bear a striking resemblance to formulae widely employed in the *Eufemiavisor*, so we can safely assume a direct influence.⁶²

I think the question of the role played by the *Eufemiavisor* can be profitably addressed by viewing at the dynamics at work within the literary polysystem of medieval Sweden. What has been observed in the case of redaction C of *Sju vise mästare* and, even more clearly, of *Namnlös och Valentin* leads us to assert that the *Eufemiavisor* retained a central position within the system of translated literature, at least as

⁶² See Wolf, *Namnlös*, LXXXII–LXXXIV.

regards their influence on genres and texts that were meant to address an aristocratic audience.

Furthermore, the fact that they also directly influenced the *Erikskrönika*, a nontranslated work and the oldest and best example of the rhymed chronicles (*rimkrönikor*), can be accounted for by considering at least two factors. Firstly, the *Erikskrönika* was composed a couple of decades after the *Eufemiavisor*, between 1320 and 1335. Hence, it can be assumed that the influence of the latter was still considerable, especially in a young literary polysystem which was “in the process of being established”.⁶³ Translation as an innovatory force “participates actively in shaping the center of the polysystem”, as Even-Zohar points out.⁶⁴ Thus, texts produced during a period in which translation plays such a major role tend to adopt the models and the norms established by translated texts.

Secondly, the *Erikskrönika* was also certainly addressed to an aristocratic audience. This is suggested by its subject-matter, the story of Swedish kings and knights in a crucial period of the development of the kingdom, and is confirmed by the fact that the text continued to be copied in manuscripts belonging to the aristocracy long after the themes it dealt with were no longer topical, as its presence in D 3 and D 4 attests.⁶⁵

A very important aspect that must be highlighted in this context is that, as far as we can judge, in medieval Sweden translations – at least within the realm of secular genres – appear to have satisfied the need for innovation. Translated texts do not seem to have set into motion a process of imitation that yielded the composition of original works of the same kind and genre, based and modelled on them. In other words, in Sweden there is no such thing as the indigenous *riddarasögur* in the West Norse polysystem. This entails, among other things, that in the struggle for the occupation of the central position in the literary system of texts intended for an aristocratic audience, the *Eufemiavisor* as the very first example of translated chivalric literature were not challenged by original works in the course of the development of the polysystem.

The case of the *riddarasögur* mentioned above is particularly interesting because it enables us to draw a parallel with what can be observed for Sweden in about the same period and to elucidate what has been seen so far. As is well known, the translated *riddarasögur*, which introduced new themes and motifs belonging to the literary repertoire and to the ideological values-system of courtly society into medieval Norway, subsequently contributed to giving rise to a series of original Icelandic works (the so-called indigenous *riddarasögur*) which were partly modelled after them. As Glauser points out,

⁶³ Even-Zohar, “The Position of Translated Literature”, 47.

⁶⁴ Even-Zohar, “The Position of Translated Literature”, 46.

⁶⁵ On *Erikskrönikan* and its ideological implications see Ferrari, Fulvio. 2008. “Literature as a Performative Act: Erikskrönikan and the Making of a Nation.” *Lärdomber oc skämptan*, 55–80.

[t]he *riddarasögur* not only absorb courtly subject matter in translating foreign narratives, but are also stimulated by them to produce novel modes of narration which they combine with the Nordic tradition of storytelling, thus making their contribution to the development and enrichment of the saga as a narrative genre.⁶⁶

The existence of a well-established literary tradition, that of the saga, solidly at work at the centre of the literary polysystem, enables the translated texts to incorporate novelties by applying the narrative patterns and the style that were already a constitutive part of that tradition. At the same time, however, the interaction between tradition and innovation yields “novel modes of narration” that provides both material and tools to experiment. This fact furthers the development of the polysystem and brings about a re-definition of the relations between the different systems within the polysystem.⁶⁷

The literary polysystem of Sweden in the late Middle Ages, on the other hand, had not developed any such strong literary tradition yet. The absence of such a tradition also helps us account for the lack of evidence of original works after the introduction of innovations through translation.

I think that an awareness of the dynamics regulating the relations between different texts belonging to various genres within the common structure of a culture understood as a polysystem is crucial, if one aims at “understanding the processes undertaken in the act of translation”, as Bassnett puts it. From such a perspective, each medieval translated text comes to be viewed both in its own right, as the result of a reworking and rewriting process that makes the text acceptable to the target culture, and as part of the wider context of the polysystem, as an actor in a dialogue not only between different cultures, but also between texts belonging to the same cultural and linguistic repertoire.

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⁶⁶ Glauser, Jürg. 2005. “Romance (Translated *riddarasögur*).” *A Companion to Old Norse Icelandic Literature and Culture*, edited by Rory McTurk. Oxford : Blackwell Publishing, 385.

⁶⁷ See in particular Glauser, “Romance”, 383, where he points out the extent of the influence of the *riddarasögur* within the context of Old Norse saga literature. In my opinion, the application of the target-oriented approach to the study of the West Norse literary polysystem could contribute to the understanding of the dynamics at work within the polysystem.

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