

## “Et cele pleure et dist que ja a Dieu ne le comandera”

### Cultural Elements in the Old French *Le Conte du Graal* and the Old Norse *Parcevals saga*

At The Third Scandinavian Ph.D. Conference in Linguistics and Philology in Bergen, I will present preliminary results from the work on my doctoral thesis on culture-related elements in the so-called *riddarasögur*. In its stricter sense, the term of *riddarasögur* is commonly applied to a group of Old Norse sagas that were produced in the thirteenth century, by means of translation and adaptation of Old French, Anglo-Norman and Latin works. Taking Chrétien de Troyes' courtly romance *Le Conte du Graal* and its Scandinavian counterpart *Parcevals saga* as examples, I compare the way in which European culture is referred to in the Old French and Old Norse material. As is also the case for a number of other *riddarasögur*, the Norwegian King Håkon Håkonsson is assumed to have commissioned the translation of *Parcevals saga*, possibly with the intention of introducing chivalric ideology in Norway. In order to establish how European courtly literature was received and mirrored in Norway, I examine how elements relating to different aspects of culture are presented in the Old French original and its Old Norse adaptation. Thus, I hope to elucidate the manner in which ideals associated with feudal society could be, or were attempted to be, translated and introduced into the culture of the target language.

The aim of this paper is to show how culture-related elements are adapted in the course of translation from one language – and culture – into another. Drawing on methodology suggested in Translation Studies, for instance by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) and Chesterman (1997), I will put forward a way of categorising and analysing such changes. While the strategies discussed by these scholars are attempts to systematically solve problems translators are prone to encounter, I want to propose that such prescriptive methodologies can also be applied to already existing translations. Last but not least, I intend to illustrate how a modern approach to translation can be germane to the study of mediaeval material.

#### References:

- Chesterman, Andrew. 1997. *Memes of Translation: The Spread of Ideas in Translation Theory*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Vinay, Jean-Paul and Jean Darbelnet. 1995. *Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology of Translation*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.