

The Icelandic *Lucidarius*, Traditional and New Philology

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The *Lucidarius* and the *Lucidarius*-texts

Lucidarius, i. e. the Donor of Light, is the name of an anonymous work of instruction within the medieval European encyclopaedic tradition. It was first written in Germany around 1190, one of the earliest German vernacular works in prose (and thus the German version of this European chapbook is very well studied). The book is written as a dialogue between a teacher (the ‘Magister’) and a pupil (the ‘discipulus’) and disseminates a medieval Christian outlook in the form of the teacher’s answers to the pupil’s questions concerning theology, biblical history, cosmography, geography and ethnography. The German *Lucidarius* was translated into other vernaculars during the Middle Ages, among them Danish and Icelandic.

The dialogue consists of three parts, plus a prologue, in which the cause and the purpose of the book is explained. The content of the book can be systematised: Part 1 deals with the Creator, the Creation and the created world including geography, meteorology, astrology and biology. Part 2 treats faith and

life, i. e. Christianity and the liturgy of the Christian church. Part 3 throws light on eschatology, Doomsday and salvation.

The source of inspiration is *Elucidarium*, a Latin treatise on theology written by Honorius Augustodunensis c. 1098. *Elucidarium* forms together with two other works by Honorius himself and some works of his contemporaries the sources of the German *Lucidarius*. *Elucidarium* was translated into Old Norse around 1150. This translation is called *Elucidarius*, and because of the similarity of the two names the younger Icelandic version of the German *Lucidarius* has often been confused with this older translation.

The German and the Danish *Lucidarius* are well known. They have both been edited several times, are constantly the object of research, and they both hold a strong position in the history of literature in the two countries. But the Icelandic *Lucidarius* is a relatively unknown work. It was never printed, like the German and Danish counterparts, and it has not yet been edited. In its manuscript state is it not easy accessible, one has to be experienced in manuscripts to know of it. The young *Lucidarius* has been pushed into the background by its predecessor *Elucidarius*, which has claimed attention for its antiquity and transmission in old vellums, and only recently have Icelandic *Lucidarius* manuscripts been identified and the texts examined.

Since the first monograph on the German *Lucidarius* and its textual history was published in 1894 (Karl Schorbach: *Studien über das deutsche Volksbuch Lucidarius und seine Bearbeitungen in fremden Sprachen*) and the first critical edition in 1920 (*Lucidarius aus der Berliner Handschrift*, ed. Felix Heidlauf) and up to the newest edition from 1994 (*Der deutsche 'Lucidarius'*, ed. Dagmar Gottschall & Georg Steer) scholars have agreed that *Lucidarius* is a commissioned work. The German duke Heinrich der Löwe gave his curate in Braunschweig the assignment of composing the work in German prose. It should have been titled *Aurea Gemma*, but the author preferred the name *Lucidarius*. This is how the making of *Lucidarius* is described in the A-prologue that is only preserved in a minority of 8 younger manuscripts from the second half the 15th century. Together these manuscripts form a young and abridged version. The B-prologue brings no information on the time and place of origin, nor the circumstances, but it is found in the majority of the text witnesses including incunabula and prints, and it is this prologue that is reproduced in the Icelandic version.

The German *Lucidarius* is nowadays characterised as an 'open' text in which the author has reworked his own original text, a shorter version (the so-called x-version) into a longer redaction (the y-version), using the same sources in the original shorter version and in the additions of the longer redaction. The A-prologue is reduced to a secondary place partly on the basis of principles of textual criticism and partly because the B-prologue both structurally and as regards contents, corresponds with the three books of the *Lucidarius* text.

The Icelandic *Lucidarius* consists of the prologue and one big part forming

the rest of the book. This part cannot be divided into three books in correspondence with the three books of the German *Lucidarius*; nothing of the textual material found in book II and III of the German *Lucidarius* is found in the Icelandic version. But maintaining the tripartite structure one may organise the Icelandic text in three parts: part 1 being a theological and dogmatic part, part 2 dealing with biblical history and part 3 on geography. Furthermore, each part is divisible into minor passages defined by subject and content.

A collation between the Icelandic and the German *Lucidarius* texts shows that the Icelandic version was made on the basis of the German. The prologue and some of the following passages in all three parts are translations of a German text. The closest I have so far been able to identify the source of translation is a Middle Low German version printed at the Brandis family printing office in 1485. Another Low German version printed at the Mohnkopfdruckerei in 1520 might be the source of the Icelandic version. This redaction of the German *Lucidarius* is not found in any other text witness and is supposed to contain material that, according to descriptions of the print in the *Lucidarius* monograph from 1894, might correspond with material in the Icelandic *Lucidarius*. Unfortunately it appears that all the catalogued copies of this edition have subsequently been lost and the hypothesis of a closer relationship between the two versions cannot be tested, at least for the time being.

However the Icelandic *Lucidarius* is more than a translation of passages from a German text source. It is a compilation bringing together material from different Icelandic and foreign works. I would like to draw attention to a twelve-part apologetic version of the Apostles' Creed. Here each apostle states one article of faith followed by opinions of named heretics, thus bringing Christian doctrine in a polemic against heresy. This version, which is not known elsewhere in Icelandic dogmatic literature, is presumably founded on St Augustine's writing on heresy *De Haeresibus* or on Isidor's *Etymologiae*. The Icelandic *Lucidarius* compiler also used Low German legendary material on the birth of Jesus Christ and the Three Wise Men that is also found in *Reykjahólarbók*. Of particular interest is an otherwise lost geographical description of Scandinavia, the Arctic and North America.

In Iceland the *Lucidarius* was transmitted in a complex of teacher-pupil dialogues comprising both religious and secular texts (*Samtal meistara og lærisveins*, *Eftirgrennslan leyndra hluta* and *Problemata Aristotelis*). In Denmark the earliest version of *Lucidarius* is transmitted in both manuscript and printed form. The relationship between the Danish and the Icelandic version has not been closely examined, but there does not seem to be a direct connection between the two. The Danish version, too, can be traced back to the German, the structure of which recurs in the Danish version with a rearrangement of the books. The first part of the German *Lucidarius*, the one dealing with God and the created world, has been separated into two

independent parts, after which the second part on Christian practice is squeezed in between the two separated parts. The third part on Doomsday remains as the last part. Along with the Reformation a revision of *Lucidarius* was provided with the same title, *Mester Lucidarius*, as in the German printed versions. This so-called younger Danish *Lucidarius* was printed many times in the following centuries as a chapbook.

Like its Danish namesake, the Icelandic *Lucidarius* is an original and creative rewriting of the German model. The Icelandic author creates within the structural and thematic framework of the *Lucidarius* genre a work with a focus on the miraculous aspects of human life. The theological and biblical sections of the German source of translation have been elaborated, illustrated and explained by the supply of biblical, homiletic and legendary material from Icelandic texts, and the cosmographic and geographic passages are adapted to an Icelandic audience by working in an Old Icelandic book on geography. This rewriting of the German *Lucidarius* reflects the work of a compiler who is concerned with hermeneutics and education. Thus, the Icelandic version is representative of the time and place of its origin and a significant and elucidating text in the research field of Icelandic history of education and mentality in the time of transition between Catholicism and Protestantism.

Icelandic *Lucidarius*-manuscripts

The Icelandic *Lucidarius* is transmitted in a few post-medieval manuscripts; the oldest being a fragment from the beginning of the 17th century, while the youngest are copies from 1893. One manuscript has a complete text, two most of the text, three manuscripts contain extracts and, finally, four fragmentary pieces of texts have survived in one manuscript. Some of the manuscripts belong to the category 'miscellanies' a term often used in manuscript catalogues to cover manuscripts with a variety of different texts, and a few are composite too, put together from originally different physical objects.

Taking an approach from Material Philology one may supply a description of a manuscript asking the following questions: What does the physical manuscript tell of its intellectual content? Is it possible to draw any conclusions on the use and the purpose of a manuscript from the physical look of the book, the script, layout, binding etc.?

Additional Manuscript 4889 in the British Library consists of four physically different parts written by different unidentified scribes during the 18th century. The first two parts date from the beginning of the century, and the last two were written later on. All the parts are in octavo. The four original units were soon united to one book, before the manuscript was presented to the museum in January 1778 or in March 1781. No title page indicates that the collection has been looked on as a textual unity, but as it comprises the same literary genres as the other *Lucidarius* miscellanies it seems reasonable to

assume that the parts were brought together by tradition and not by accident or for pragmatic reasons. In a whole the texts make up a book of knowledge that communicates old and popular knowledge about the physical world and divine Creation through different literary genres. A closer examination of the paper supporting the four parts might give some idea of the production of the contemporary parts, where they were produced in the same cultural context and regarded as parts of a larger whole.

Lbs 2305 4to in the Icelandic National Library is in turn planned as a whole book. The scribe has carefully worked out the title page surrounded by a coloured frame decorated with geometrical patterns and flower ornamentation. Attention is drawn to the title of the book, *Kálfavíkurbók*, which is written in coloured fracture. The decorated frame and the following list of contents are not the inventions of the scribe or a contemporary illustrator but most likely reproductions from the source of the manuscript. Here it may be mentioned that the well-known saga manuscript AM 426 fol. in the Arnamagnaeian Collection has a similar though more refined decoration of the title page, not to mention the illustrations of the saga heroes Egill and Grettir and an index. On the front page of Lbs 2305 the reader is informed that the book is a copy of an old manuscript, that it is written by the Icelander Sighvatur Grímsson Borgfirðingur on his farm Höfði in Dýrafjörður in the year 1893. One may try to answer the question whether the transcriber made any changes of the original, changes determined by an audience or a specific use. He has been true to the text of the original, indicating lacunae or illegible text by pricking. The *Lucidarius* text in Lbs 2305 4to appears to be more easily read than the text in BLAdd 4889. There are punctuation marks, and it is marked when a question switches on to an answer by a new line or a larger space between the words, but still no indication of paragraphs and no rubrics. The readers were expected to be trained.

Sighvatur entered his handwritten books in a catalogue where he gives the information that *Kálfavíkurbók* contains different kinds of knowledge and is a transcription of an old manuscript from 1695. This manuscript is lost, but the title reflects an indication of locality, and the dating makes it reasonable to connect *Kálfavíkurbók* with Jón Þorðarson, a scribe who worked for Magnús Jónsson in Vigur and lived at Kálfavík on the east side of Skötufjörður in Ögurssveit in Norður-Ísafjarðarsýsla. The book, a thick exercise book with a red paper cover, gives the impression of having been written for private purposes. This presumption is supported by the fact that Sighvatur in the same year wrote another manuscript containing some passages of *Lucidarius*. This manuscript, Lbs 4614 4to, is a book commissioned by a local farmer. It is therefore more attractively produced than Sighvatur's own copy and has been bound in a half binding with a leather spine. The title is not *Kálfavíkurbók* but 'merkileg fróðleiksbók', which provides the reader with more information on content as well as use than the title *Kálfavíkurbók*, which tell us about the origin

of the book.

Traditional and New Philology

What does one do when one would like to make an edition of the Icelandic *Lucidarius*? Does one prepare a traditional historical-philological edition on the basis of the stemmatic method (the Best Text Edition) or does one try a rather new practice: an edition based on the theories of New Philology.

Textual criticism and the editorial technique of traditional classical philology were recently challenged by a chiefly American initiative whose manifesto was presented in *The New Philology* (a theme number of *Speculum* from 1990). New Philology is a theory of medieval writing in the vernacular and it brings the physical manuscripts and manuscript culture into the focus of philology. The intention, it was claimed, was a renewal, rethinking and re-establishment of philology as the uniting discipline within medieval studies. One of the pioneers, Bernard Cerquiglini, stated the basic standpoints in 1989 (*Eloge de la variante. Histoire critique de la philologie*). Medieval writing is variance, mobility and rewriting, which is why the content of the manuscripts must be understood as synchronic texts of equal value. This view of medieval writing as an open and variable text that cannot be fixed makes it absurd to employ a concept of the original text or the author, according to new philologists. The focus of textual criticism has changed from the relationship between text witnesses and the establishment of the best text to a presentation and reproduction of the individual witnesses and the texts as a corpus. The editorial consequence is that all texts are reproduced in diplomatic and synoptic editions, for which electronic media are especially suitable, as discussed by Matthew James Driscoll in his plenary lecture at this conference. An electronic edition reproduces the variance and the variety of the writing, which a traditional critical edition reduces.

New Philology has developed into Material Philology, which focuses on the material artefacts and their historical context (G. Nichols: 'Why Material Philology?', *Philologie als Textwissenschaft*, pp. 10-30. 1997). Medieval literature both in theory and in practice must be studied by reinserting literature into its historical context, and the material artefacts, the manuscripts themselves, are the nucleus in this historical context. The manuscripts are more than text witnesses and historical documents, in fact they are themselves historical and cultural events because they are material. They often are the only surviving witnesses or the most reliable witnesses to the production, reception and dissemination of texts in their social and historical context. A medieval scribe or illuminator was influenced by his social milieu in the same way as a later transcriber was influenced by his historical context. The physical aspects of a manuscript: the script such as it is written on the support of parchment or paper with scribal errors and corrections, additions and omissions, layout,

illuminations, decoration and binding all give information about the conditions of production. Thus the manuscripts are unique witnesses to history, whatever their position in a stemma may be. A corrected and constructed reproduction of a manuscript text supplied with text material from other manuscripts does not represent the medieval manuscript: it is a post-medieval reconstruction, and such a text can not tell anything at all about the social and historical context of the manuscript.

Some have asked the question: what is new in New Philology? Some philologists have interpreted the theories of New Philology as ideological criticism without any methods of textual criticism or editorial technique. They are concerned about abandoning the printed critical editions in favour of electronic multiple-texts versions. The future reception of the texts by a modern audience depends on the philologists' textual work and the interpretation of the manuscript material, since most modern readers are not experts in manuscripts and not experienced in the reading of handwritten texts (Ingrid Bennewitz: 'Alte "neue" Philologie?', *Philologie als Textwissenschaft*, pp. 46-61).

In the historical-philological tradition there has always been a great interest in codicology and manuscript culture, and new philological synoptic editions with diplomatic or semi-diplomatic transcriptions of the texts along with facsimile editions are produced all the time. The newest initiatives and projects on digitization of manuscripts: pictures, texts and descriptions are results of new philological practice.

What is 'new' in New Philology is the focus on the manuscripts as material objects and social and historical witnesses and the stressing on the analysis of the correlation between the textual content and the physical appearance that tells about production, reception and dissemination of medieval literature.

Thus far, New Philology has been concerned more with textual theory and less with practice, and no specific methods of editing have been developed, though it has been suggested that single-manuscript editions where textual variants are treated according to their historical value, not their value for textual criticism, are to be preferred.

One might be slightly sceptical towards a new philological edition based on a material and socio-centric textual criticism. Will it be a useful and scientifically sound basic or standard edition? The qualities of such an edition may hardly be evaluated without a traditional critical edition that has considered the textual tradition reproducing an 'authoritative' text. But undoubtedly the textual theory of New Philology is a fruitful supplement to the methods of traditional philology, and the focusing on the materiality of the manuscripts and manuscript culture brings a renewal to philology.

As far as the Icelandic *Lucidarius* is concerned, the textual variance is small, so my interest is focused on the text itself as a member of the European *Lucidarius* tradition and as an almost unknown text in the history of Icelandic literature. It is fascinating to see how the *Lucidarius* concept has been adapted

to an Icelandic audience. The manuscripts are relatively young and they give information of the conditions of production when they were produced. If one wants to learn something about what people might be concerned about in the late Middle Ages, one has to study the text as a non-material witness. The physical manuscripts may tell us about the life of the text after its composition.

If one wants to prepare a standard edition, a best-text edition, one cannot avoid the stemmatic method of traditional philology. The purpose of such a qualitative textual critique is to establish the Icelandic author's original work, if possible, and the best way to describe the textual tradition is thought to be through stemmatic work. The variance and variety in the reproduction of the Icelandic *Lucidarius* must be documented in the textual apparatus and described in the codicological and philological sections of the introduction. This author-centric view focusing on the text and the interpretative work is to some extent opposed to the view of New Philology with its open and dynamic textual concept. A new philological electronic edition containing pictures of every manuscript and transcriptions of every text gives the reader the opportunity to study all the text witnesses and to study the dissemination of a work. It is going to be interesting to investigate the consequences of the different philological approaches for textual editing. I am sure that traditional textual criticism is facing a strong competitor in New Philology, especially if one is concerned with the production, dissemination and reception of medieval and post-medieval literature. So the answer to the question about which type of edition one is going to prepare is that one does not just produce a traditional critical edition, but also a new philological electronic version.