

On a New Edition of Scaldic Poetry.

By Bjarne Fidjestøl

Nearly 30 years ago, Scandinavian scholars met in Copenhagen to discuss problems in their common discipline, "nordisk filologi". The lectures from the conference have been printed in Acta philologica scandinavica 19 (1950). One of them was a short paper entitled "Planer om en ny udgave af skjaldedigtingen", read by Jón Helgason.

As an introduction, Jón Helgason apologizes for the word plans in the title of his lecture: "Der foreligger ingen planer, kun en tanke, et haab. At en ny udgave er paa-trængende nødvendig, er forlængst erkendt fra alle sider." This statement still holds true, in spite of Ernst A. Kock's edition, the first volume of which appeared in the very year of the Copenhagen conference (1946), and in spite of the most welcome photographic reprint of Finnur Jónsson's edition in 1967 and 1973. My impression is, however, that the scaldic poetry is nowadays studied more than ever throughout the world (cp. my recension article in Maal og Minne 1-2/1985), and even new editions of parts of the scaldic corpus have been produced. In my opinion it is thus now high time to continue the discussion initiated by Jón Helgason 30 years ago.

The main reason why no one has had the courage to assail this task yet - as far as I know - is of course that it is an overwhelming one, taking into account modern standards of scholarly edition. Perhaps we should be grateful to Finnur Jónsson for the very imperfections of his edition, which at least has the crucial advantage of its actual existence. My contribution in this paper towards actual plans for a new edition, will therefore be a proposal that we consider a meaningful division of this overwhelming task, which could possibly also lead to a division of the labour.

The most obvious insufficiency of Finnur Jónsson's edition is the lack of any account of its textual foundation, the relation between the manuscripts used. To counteract this fallacy, I think that a new edition should resolutely take the textual transmission as its point of departure. This will certainly lead to some dilemmas compared with the alternative point of departure, namely the texts themselves as literary entities, the poetical output of individual scalds. This dilemma, the textual versus the literary point of view, will be my main concern in this lecture. In my view, it is perhaps less embarrassing than might have been expected.

One of the most striking features of the textual transmission of scaldic poetry as we know it from Finnur Jónsson's Den norsk-islandske Skjaldedigtning A I-II, is the fact that the great bulk of the poems is transmitted in a great number of texts, which can be grouped together into a small number of separate textual corpora with rather little overlapping from one group to another. For our purposes, we might distinguish between five groups, my main concern being with the first two or three of them:

- 1) The kings' saga group, consisting of historical literature concerning countries outside Iceland.
- 2) The poetological group, consisting of treatises on grammar and poetology, mainly Snorri's Edda.
- 3) The Icelandic group, consisting of historical literature concerning Iceland, mainly the so-called family sagas and the Sturlunga collection. (In labelling this group "Icelandic", we do not forget that all groups are nearly totally Icelandic in origin.)
- 4) The fornaldar saga group, which, however, to a great extent might be excluded as transmitters of scaldic poetry, if one decided to define their poetry as eddic.
- 5) The religious group, including bishops' sagas (if they should not be placed in the Icelandic group), apostle sagas, and a number of manuscripts transmitting religious poetry as such, not as quotations in prosaic works, e.g. AM 713, 4to.

As for religious poetry on the two Norwegian missionary kings, transmitted as separate entities in manuscripts of the kings' sagas, such as Geisli in Flateyjarbók or pseudo-Hallfreðr's Ólafsdrápa in Bergsbók, it is a matter of opinion whether they should be put in group one or five.

Particularly within the kings' saga group there is a large amount of overlapping from one work to another. Of the 419 stanzas in the first and third parts of Heimskringla, e.g., about 350 (84%) are also quoted in other kings' sagas related to Heimskringla; in the second part, Ólafs saga, considerably less: 56 out of 178 (31%). (Note that here and elsewhere in this paper, I make no distinction between full stanzas of 8 lines and lesser parts of stanzas quoted separately. I also have to confess to some casual approximations in my countings, which should not alter the general impression, however.)

Across the main groups, however, there is very little overlapping, especially if the poetological group is not considered.

The kings' saga group might be extensially defined as consisting of the following works:

- 1) Ágrip
- 2) Oldest and Legendary saga of Saint Ólafr
- 3) Orkneyinga saga
- 4) Jómsvíkinga saga
- 5) Oddr monk's saga of Ólafr Tryggvason
- 6) Sverris saga
- 7) Morkinskinna
- 8) Fagrskinna
- 9) Heimskringla and the separate saga of Saint Ólafr
- 10) Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar
- 11) The great saga of Ólafr Tryggvason
- 12) Knýtlinga saga
- 13) The Hulda/Hrokkinskinna compilation

14) A final group of various minor texts, including Hákonar saga Ívarssonar and certain þættir in Flateyjarbók, Hauksbók etc. (Note that parts of the great saga of Ólafr Tryggvason and of Flateyjarbók belong to the Icelandic group, e.g. the Hallfreds saga.)

In this group of sagas are quoted about 1270 different stanzas, major poems transmitted as separate entries (e.g. Geisli) not being included. About 60 of these kings' saga stanzas are also quoted in the poetological group, but only about 30 in the Icelandic group. Of these 30 stanzas, 10 are by Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskald, due to the overlapping between Fostbrœðra saga and the sagas of Saint Ólafr, and just as many are caused by the overlapping connected with Ólafr Tryggvason's missionary initiative in Iceland. Apart from these two groups, the overlapping between the kings' saga group and the Icelandic group amounts to next to nothing.

My conclusion so far is that from the textual point of view it would be a safe editorial policy to edit the kings' saga stanzas and the Icelandic saga stanzas separately. The same might apply to the religious group and eventually to the Fornaldar saga group.

A particular problem is created, however, by the poetological group, which consists of the Snorre-Edda complex and the 3rd and the 4th grammatical treatises. (Also the 1st grammatical treatise might be included on account of its two tiny fragments.) This group transmits about 570 scaldic stanzas. Slightly more than 10% of them also occur in the kings' saga group, whereas only about 20 are found in the Icelandic group, nearly half of these in the Egill's saga. Its affinity to the kings' saga group is thus considerably greater than its affinity to the Icelandic group. This is what might be expected, of course, as Snorri Sturluson, and perhaps his nephew Ólafr Þórðarson, appear to be authors of major works in each group. However, the vast majority of

stanzas also in the poetological group is found only there. Of the 373 different scaldic stanzas quoted in Snorri's Edda, this work is our sole source for 317 (not 280 as stated in Fidjestøl 1982:44).

My conclusion is that, considering an edition from the textual point of view, there might be some reason to incorporate the poetological group in the kings' saga group, but there are, of course, also evident counter arguments.

The textual point of view also has its obvious drawbacks. Even though there is little overlapping as for individual stanzas, the overlapping as regards individual poets is by necessity much greater. To take one instance, Þórér Kolbeinsson is quoted as author of 30 stanzas in all, 16 in different kings' sagas, three of which are also found in the poetological group, another stanza is quoted only in Snorri's Edda, and finally 13 stanzas in different Icelandic sagas (12 in Bjarnar saga hitdólakappa and 1 in Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu). But this case is hardly a typical one. An effort to evaluate also this type of overlapping will show the following result:

Of 117 different scalds quoted in kings' sagas 57 (49%) are quoted only there, and another 35 only in kings' sagas and in the poetological group, whereas 25 scalds (21%) are also quoted in the Icelandic group.

If we treat the kings' sagas and the poetological group as one unit, we get all in all an amount of somewhat more than 150 scalds, about 40 of which overlap with the Icelandic group. More than half of them are minor scalds, however, of whose poetry less than 4 stanzas are known. But even if these are disregarded, between 15 and 20 scalds remain in company with Þórér Kolbeinsson in the group of "divided" scalds, among whom are several of the most important ones, such as Egill Skallagrímsson, Hallfreðr vandræðaskald, Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskald, Kolbeinn Tumason, Snorri Sturluson and his two literary nephews (for more details, cp. Appendix).

This divided group constitutes our principal dilemma, and taken in isolation, it strongly favours an edition like Skjaldedigting, where literary history is the guiding line.

Nevertheless, I for one am inclined to think that we should still consider a policy of edition according to the textual point of view - not only for the sake of conveniency, but also as a matter of principle. Our situation is that we have no more immediate access to the scaldic poetry as it once flourished as a living, orally produced kind of poetry, in its origin much older than the age of literacy in our countries. We know the scaldic poetry only in a secondary state of being, so to speak, in the way it has been transmitted in literary texts, mostly as quotations, not even as complete poetic entities. My point is, that an edition guided by considerations of textual transmission rather than by literary history, would help in clarifying this state of affairs.

I do not want to stress this point of view, however. After all, our interest in this poetry is caused by its intrinsic literary and historical value, and in the last instance the editorial policy will have to serve this interest. Even if the textual point of view will be predominant in a new edition, the scattered fragments will have to be presented as the remnants of greater poems by individual poets. Anyhow, an editor would have to see to how the inconveniencies of splitting up the production of major scalds according to groups of transmission could be retaliated. He could e.g. give an account of the poetry of each scald in question, which may be found outside the actual edition. The ideal solution would of course be team work, so that the different transmission groups could be treated at a time. Then the question whether the poetry of the "divided" scalds should be gathered in one volume or not, would be reduced to a minor problem of presentation.

Thus in my opinion the kings' saga group, and perhaps the poetological treatises, should be treated as a whole, as the base for an edition of the scaldic poetry quoted in them. A special problem is created by stanzas quoted in more than one separate work. Also Jón Helgason considers whether it would be advisable in such cases to print the different versions separately, e.g. one Fagrskinna text alongside with one Heimskringla text. This question can hardly be answered as a matter of principle. As a matter of fact, different prose works very seldom show greater variance in their transmittance of a common stanza than do separate manuscripts and groups of manuscripts of one single work. With notable exceptions, such as Kalfsflokkur by Bjarni Hallbjarnarson, where Fagrskinna is at fairly great variance with Heimskringla, a scrutiny of the actual variants given in Skjaldedigtning A will show that the group of kings' sagas in its totality may safely be treated as representatives of one single literary branche of transmission of scaldic texts (cp. Fidjestøl 1982:45-60). Prudence will commend some restraint in the application of this principle, but as a main rule, I think that we should labour with a stemmatic model, where the archetype of the actual stanza is considered the starting point for the works in which it is quoted.

Let me take an example. Grani skald, stanza 2a (Skj. A I:387) is quoted in 6 manuscripts of Snorri's Edda, as well as in 3 manuscripts of kings' sagas of the Morkinskinna group, namely:

- T = Bibl. Utrecht, cod. ms. nr. 1374
- R = Gml. kgl. saml. 2367, 4to
- U = Upps. univ., De la Gardie nr. 11
- 1eB = AM 748 II, 4to (1e/beta)
- 748 = AM 748 I, 4to
- 757 = AM 757, 4to
- Mk = Gml. kgl. saml. 1009, fol. (Morkinskinna)
- 66 = AM 66, fol. (Hulda)
- Hr = Gml. kgl. saml. 1010, fol. (Hrokkinskinna)

Its stemma should presumably be something like this (cp. Snorri's Edda 1931:XXXVIII, Louis-Jensen 1977:7):

Grani 2a (oral original)

I

Grani 2a (literary archetype)

I

 Snorri's Edda (archetype)

Morkinskinna (archetype)

*y		*z		Mk	*H
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T	R	1eE	U		66
			*æ		Hr

			748	757	

Lines 1-2 are not found in T, R, 1eE and U, which according to our stemma means either that they are omitted in *y as well as in U, or that they are added from unknown source in *æ. The line pairs give meaning separately, and ll. 1-2 are not needed as an illustration of the point in question in the prose text ('king' named doggligr). The most interesting variants, however, are to be found in ll. 3-4, which according to Skj. A show the following variation worth noting in our context:

Mk	hrip	:	hycc	:	hilmí	:	gørþo
66	horð	:	veitk	:		:	
Hr	haurd	:	verk	:	hilmir	:	giordi
748	hirð	:		:		:	styrév
757	(like 748)						

Mk hvgins íol vip nes þíolar

66, Hr, 748, 757 (like Mk)

The most comprehensible text is that of 66, I think: 'I know "the king to have made" (i.e. that the king made) a hard raven's yule (i.e. battle) at þjólarne.' The Hr text could be understood as 'The king made a hard work - the raven's

yule at þjólnes, but for several reasons this interpretation is inferior. The other readings hardly give any understandable meaning. Thus if I only had the kings' saga text, I would have to conclude, that 66, representing *H, had the proper text, which had been corrupted in Mk. However, the total transmission of the lines leads to another conclusion, which is that no single manuscript has taken care of the original reading, and that the text of 66 is the result of an intelligent guess work. I presume that the reading of the archetype is as follows: Hykk hird gerðu hilmi Hugins jól við þjólnes - 'I think the retinue made a raven's feast for the king at þjólnes.' If I am right, one might expect hilmis: 'The retinue of the king made ...', and so Finnur Jónsson emends the text, but I suppose that also the dative makes sense. The point is that most of the variation could be explained originating in a misinterpretation of hilmi as an accusative, object of hykk.

The fact that several literary works often quote the same stanzas, may create problems for the editor, but in more cases it will help us in finding the proper text.

Another aspect should be underlined. I totally agree with Jón Helgason that an editor of scaldic poetry cannot be supposed to recreate the stemmas of the prose works that quote the stanzas. He would have to rely on work previously done and, after all, quite a lot of work has actually been done since Jón Helgason read his lecture in 1946. However, an editor of scaldic poetry might contribute to a refinement of established stemmas by new observations. Thanks to the overlaps in the transmission of the stanzas, the scaldic poetry is a privileged text category as for the critical evaluation of manuscript groups, as the parallel text may help to decide which one of two rivalling variants should be considered a corruption, and which one the most correct one. Well known criteria like the lectio facillior rule may be fallacious.

Even if a scaldic poetry editor may be relieved of the burden of making fresh stemmas for the sagas, he will have to be thoroughly acquainted with peculiarities of the various manuscripts and scribal hands. As far as possible, the graphematic system of each hand should be known and, in particular it would be rewarding to get an impression of the "scaldic competence" of individual scribes, as the task of copying a scaldic stanza may differ very much from that of copying a prose text. The text is harder to understand, and the exact form of the message matters more. Like other people, scribes varied considerably in their capacity of understanding scaldic poetry and evaluating its form. Some scribes will be inclined to make more errors than usual, while others will perhaps take care to be particularly careful. An editor will, in particular, have to beware of the highly competent scribe, who is prone to emend the text, much in the vein of competent editors in modern times. The scribe responsible for the Hulda text cited above may be an illustration. An examination of textual variation in the greater saga of Saint Ólafr, where there is a great number of manuscripts, is particularly rewarding from this point of view. There several competent scribes, capable of making corrections of a modern standard may be detected, such as a certain *d, which is the common denominator for AM 325, 4to, AM 75a, fol, AM 73, fol and AM 78, fol (cp. Jón Helgason 1941:1103). Also the writer (first hand) of AM 61, fol. seems to have taken particular interest in the stanzas. Observations of this kind will give some contribution to the reception history of the scaldic poetry, in this case, its reception by the scribes, and they will be in accordance with sound principles of edition, as e.g. stated by Gabriele Schieb: "Denn das, was man mit dem Fachausdruck der Recensio belegt hat, die Zusammenstellung, Prüfung und Beurteilung aller erhaltenen Zeugen eines literarischen Denkmals, möchte nach unseren heutigen Ansprüchen nicht nur einseitig vom Gesichtspunkt des Autortextes, sondern auch vom Gesichtspunkt der Einzelhandschrift als historischem Individuum vorgenommen werden" (Schieb 1967:406).

Where it can be detected, active scribal contribution to the understanding and restitution of scaldic verse should probably be made visible in an edition, for instance by quoting variants in their context more extensively than Finnur Jónsson has done, whenever there is some evident connection between different variants in a manuscript. Again the stanza quoted above may serve as an example. Finnur Jónsson gives firstly hird as the 748 and 757 variant to Mk hriþ, and then styrðv as their variant to gørþo, where perhaps the whole line should be quoted for the sake of clarity. But this is, of course, also a question of printing expenses.

A part from this, I adhere to Finnur Jónsson's method of presenting the variants, giving a diplomatic rendering of one selected manuscript with variant forms from all other manuscripts considered to be textually relevant. They should only be more properly ordered according to stemma considerations than in his edition. The variant apparatus should aspire to completeness, as far as the variation may be considered to have any interest for meaning, form or textual criticism.

I do not think that a new edition should have a critically emended text like the one i Skj. B. Instead, each poem should be accompanied by a commentary, more in the vein of Finnur Jónsson's volume 4 of his Heimskringla edition or, to take a more recent example, Gabriel Turville-Petre's Scaldic poetry, a commentary where ambiguities in the text and uncertainties in the interpretation should not be hidden away. The temptation to make such a commentary excessively long must be resisted, as bibliographical hints may save place. As a conclusion, I think that the text should be "taken up" in prose order with translation of kennings. If possible, printing devices that will take care of inherent ambiguities in the text should be figured out. Examples may be the proper connections between attributives and their head words and adverbial phrases which may be associated with different sentences.

I am not much in favour of translating the text into a foreign language. As well Finnur Jónsson's clumsy Danish prose as Ernst A. Kock's showy Swedish demonstrate the old saying traduttore traditore. A prose version with commentary should do. As a help for those who study the scaldic poetry for the sake of history, however, I think that a sort of historical regestum for each poem should be established, taking care of all historical hard facts. Such a regest might include information not found in the stanza itself, which may be inferred from the prose context in which it is quoted, properly set apart typographically from the primary information of the very stanzas. A regest might also serve as the base for an historical index.

Finally, I give a very rough sketch of how an edition of the kings saga poetry possibly might be composed:

- I General introduction bearing on
 - a) the total textual transmission
 - b) general problems of interpretation of scaldic texts
 - c) the present edition.
- II Texts.
 - 1) Textual introduction to each poem, with references to the general introduction.
 - 2) Relevant quotations from the texts in which the stanzas are transmitted.
 - 3) Diplomatic rendering of one selected text, presented in stanza form.
 - 4) Variant readings.
 - 5) Commentary with bibliographical references, concluding with a prose account of the stanza.
 - 6) Historical regest.
- III Indexes.

Literature:

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- Turville-Petre, Gabriel 1976: Scaldic Poetry. Oxford.

APPENDIX

The purpose of the appendix is to give a more detailed survey of the transmission of scaldic poetry as it is divided between the main groups. Only major scalds quoted in the kings' saga and the poetological groups are considered. "Major scalds" are poets, of whose poetry more than 3 stanzas (of 8 lines in average) are known.

1. Quoted in kings' sagas only:

Torf-Einarr
 Gopþormr sindri
 Bersi Skaltorfuson
 Bjarni Hallbjarnarson
 Halli stirdi
 Anon. Líðsmannaflokkur
 Magnús berfóttur
 Björn krepphendur
 Gísli Illugason
 Ívarr
 Kolli þrúdi
 Oddi lítli
 Ármóður
 Blakkr
 Þorkeil Gíslason

2) Quoted in kings' sagas and in the poetological group:

Þjóðólfr ór Hvini
 Þorbjörn hornklofi
 Jórunn skaldmætur
 Anon. Eiríksmál
 Anon. Bjarkamál
 Eyjólfur dádaskaldur
 Sigvatr Þórðarson
 Óttarr svartur

Skúli Þorsteinsson
 Hallvarðr háreksblesi
 Hofgarða-Refr
 Þórarinn loftunga
 Þórdr Særeksson
 Arnórr jarlaskald
 Haraldr harðráði
 Þjóðólfr Arnórsson
 Þølverkr Arnórsson
 Sneglu-Halli
 Valgarðr á Velli
 Þorleikr fagri
 Stúfr Þórðarson
 Steinn Herdísarson
 Þorkell hamarskald
 Markús Skeggjason
 Einarr Skúlason
 Halldórr skvaldri
 Þórarinn stuttfeldr
 Hallar-Steinn
 Bjarni byskup

3) Quoted in the poetological group only:

Eilífr Goðrúnarson
 Eilífr Kúlnasveinn

In the following will be enumerated the major scalds, whose poetry is quoted as well in the kings' saga/poetological groups as in other groups, mainly the Icelandic one ("divided" scalds). In order to make the problem measurable, the number of stanzas in each group is given. The number of stanzas is here reduced to "normal" stanzas of 8 lines (6 in ljóðaháttur). I also add the sum of stanzas

quoted, and when this sum is less than the arithmetical sum of the numbers given under each group, it means that some stanzas are quoted in more than one group.

4) Quoted in kings' sagas, in the poetological group and in the Icelandic group:

	Kings' sagas	Poet. group	Icel. group	Sum
Bragi Boddason	1	17 1/4	1	18 1/4
Eyvindr Finnsson	43 1/2	8	1	46 1/2
Glúmr Geirason	10	2 1/2	1/4	12 1/2
Kormakr Ögmundarson	1	3 1/4	62 1/4	66 1/2
Einarr skálaglamm	27 1/2	7	2	33 1/2
Ulfur Uggason	1	7	1	8
Þórleifr jarlsskald	4	1/2	4	8 1/2
Tindr Hallkellsson	10	1/2	2	12
Hallfreðr vandræðaskald	28	5 1/2	27 3/4	64 1/4
Þórðr Kolbeinsson	15 1/4	1 1/2	13	28 3/4
Máni	3	1/2	1	4 1/2
Snorri Sturluson	4	103 3/4	5 3/8	109 1/8
Ólafr Þórðarson	13 1/2	1	2	16 1/2
Sturla Þórðarson	95 1/2	1/2	7 1/2	103 1/4

5) Quoted in kings' saga and in the Icelandic group:

	Kings' sagas	Icel. group	Sum
Þórmodr Kolbrúnarskald	15	37	40
Guðmundr Oddsson	1	8	8

6) Quoted in the poetological group and in the Icelandic group:

	Poet. group	Icel. group	Sum
Egill Skallagrímsson	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	116	116 $\frac{1}{4}$
Holmgöngu-Bersi	$\frac{3}{4}$	14	14
Víga-Glúmr	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	10 $\frac{1}{2}$
Gunnlaugr ormsunga	$\frac{1}{2}$	12 $\frac{1}{2}$	12 $\frac{1}{2}$
Björn Hítðólakappi	$\frac{1}{4}$	23 $\frac{1}{2}$	23 $\frac{1}{2}$
Grettir Ásmundarson	$\frac{1}{2}$	15 $\frac{3}{4}$	15 $\frac{3}{4}$
Ólafr Leggsson	2 $\frac{3}{8}$	1	3 $\frac{3}{8}$
Nikolaus Bergsson	1	3	4
Kolbeinn Tumason	$\frac{1}{2}$	14	14 $\frac{1}{2}$

