

# A STEMMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE *PROSE EDDA*

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## Introduction

*The Prose Edda*, attributed to Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241), is preserved in eight manuscripts predating 1600. They are as follows:

R = r = Codex Regius, GKS 2367 4to (c.1300)

T = Codex Trajectinus, Traj 1374 (c. 1595)

W = Codex Wormianus, AM 242 fol. (c.1350)

U = Codex Upsaliensis, DG 11 (c.1300–25)

H = w = AM 756 4to (15th century)<sup>1</sup>

A = AM 748 I b 4to (c.1300–25)

B = AM 757 a 4to (c.1400)

C = AM 748 II 4to = AM 1e β fol. (c. 1400)<sup>2</sup>

For some time the prevailing view has been that it is difficult or impossible to elucidate satisfactorily the relationship between these manuscripts.

The introduction to *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 2 (Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages II)* contains no fewer than eleven stemmas for the various sources used in it, including for example *Orkneyinga saga*, *Knýtlinga saga* and *Heimskringla*. But the edition declines to draw up a stemma for the *Edda*, noting rather that 'it is very difficult to establish a stemma for the mss of *SnE*' (Gade 2009, lxxvii), and citing Anthony Faulkes's edition of the first part of the *Edda*. Faulkes has this to say (2005, xxx):

Attempts have . . . been made to establish a stemma of the relationships of the principal manuscripts, but these have resulted in little agreement. While R, T and AM 748 II 4to clearly form one group and AM 748 I b 4to and AM 757 a 4to another, the relationships of these groups to W and U are more complicated than a conventional stemma can indicate.

On an even more dire note, Heimir Pálsson (2012, cxvii) has stated that any attempt to draw up a stemma is 'doomed to failure'.

<sup>1</sup> H is a fragmentary copy of preserved parts of W. Since it is a *codex descriptus* it is typically excluded from the stemmas. By happenstance H sometimes agrees with other manuscripts against W. In a future investigation of possible contamination in the Eddic tradition, H might serve as a control.

<sup>2</sup> For a handy comparative table of RWUABC see Guðrún Nordal 2001, 216–21.

With these warnings in mind it was not without trepidation that I began to study this subject. To my surprise I found more agreement between scholars than I had expected.

This article begins with a defence of stemmatics and then reviews previous work on the stemmatics of the *Prose Edda*. Then it moves on to build a case for what seems to me to be the most likely stemma. My results are closely aligned with those of van Eeden (1913) and Boer (1924).

## Two types of editions

When it comes to the editing of texts, medieval or otherwise, more than one method exists. One popular method, that of Joseph Bédier, is to select a ‘best manuscript’ and base the text on that, only bringing in text from other manuscripts when the main manuscript seems clearly wrong. Another method, the stemmatic method, attempts to establish the relations between the surviving witnesses and uses that to reconstruct, to the extent possible, the archetype from which all witnesses are descended.

The two most important editions of the *Prose Edda*, those of Finnur Jónsson and Anthony Faulkes, exemplify these two philosophies. Faulkes spells this out very clearly:

The text (from 5/13) is based solely on R: readings from other manuscripts are only quoted when the text of R is incoherent or has obvious omissions (Faulkes 2005, 73).

Reconstruction of the author’s original or of the archetype have both been judged impossible, and the text is based on R, supplemented where necessary (where the text does not give acceptable sense or is clearly damaged) from T, W and U (Faulkes 2007, xxiii).

Finnur Jónsson (1931a, xxxviii–xxxix) presents a stemma and then notes that he uses it, though not in a fully systematic way, to correct the text of R:

Vistnok er det sá, at de for grupperne fælles læsemåder repræsenterer den oprindeligste tekst; deres ordlyd er da ogsá meget hyppig optaget i hovedteksten i denne udgave. Fuldtud systematisk er dette dog ikke gennemfórt.

The textual difference between these two editions is smaller than the different statements of intent imply. Finnur is more loyal to the text of R than his stemma would allow him to be. And Faulkes—rightly, in my view—takes a fairly broad view of what constitutes a clear error in R. Two examples will illustrate this.

The description of Baldr in *Gylfaginning* has a sentence which goes like this in R (Finnur Jónsson 1931a, 29):

Hann er vitrastr Ásanna ok fegrstr taliðr ok líknsamastr

‘He is the wisest of the Æsir and he is considered the most beautiful and the most merciful.’

As far as I can see there is nothing incoherent or even odd about this sentence. If this were the only text we had it seems unlikely that anyone would have found it deficient or in need of emendation. But the other manuscripts containing this sentence (TWHU) all agree on ‘fegrst talaðr’ (most beautifully spoken) instead of ‘fegrstr taliðr’ (considered most beautiful) and Faulkes (2005, 23) emends the text based on this. Presumably he felt that the other manuscripts had the *lectio difficilior*—the participle of *telja* occurs several times in the *Edda* but the participle of *tala* only here.

There is another example in the description of the golden age of the Æsir. R has this sentence (Finnur Jónsson 1931a, 20):

öllum búsgögnum hǫfðu þeir af gulli  
‘they had all their household goods out of gold.’

This is a perfectly coherent sentence but Faulkes emends it to follow the other manuscripts (Faulkes 2005, 15):

öllum búsgögnum ok öllum reiðigögnum<sup>3</sup> hǫfðu þeir af gulli  
‘they had all their household goods and all their equipment out of gold.’

This is probably a case of the common form of scribal error (*homeoteleuton*) whereby the scribe accidentally jumps from one instance of a word (*gögn*) to another instance of that same word, leaving out the text in between. Faulkes rightly rectifies the omission.

### In defence of stemmatics

I will now bring up and answer various objections that have been raised to stemmatics and stemmatic editions, particularly in the context of the *Prose Edda*.

*Objection 1:* In order to establish a stemma, scholars proceed on the false assumption of a perfect original which is gradually degraded by careless copyists. But in reality, medieval scribes creatively shaped and improved the text they were working with. A scribe can correct errors in his exemplar—rendering futile the project of filiation by common errors. There is no guarantee that the most coherent and most sensible text is the most original.

<sup>3</sup> The word *reiðigögn* is a *hapax legomenon* and the exact meaning is difficult to pinpoint.

*Reply:* It is certainly true that scribes can, and often do, correct errors in their exemplars and that this fact makes stemmatics more difficult than it would otherwise be. And it often happens that the most attractive text is actually an innovation. But stemmatics is still not impossible, merely difficult. No copy made by a normal human being is without innovations. Certain errors and innovations are characteristic of scribal transmission and very hard for subsequent copyists to correct. And even when no single error offers absolute proof, the cumulative weight of the evidence can point strongly to a particular conclusion.

In practice, no philologist adheres to the nihilistic view that no conclusions can be drawn about the relationship between preserved witnesses. Faulkes declines to draw up a stemma for the *Prose Edda* but he is certainly not in a state of zero knowledge about their relations. He believes, for example, that H is a copy of W and hence not worth citing variants from, while T is not a copy of R—or any preserved manuscript—and *is* worth citing variants from. How do we know that H isn't a sister manuscript to W? How do we know that T isn't a copy of R in which many of R's errors have been fixed? A careful investigation will show that these possibilities are not tenable. And exactly the same sort of investigation can establish the evidence needed to build a stemma.

*Objection 2:* The project of building a stemma to reconstruct a putative archetype is misguided and places the focus in the wrong place. Attempting to establish one text using many manuscripts denies the fertility and multiplicity of the Eddic tradition. There is no one true *Edda* for scholars to reconstruct but rather each manuscript contains its own redaction and this should be brought forth and studied rather than swept under the table.

*Reply:* It is quite true that the medieval manuscripts contain different redactions, each of which is worthy of detailed study. But in no way does a stemmatic investigation detract from this. On the contrary, having a stemma assists us in understanding the sources of the redactors and the novelty of each redaction.

*Objection 3:* The manuscripts of the *Edda* might not all go back to the same authorial version. If there were two authorial versions there is no one true version to reconstruct and the whole project is revealed as ill-conceived.

*Reply:* If there were two authorial versions then one was based on the other and a stemma is still possible and informative. As an example,

Lorenzo Valla's analysis of the *Donation of Constantine* is extant in two authorial versions and this is no hindrance in building a stemma (Trovato 2014, 163).

Perhaps more to the point, I do not think the arguments for two surviving authorial versions of the *Prose Edda* are strong. I find Daniel Sävborg's (2012) account of the differences between RTW and U more persuasive than that of Heimir Pálsson (2010).

*Objection 4:* Basing an edition on one manuscript ensures consistency of style and delivers to readers an authentic medieval text; this is far preferable to a hybrid scholarly construction based on multiple manuscripts.

*Reply:* It is a valid and worthwhile task to publish the text of each *Edda* manuscript separately. But an edited text intended for a broad audience gains greatly from making use of all the witnesses. This is certainly true of Faulkes's edition, where the other manuscripts are used to correct the text of R on practically every page—much to the benefit of the text.

The point on authenticity of style is an important one. Certainly, a stemmatic edition should proceed with an analysis of the stylistic tendencies of the witnesses and an awareness of their age. Finnur Jónsson's edition tends to preserve archaic word forms in R even when the other manuscripts are united against it and this is a very reasonable choice—the archetype was, of course, more archaic than any extant manuscript.

I do not think it is generally true that an extant manuscript is more stylistically consistent than a reconstructed archetype. Two examples will illustrate this. In the first chapter of *Gylfaginning* (found only in RTW), the manuscripts have this text on Gefjun's oxen (Finnur Jónsson 1931a, 8):

en þat váru synir jötuns ok hennar (R)  
 en þat váru synir jötuns nokkurs ok hennar (TW)

Finnur Jónsson emends the text based on TW here but Faulkes does not (2005, 7). Which choice leaves us with more stylistic consistency? We can compare with a chapter later in *Gylfaginning* (Faulkes 2005, 44):

ok kom einn aptan at kveldi til jötuns nokkurs (R)

Since we have *nokkurs* here it would seem more stylistically consistent to include it also in the first sentence.

Another example is found in *Gylfaginning* where Þórr's helper, Þjálfi, is introduced. Faulkes has this text, following R (Faulkes 2005, 37):

Sonr búa hét Þjálfi  
 'The farmer's son was named Þjálfi'

Finnur (1931a, 49) emends *búa* to *búanda* based on the other witnesses. And this makes for a more consistent text since the word *búandi* is found multiple times in the Edda but *búi* only this once in R.

These examples are not cherry-picked. As far as I can see there is no general tendency for the innovations in R to improve stylistic consistency.

*Objection 5:* The Edda quotes a vast amount of poetry, some of which is also extant in other sources. The poetry quoted (apart from *Háttatal*) was not composed by the author of the *Edda* and a stemma of the *Prose Edda* cannot establish the original text. Making things more complicated, the individual scribes sometimes knew the poetry being quoted and followed their own memory rather than their exemplar.

*Reply:* This is all true. While the archetype had a good text of most of the poetry quoted in it, it did not have a flawless text. Indeed, sometimes it had text which we cannot make sense of. A coherent text will sometimes have to be sought in other sources, in anti-stemmatic readings or through conjecture. But a stemma still makes things easier rather than harder; it allows us to keep better track of what we are doing.

*Objection 6:* There is clearly a case for emending the main manuscript in cases where it is incoherent or where the other witnesses indicate that another sense is superior. But a stemmatic edition will also emend the text in cases where there is no real difference in meaning between the manuscripts. Take this sentence in Finnur Jónsson's edition (1931a, 43):

ok þaðan af falla þær ár er svá heita

R actually has *en* rather than *ok* and *ár þær* rather than *þær ár* but based on the agreement of the other manuscripts, Finnur has emended the text. This does not change the meaning in any appreciable way. What is the point of fiddling with the text like this?

*Reply:* It is useful for stylistic research to get as close as we can to the style of the original work—including such seemingly inconsequential details as word order or the choice between *en* and *ok*. This facilitates comparison with other works which might be by the same author or from the same time period. This can be a productive pursuit (see e.g. Hallberg 1968).

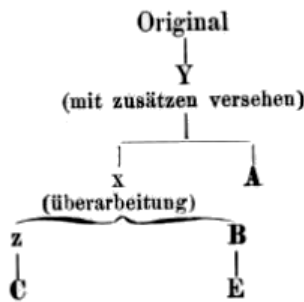
*Objection 7:* It is ironic to see so much effort expended in defence of Finnur Jónsson's edition. In a later section a different stemma is favoured over Finnur's, presumably rendering Finnur's editorial decisions invalid. This reveals the perils of stemmatic editing—a *best manuscript* edition is not subject to this sort of 'disproof'.

*Reply:* I argue for a stemma different from the one Finnur presented but one similar enough for the great majority of Finnur's emendations of R to be, in my view, justified. Most crucially, both stemmas imply that R should be emended when the other manuscripts agree against it. This accounts for a high percentage of Finnur's corrections.

For a much more detailed defence of classical stemmatic methods see Trovato 2014.

### Early work on the stemmatics of the *Prose Edda*

The oldest stemma of Eddic manuscripts which I am aware of is one by Ernst Wilken, published in 1878—though I am not sure that his elaborate and idiosyncratic diagram is properly understood as a stemma (Wilken 1878, 220). A more conventional stemma was presented a year later by Eugen Mogk:



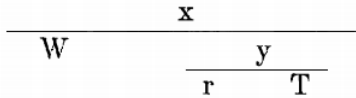
Mogk's stemma of RWHU (1879, 61); A = U; B = W; C = R; E = H

Mogk's result for the manuscripts of *Gylfaginning* is that H is a copy of W and that R and W share innovations against U. As far as I can tell, every subsequent scholar has agreed with this—though there has been plenty of disagreement on the extent to which the text was revised in the common ancestor of RW.

It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that the importance of the Codex Trajectinus was announced to the scholarly world with Finnur Jónsson's 1898 article on the original form and composition of the *Edda*. Finnur does not draw up a stemma for the manuscripts; his principal concern is whether U or RTW better represent the original form of the *Edda*. This question is dealt with in a number of later publications including Mogk 1925, Müller 1941, Zetterholm 1949, Baetke 1950, Krogmann 1959, Heimir Pálsson 2010, 2012 and Sävborg 2012. None of these works contains a new stemma.

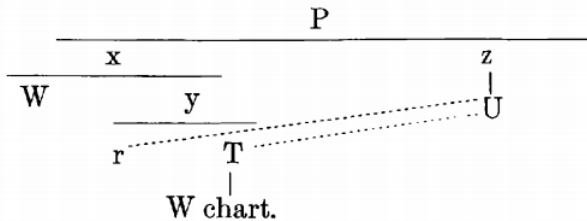
### Willem van Eeden's stemma

In 1913, Willem van Eeden published the text of Codex Trajectinus with an introduction dealing extensively with the question of the relationship between the manuscripts. First he devotes eighty pages to the relationship between R, T and W, using his editorial judgment to evaluate hundreds of variants, sometimes in considerable detail. He reaches the conclusion that R and T share many errors against W and must have a common ancestor. He draws up the following stemma:



### Van Eeden's stemma of RTW (1913, lxxxvii)

Having established this, van Eeden tosses U into the mix and soldiers on with evaluating variants for another forty pages. His ultimate result is that the U text is independent of RTW with a final stemma as follows:



### Van Eeden's stemma of RTWU, including (some of) the young paper leaves in W

The dotted lines between r, T and U represent van Eeden's idea that R and T have, in a handful of cases, been contaminated with U text. I have reservations about this theory; van Eeden seems rather quick to assume contamination where coincidence and independent corrections seem attractive possibilities. I will not deal with this further here since it is a thorny question which should not be allowed to obscure the main issue.

Van Eeden's investigation is representative of the high tide of traditional philology—vigorous and self-assured. I will not deny that van Eeden is overconfident in his editorial judgment but it also seems clear to me that he is right more often than he is wrong. The excruciatingly detailed case he made for his stemma stands unrefuted.



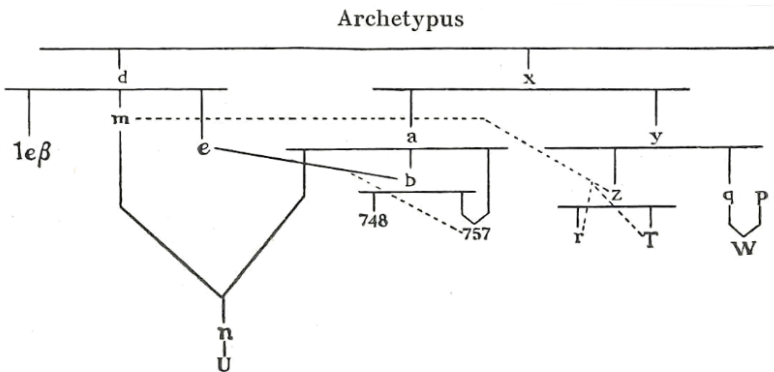
### R. C. Boer's stemma

The next work on Eddic stemmas appeared nine years later: a 128-page article by another Dutchman, Richard Constant Boer (1924, 156). The great advance in this work is that Boer considers not only RTWU but also ABC. Thus he is the first to produce a stemma of all the manuscripts.

Boer starts by comparing R, T, W and U. To demonstrate the independence of U, he adduces selected variants from throughout the text. He then demonstrates the special relationship between R and T by a close reading of selected passages. Nine pages into his article Boer pauses to note that his results agree entirely with van Eeden's even though the two scholars investigated different parts of the text. So far so good.

Boer then moves on to expand on van Eeden's work by including ABC. Another contrast with van Eeden is that Boer is not only concerned with variants at individual places in the text but also bases much of his argument on the overall arrangement and organisation of the material in each manuscript.

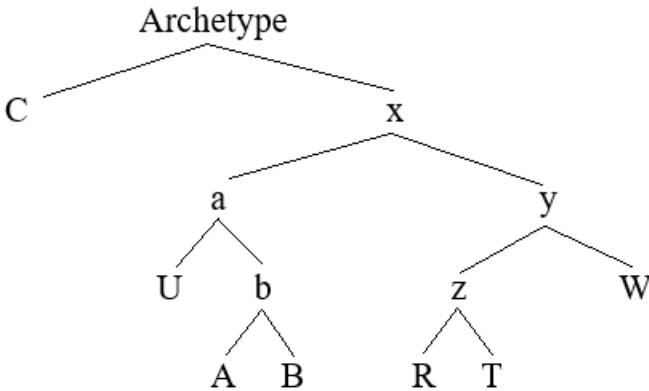
Ultimately Boer produces the following stemma:



### R. C. Boer's stemma of the *Edda* (1924, 263)

When I first saw this tangled mess I was highly sceptical and I read Boer's article with the intention of finding out where he had gone wrong. But as things turned out, Boer's arguments prevailed and ended up convincing me. To be sure, I am as sceptical of Boer's contamination theories (the dotted lines) as I am of van Eeden's. But Boer, too, realised that here he

was operating on the very edge of what could be ascertained: ‘Vi er i det hele nået til grænsen, måske lidt over grænsen af det, som kan opnås med de til vor rådighed stående midler’ (Boer 1924, 263). If we leave aside the difficult question of contamination and of secondary sources for W, U and B<sup>4</sup> we can produce a more readable stemma which I believe captures the essentials:



**A stemma based on Boer's but considering only  
the primary source of each manuscript**

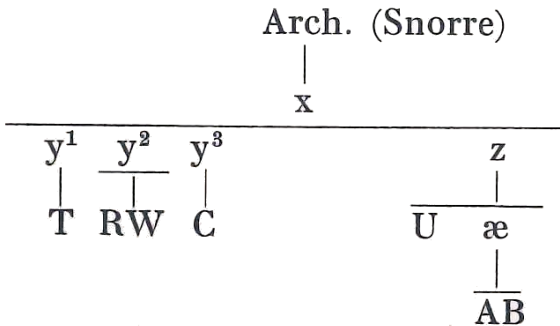
Before discussing this stemma further it will be necessary to consider Finnur Jónsson's alternative.

**Finnur Jónsson's stemma**

In his 1931 critical edition of the *Edda*, Finnur devotes some space to the relationship between the manuscripts. He briefly discusses van Eeden's study, notes that his main result is correct ('er hans hovedresultat dog rigtigt', xxxvii) and reproduces his stemma (without the dotted lines). Then he moves on to Boer and notes that he is also largely correct ('I det hele og store må man give Boer ret i hans gruppering', xxxviii).

We now come to the crucial part. Finnur notes that he disagrees with Boer on the placement of C, stating that it is closer to the RWT group than Boer had thought. Directly following this, Finnur produces a stemma of his own:

<sup>4</sup> For valuable discussion of the sources of W and U see not least Johansson 1997 and Mårtensson 2009.



### Finnur Jónsson's stemma (1931a, xxxviii)

Finnur does indeed place C closer to RTW than Boer did. But what comes as a surprise is the placement of RW as a subgroup instead of the expected RT. This is motivated by nothing in the preceding text and seems to contradict Finnur's discussion of *Grottasngr* where he says (Finnur Jónsson 1931a, xxxii):

Digtet, der i RT er uden indledning mekanisk føjet til kapitlet, mangler iøvrigt helt i C. Her kan der næppe være nogen tvivl om, at C byder den oprindelige tekstform. I originalen for RT har skriveren bestemt at optage hele digtet; da måtte ordene »og dette er begyndelsen dertil« med verset bortfalde.

For this to make sense we must assume that R and T have a common ancestor not shared by C, in contradiction to the stemma as printed.

I am unsure how to explain the putative common ancestor of R and W in Finnur's stemma. At any rate Finnur presents no argument for this part of his stemma and, as the following section demonstrates, the evidence is incompatible with it.

### The common ancestor of RT

After this theoretical and historical preamble it is time to get down to the nuts and bolts. I will argue that the stemmatic conclusions reached by van Eeden and Boer are correct. Their own arguments for this stand unrefuted but I will attempt to make the case in an efficient manner, concentrating on the most convincing evidence. It is convenient to begin with the relationship between R, T and W.

In Faulkes's edition of the *Edda* I have found forty examples where Faulkes finds a bad text in R and T, emending the text based on W and

U.<sup>5</sup> But even counting quite marginal cases I can only find five instances where Faulkes identifies a common error in R and W, emending based on T and U<sup>6</sup>—and some three instances where Faulkes finds a common error in R and U, emending based on T and W.<sup>7</sup>

Why would R share so many errors with T alone? The most natural explanation is that these two manuscripts share an ancestor not shared by the other manuscripts. This common ancestor had a number of errors and innovations. One of the most obvious scribal errors is found in the prose following stanza 7 of *Háttatal*. Faulkes prints the text as follows (2007, 7):

Í þessi vísu eru allar oddhendingar <inar fyrri hendingar>, ok er þó þessi háttar dróttkvæðr at hætti.

The words within brackets are lacking in RT and supplied from WU. It is likely that they were dropped owing to homeoteleuton in the ancestor of RT. The scribe's eyes jumped from one instance of *hendingar* to the next and the text in between was lost.

The evidence for a common ancestor for RT is very much stronger than that for a common ancestor for RW. The handful of cases where RW share bad readings against TU are easily explained as two scribes independently making the same mistake or the same correction.

### The common ancestor of RTW

All previous analyses have come to the conclusion that RTW share innovations against U, and I agree. There are many such innovations, but the three examples which seem clearest to me are as follows.

Stanza 38 of *Háttatal* is in the correct place only in U. In R it appears at the end of the poem and in W it appears after stanza 54. It is not found in T but probably appeared at the end there, as in R, when the manuscript was complete. The stanza's location in U is the only one which fits the organisation of the poem. What probably happened here is that the common ancestor of RTW accidentally omitted the stanza and then, when the mistake was realised, wrote it on the margin of a page, leaving it unclear where it fitted in the poem.

<sup>5</sup> Faulkes 2005, 5/36, 9/23, 9/32, 10/26, 11/11, 16/38, 18/11, 19/13, 21/33, 23/32, 27/19, 28/5, 33/19, 33/24, 34/24, 43/1, 47/13, 50/28, 51/8; Faulkes 1998, verses 37/4, 38/2, 58/5, 148/2, 189/1, 243/3, 246/4, 267/1; Faulkes 2007, 6/14, 7/5, 7/9, 12/11, 13/9, 13/11, 14/9, 16/13, 17/16, 18/17, 19/11, 51/12, 55/7.

<sup>6</sup> Faulkes 2005, 39/21, 53/9; Faulkes 1998, 4/39, verse 289/4; Faulkes 2007, 48/1.

<sup>7</sup> Faulkes 1998 verses 34/1, 297/1; Faulkes 2007, 21/4.

The fourth line of a stanza in *Skáldskaparmál* attributed to Eilífr kúlñasveinn has the acceptable text *einn sólkonungr hreinni* in U (and A) whereas RTW have the senseless (in context) *ein Máríu sveini* (Faulkes 1998, 77, 144). This line has migrated from the following stanza, where line 2 reads *hrein Máríu sveini*. A scribal mistake in the ancestor of RTW is the most straightforward explanation.

Chapter 2 of *Gylfaginning* begins in W with an introduction of King Gylfi. This is out of place since Gylfi has already been introduced in chapter 1. The reason for this becomes clear when we realise that chapter 1 is not found in U; it must have been awkwardly tacked on in the common ancestor of RTW. The text has been smoothed over in RT by removing the introduction of Gylfi from chapter 2 while W has preserved a more original state of affairs. This one chapter, thus, gives us the whole stemma for RTWU: RTW show a common innovation against U and RT show a common innovation against W.

I now move on to three further errors in the common ancestor of RTW. They turn out to be a special case and need to be analysed together.

In a stanza attributed to Gunnlaugr ormstunga, UAC correctly have the first word of line 3 as *lág*. That this is correct is independently confirmed by the manuscripts of *Gunnlaugs saga*. But in the common ancestor of R, T and W this word has gone missing. In T the stanza is written out with no attention to the missing word. In W some empty space is left in the appropriate location. This space is loyally transmitted in H, the fifteenth-century copy of W. In R, the word *þá* has been inserted to fill out the stanza; this helps with the syllable count but not with the internal rhyme or the semantics. In summary, the manuscripts have the following text:

R:	þá	var ek auðs at eiga
T:	{no space}	var ek auðs at eiga
WH:	{space}	var ek auðs at eiga
UAC:	lág	var ek auðs at eiga <sup>8</sup>

It is plainly the case that UAC preserve the original text while RTWH have a common error. It should be noted that several avenues were open for scribes interested in restoring the defective verse. To begin with, anyone with a copy of *Gunnlaugs saga* could have obtained the complete verse there. Second, anyone with another copy of the *Edda* could have obtained

<sup>8</sup> I have normalised the spelling and used the following sources: **R**: f. 33r, Finnur Jónsson 1931a, 146; **T**: f. 34v, van Eeden 1913, 104; **W**: p. 76, Finnur Jónsson 1924, 79; **H**: f. 15v; **U**: p. 63, Grape 1962–77, II 63, 144–45, Heimir Pálsson 2012, 172; **A**: f. 16v, Jón Sigurðsson 1852, 435; **C**: f. 4v, Jón Sigurðsson 1852, 584.

the verse from there. Boer theorises that R, T, W and the exemplar of RT have all been contaminated with text from other manuscripts. If the scribes had other manuscripts at hand this would have been a good time to consult them. Third, the prose introduction to this stanza mentions the words *lág* and *lóg* as base words for women kennings. The structure of *dróttkvætt* indicates that an internal rhyme in *g* is required and that a monosyllabic word would fit. It should not have taken an especially keen philologist to put the pieces together. Yet, in H, W, T and the exemplar of RT no attempt was made to rectify the omission and in R an incorrect word was inserted instead.

There is a closely similar error in a stanza by Óttarr svarti where the words *ógnar stafr* are missing in RTW (with an empty space in W) but present in UAC. Again it is worth looking at the possibilities the scribes had for restoring the defective verse. First, the stanza is preserved in a great many manuscripts of the Kings' Sagas which share the reading in UAC (Townend 2012, 781)<sup>9</sup>. Second, the quotation in the *Edda* is introduced with the words *Stafr, sem Óttarr kvað*. The word *stafr* forms the required full rhyme with the rest of the verse and it should not be difficult to surmise that it forms a part of what is missing. Third, the same half-stanza is quoted again later in *Skáldskaparmál* so that R and T actually have the full text a few leaves down the road. To be sure, that section is omitted from W but it was certainly present in the last common ancestor of RTW.

In W, the missing words were eventually filled in with a younger hand. This presumably happened before the copy in H was made since H has the complete verse.

There is a third case in a half-stanza attributed to Einarr skálaglamm. Two syllables are missing from the first line of the quotation in RT. The line has been completed by conjecture in WH:

RT:	hjálm	bauð hildi
WH:	hjálm	bauð hildi ólmum
UA:	hjálmfaldinn	bauð hildi
C:	hjálmdum	bauð hilmi <sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> **R**: f. 33v, Finnur Jónsson 1931a, 148; **T**: f. 35r, van Eeden 1913, 105; **W**: p. 77, Finnur Jónsson 1924, 80; **H**: f. 16r; **U**: p. 63, Grape 1962–77, II 63, 144–45, Heimir Pálsson 2012, 176; **A**: f. 16v, Jón Sigurðsson 1852, 437; **C**: f. 5r, Jón Sigurðsson 1852, 586.

<sup>10</sup> **R**: f. 34r, Finnur Jónsson 1931a, 150; **T**: f. 35r, van Eeden 1913, 106; **W**: p. 77, Finnur Jónsson 1924, 81; **H**: f. 16v; **U**: p. 64, Grape 1962–77, II 64, Heimir Pálsson 2012, 178; **A**: f. 17r, Jón Sigurðsson 1852, 439; **C**: f. 5v, Jón Sigurðsson 1852, 588.

This case is more difficult to evaluate than the previous ones since UA and C do not have the same reading and the stanza is not preserved anywhere but the *Edda*. Nevertheless this is clearly a part of the same pattern.

The text in RTW is generally quite good—the common ancestor did not frequently leave out words. Thus it is surprising to see three serious omissions common to RTW in such a short stretch of text. It would be good to have an explanation and it turns out that we have one. The textual interval between error 1 and 2 is exactly the same as the interval between error 2 and 3. And this interval corresponds to one page of text in a manuscript of modest proportions. It would seem that the ancestral manuscript had suffered damage—perhaps a fraying of the top margin—to two adjacent folios. On the verso side of the first folio the short word *lág* had been lost while on the recto side the damage was presumably slight enough not to prevent a full reading. The second folio was harder hit, wiping out *ógnar stafr* on the recto side and *faldinn* or *eldum* on the verso side.

How large was the damaged manuscript? It would have had about as much text per page as H; in that manuscript *ógnar stafr* is in line 17 on f. 16r while *hjálmbauð* is in line 17 on f. 16v. If the lost manuscript had the *Edda* and nothing else (like T) it would have had a size of approximately seventy-four folios.

It is possible that RT and W derive from independent copies of the damaged manuscript. But damage is usually progressive and since the lacunae in RTW are exactly the same size it seems more likely that RTW are all derived from the same copy of the damaged manuscript. This copy would have left spaces for the words which could not be read. These spaces were further propagated in W (and the first one further still in H) but ignored in RT. The study of these missing words is useful for what it tells us about scribal procedure in medieval Iceland. The scribes did not usually have the time, resources or inclination to restore words missing in their exemplar successfully.<sup>11</sup>

### The common ancestor of AB

Up to now I have argued for a relationship between RTWU conforming with the stemmas of Boer and van Eeden. I now move on to ABC, each of which contains only a partial text of *Skáldskaparmál*. These manuscripts

<sup>11</sup> Compare the interesting case of the corrupt abbreviations in U (Mårtensson and Heimir Pálsson 2008). The scribe was apparently unable to find or uninterested in obtaining a text of *Völuspá* to correct or flesh out his text.

are more challenging to work with since the body of comparative material is significantly smaller than in the case of RTWU. Nevertheless, the evidence is sufficient to allow reasonably clear conclusions.

A and B share numerous innovations in the addition and arrangement of material as well as in individual readings. All commentators have agreed that they share an ancestor not shared by the other manuscripts.<sup>12</sup> Boer (1924, 215–44) makes the case for this convincingly and at great length. There is no opposing view to refute and I have little to add.

Neither A nor B shares the errors common to RT or RTW. Before considering the relationship between AB and U it is helpful to look at C.

### The placement of C in Finnur's stemma

Boer and Finnur Jónsson disagreed on the placement of C. Finnur placed it with RTW while Boer placed it near the top of his stemma, proposing that all the other manuscripts shared errors against it.

My initial presumption was that Finnur was right. On a casual inspection C appears quite close to RTW and it may seem outlandish to place it so high in the stemma. But as it turns out, Finnur's theory has much greater problems with the evidence than Boer's.

The simple problem with Finnur's theory is that if RTWC had a common ancestor not shared by UAB,<sup>13</sup> there should be some common errors in RTWC. But I know of no persuasive example and Finnur produces none.

Furthermore, according to Finnur's stemma there should not be variants, except for the occasional coincidence, where RTW are united in a reading but C has a reading common with U, A or B. But there are a number of such readings. To be sure, the stretch of text found in both C and W is quite limited (Finnur Jónsson 1931a, 139–52) so we cannot expect a great many examples. The strongest seem to be as follows:

- ok lífillæti RTW] –UC (Finnur Jónsson 1931a, 139)
- hafa til at gefa mér RTW] hafa mér at gefa UC (139)
- til hefir RTW] heldr hefir til UC (139)
- boð RTW] orð UC (140)
- er hann laut niðr RTW] at Aðils laut niðr UC (142)
- haugþok sama RTW] haugþak saman UABC (143)
- gæddi RTW] gladdi UABC (143)

<sup>12</sup> Faulkes (1998, xlv) puts it like this: 'B has an arrangement of parts of *Skáldskaparmál* that is similar in various ways to that in A, and these two manuscripts are clearly closely related.'

<sup>13</sup> This is how I read Finnur's stemma, with an implicit y which  $y_1$ ,  $y_2$  and  $y_3$  are derived from.



gunnveiti RTW] gunnveitir UABC (143)  
 skeggjum RTW] seggjum UAC (151)  
 leyg RTW] leygr UAC (151)

This appears to rise above the level of coincidence and is difficult to explain if Finnur's stemma is correct.

### The placement of C in Boer's stemma

Even if Finnur's stemma is wrong this does not automatically mean that Boer's stemma is correct. To prove that C constitutes a branch separate from all the other manuscripts we would need to demonstrate that there are errors or innovations common to RTW as well as U and AB but not present in C. Establishing the top of a stemma is usually the most difficult task and I will not claim that the arguments leave no shadow of doubt. Nevertheless, there are some surprisingly strong indications—especially considering the shortness of the text we have for comparison.

In his discussion of C, Boer (1924, 205–15) begins with the comparison of certain short passages that are in a different order in C from that in the other manuscripts. In each case Boer argues that C represents the original state of affairs. While the arguments are not without merit, none of them is decisive. I find Boer's discussion of individual variants (1924, 250–52) to offer stronger evidence and I will discuss the two that seem most interesting.

In a discussion of kennings for war gear the following is found:

RWH:	kalla hjálma	hjálmhött	eða fald
T:	kalla hjálma	eða hjálmhött	eða fald
A:	kalla	hjálmhött	eða fald
U:	kenna	hjálmhött þeira	eða fald
C:	kalla má	hjálmhött	eða fald <sup>14</sup>

The sentence in RTWH is nonsensical and the text in A and U is laconic. The text in C flows naturally and makes sense. If Boer (1924, 251) is right, C has the original text and <ma hialm> led to a scribal dittography of <hialma hialm> in the common ancestor of the other manuscripts. The dittography survives in RTWH but was removed in U and A (the relevant leaf of B is lost), leaving an understandable but rather rough text. This does seem like a very plausible account.

<sup>14</sup> **R:** f. 33v, Finnur Jónsson 1931a, 149; **T:** f. 35r, van Eeden 1913, 106; **W:** p. 77, Finnur Jónsson 1924, 81; **H:** f. 16v; **U:** p. 64, Grape 1962–77. II 64, Heimir Pálsson 2012, 178, xxxix; **A:** f. 17r, Jón Sigurðsson 1852, 438; **C:** f. 5r, Jón Sigurðsson 1852, 587.

The strongest case where only C appears to have the original text is in a segment on kennings for gold:

RTWHAB:	Gull er	kallat í kenningum
U:	Gull er	kallat
C:	Gull er ok	kallat í kenningum
RTU:	eldr handar eða liðs	eða leggjjar
WH:	eldr handar	liðs eða leggja
AB:	eldr handar eða liðar	eða leggjjar
C:	eldr	eða ljós handar eða leggjjar <sup>15</sup>

The text in RTWHU fails to make sense and must be corrupt: *eldr . . . liðs* ‘fire of the host’ is no gold kenning. Traditionally *liðs* has been understood here as genitive of *liðr* ‘limb’ rather than *lið* ‘host’ but this is anachronistic. It is true that in post-medieval Icelandic, following the collapse of the distinction between u-stems and i-stems, words of this type sometimes form a genitive with s. But this should not confuse us as to thirteenth-century Icelandic.

To dig into this further, I have searched for relevant genitive forms of *liðr* and the u-stems most phonetically similar to it: *fríðr*, *kviðr*, *siðr*, *viðr* and *litr*. The *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* and the *Lexicon Poeticum* between them record something close to 200 instances of these words with a genitive ending in -ar against two instances ending in -s. Both the cases in -s turn out to be from post-medieval manuscripts: one instance of *tíl fríðs* in an eighteenth-century copy of *Sturlunga saga*, and one instance of *úlfliðs* in a hopelessly corrupt half-stanza found only in the seventeenth-century *Laufás-Edda* (Finnur Jónsson 1931b; Faulkes 1979, 348).

Snorri’s *Edda* itself has several instances of *viðar* and *fríðar* as well as one of *liðar* (in *Háttatal*; Finnur Jónsson 1931a, 235). There is nothing to support the idea that its author could write *liðs* in the sense ‘of limb’. The only attested medieval form is *liðar*—which is how the AB manuscripts made sense of the text.

If *liðs* does not make sense then how did it enter the text? And why does C have such a different text here? Boer’s solution to both questions is that C has the original text and *liðs* is a misreading of *ljós*, occurring in a common ancestor of all the other manuscripts. This is paleographically plausible and explains everything. Furthermore, the phrase *eldr eða ljós* is found in a similar context elsewhere in *Skáldskaparmál* (Finnur Jónsson 1931a, 121) and is not unexpected here.

<sup>15</sup> **R**: f. 32v, Finnur Jónsson 1931a, 143; **T**: f. 34r, van Eeden 1913, 103; **W**: p. 75, Finnur Jónsson 1924, 78; **H**: f. 15r; **U**: p. 61, Grape 1962–77 II, 61, Heimir Pálsson 2012, 168; **A**: f. 16r, Jón Sigurðsson 1852, 433; **C**: f. 4r, Jón Sigurðsson 1852, 581.

Could there be other explanations? To be sure. The least bad alternative I have been able to come up with is as follows: The original text had *liðar*. This was corrupted into *liðs* in a manuscript ancestral to all the surviving ones. While *liðs* is senseless in this context it is still an Old Norse word which sometimes occurs in the *Edda* so it is not a wholly implausible scribal mistake. The scribe of C or a manuscript ancestral to it then misread *liðs* as *ljós*, perhaps influenced by the earlier occurrence of *eldr eða ljós*. This is not impossible but it is less economical than Boer's explanation since it involves two misreadings rather than one.

### The text in C

If Boer is right that C is properly placed so high in the stemma, and I think he is, we may wonder what information this gives us on the style of the archetype. As it happens, very little narrative prose is preserved both in C and in RTWU; essentially only the account of Hrólfur kraki. The text of C is generally quite close to that of RTW, but there are some cases where C has a slightly more expansive text. The following are the most striking examples:

C: Þá er ek var heima með feðr mínum

RTWU: Þá er ek var heima (Finnur Jónsson 1931a, 139)

C: Sýnist mér þat ráð at sá okkarr gefi qðrum sem heldr hefir til.

U: Nú skal sá qðrum gefa er heldr hefir til.

RTW: Nú skal sá gefa qðrum er til hefir. (Finnur Jónsson 1931a, 139)

C: Slongvir hét hestr hans ok var allra hesta skjótastr er með Svíum var.

RTW: Slungnir hét hestr hans, allra hesta skjótastr.

(sentence omitted in U) (Finnur Jónsson 1931a, 141)

It is tempting to conclude that C's longer text is closer to the original. It contains no additional information and there is no obvious motivation to expand the RTW(U) text in this way. But it is easy to see why a scribe might abridge the text slightly to save on time and parchment.<sup>16</sup>

There are a number of similar examples in the narrative segments found only in RTC. I find the following particularly interesting (Finnur Jónsson 1931a, 133):

<sup>16</sup> For instances where the most loquacious text has been taken to represent the original best see e.g. *Egils saga* (Sigurður Nordal 1933), *Njáls saga* (Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1954, clv), *Gísla saga* (Guðni Kolbeinsson and Jónas Kristjánsson 1979) and *Hákonar saga* (Sverrir Jakobsson et al. 2013 II, lix). A qualified case could perhaps be made for *lectio longior potior* in Old Icelandic prose texts. There is a valuable comparative study in Zetterholm 1949, 73–90.

C: En er Ermenrekr konungr sá haukinn þá kom honum í hug **hvat hann hafði gert** at svá sem haukrinn var ófleygr ok fjaðrlaus svá var ok ríki hans ófært er hann var gamall ok sonlaus.

RT: En er Jormunrekr konungr sá haukinn þá kom honum í hug at svá sem haukrinn var úfleygr ok fjaðrlaus svá var ríki hans úfært er hann var gamall ok sonlaus.

The words *hvat hann hafði gert* are unnecessary and if anything the text flows better without them. Would Snorri have included them? Perhaps he would have, since there is a very similar sentence in *Óláfs saga helga* (Johnsen and Jón Helgason 1941, 519; Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson 1945, 342):

Konungr leit til hans er hann heyrði þetta ok kom þá í hug hvat hann hafði gert.

The account in question is found in other texts (Metcalf 1881, 82; Holder 1886, 346; Unger 1862, 156; Keyser and Unger 1849, 80) but this sentence is unique to Snorri's *Óláfs saga*.

### The relationship between U and AB

Boer argued that U and AB had a common ancestor not shared by the other manuscripts. Finnur Jónsson agreed with this. It is most easily proven in the (unfortunately rather short) part of the text where C is also preserved. If the arguments for the independence of C are accepted then agreement between RTWC against UAB shows innovations common to UAB. There follow three good examples of innovations common to UA(B):

a) In the short section of text preserved in all seven manuscripts, the best example of an innovation in UAB is probably *ef eigi er annan veg breytt* (UAB) instead of *ef eigi er annan veg greint* (RTWC) (Finnur Jónsson 1931a, 144).

b) A stanza is introduced anonymously with the words *sem hér er* in RTWC but with the words *sem Þjóðólfr kvað* in UA (the corresponding section is lost from B) (Finnur Jónsson 1931a, 151).

c) Both U and A include two *dróttkvætt* stanzas with names for women which are absent from the other manuscripts (the corresponding section is lost from B) (Finnur Jónsson 1908–1915, A I 652).

Boer (1924, 244–50) argues the case in more detail with many examples.

### Conclusions

There have been two comprehensive attempts to build a stemma for RTWU, one by van Eeden and one by Boer. They agreed that RT have errors against WU and that RTW have errors against U. The case for this is very strong and I have attempted to present it here in an efficient manner.

When it comes to ABC, Boer's is the only detailed study. The case for grouping AB together is very strong,<sup>17</sup> as is the evidence for grouping them further with U. As for C, it agrees alternatively with RTW and with UAB, which makes it plausible that it is independent of both.

Finally, there are many cases where C has a text which seems more attractive than that in the other manuscripts. The variant *ljós / liðs* is a particularly compelling piece of evidence that RTWUAB have a common ancestor not shared by C.

I have reservations about van Eeden's and Boer's theories on secondary sources and there is plenty of work to do on sorting these out. The case for contamination has probably been overstated though it is likely that some did indeed take place. But when it comes to the primary source of each manuscript the Dutch stemmas have a lot going for them.

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<sup>17</sup> Wills (2001) argues that A and B also form a group (against W) when it comes to the text of the *Third Grammatical Treatise*.

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