

The Literary Adaptation of *Voluspá* in Hauksbók and Snorra Edda

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The three versions of *Voluspá* display substantial differences in their references to speaker and audience. In 2013, the present author investigated such references in the *Codex Regius* version of the poem, and argued that the puzzling deictic peculiarities are, in fact, traces of oral performance. The present article concludes the study of speaker and audience in *Voluspá* by offering a detailed analysis of the other versions of the poem, found in *Hauksbók* and *Snorra Edda*. It is argued that we encounter higher degrees of literary adaptation in these two versions than that seen in the *Codex Regius* version. *Voluspá* is a rare case in which the process of the literary adaptation of an oral art form may be investigated in some detail. The adaptation is not primarily explained according to chronological development, but rather according to differing literary purposes and according to a waning understanding of the oral origins of the poem and the oral art form.

1 Origins and orality

The age and origins of eddic poetry remain debated, not least in the case of the mythological poem *Voluspá*, which is the subject of this article. The main difficulty in dating eddic poems follows from the likely assumption that *Voluspá* and other eddic poems have originated in oral tradition. This leaves the dating of an eddic poem methodologically problematic, since the preserved text used in the process of dating, and the original composition, which is the object of dating, are to some extent different things.¹ Another approach to the origins of eddic poetry is to investigate how the written versions of eddic poems may convey traces of oral performance and tradition. Although relevant to the dating of the poems, this approach may not increase the precision in the process of

1. See Thorvaldsen (2016) for a methodological discussion on the dating of eddic poetry.

dating an eddic poem, but it may elucidate the process of literary adaptation of originally oral works.

Several scholars have made contributions to this field, including Joseph Harris, Lars Lönnroth, Terry Gunnell and myself.² In 2013, I offered an approach to the *Codex Regius* version of *Völuspá* (= *Völuspá R*),³ in which the object was references to the speaker and the audience, and to the scene of performance: *deictic* references.⁴ I found that many such references are best explained on the background of oral performance, such as the well-known shift between *hon* (she) and *ek* (I) in what seem to be references to the speaker. I explained this as depending on oral performance: Sometimes a human performer is enacting the mythological character of a *völva*, referring to her in the first person; sometimes the human performer stands forth, referring to the mythological *völva* in the third person. These two speaker positions even seem to be accentuated in a repeated stanza: *fjölb veit hon frǫða / fram se ec lengra*⁵ (she has much knowledge / I see further).⁶

Several of the deictic references present in *Völuspá R* thus depend on a *double scene*,⁷ a scene of oral performance and a scene created by the poem. A mythological scene is established in the *útiseta* section (R 29–

2. See Thorvaldsen (2013) for an overview of the most relevant research until 2013. The edition of eddic poems in the *Íslensk fornrit* series (Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason, 2014), has little new to offer when it comes to the understanding of eddic poems as part of oral tradition, and the research of the last decades is absorbed only to a limited degree. Relevant to the subject presented here is Terry Gunnell's article from 2016 on eddic performance and Joseph Harris' Sophus Bugge lecture of 2016 (published in *Collegium Medievale*).
3. For simplicity, I will occasionally refer to the different versions only by the manuscript abbreviations (*R* or *H*) and stanza numbers.
4. Deictic references point to the time and place of utterance, for example by the application of the grammatical categories person and tense. See Thorvaldsen (2013: 98–100) for a presentation of deixis as linguistic phenomenon.
5. The *Völuspá R* and *H* texts are quoted from Bugge (1867), in diplomatic fashion but without abbreviations. Normalized Old Norse text and the translations are my own responsibility, but I have consulted Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason (2014), Neckel and Kuhn (1962), Dronke's edition and translation (1997) and Larrington's translation (1996).
6. R 43, 46, 55. The stanza is heavily abbreviated in the last two cases.
7. This term was introduced by Lars Lönnroth ([1978]2008), who showed that the interplay between the mythological scene in *Völuspá* and a performance setting offers an important background for the interpretation of the poem. In the same book, Lönnroth studies similar effects in other Old Norse texts.

30), in which the poem states that the *völva* was sitting alone outside (*Eín sat hon uti*, R 29₁) when the god Óðinn approached her and presented her with gifts to make her share her memories and visions. Yet, the poem addresses both Óðinn and humans as listeners (R 1), and refers to men as recipients of the poem (R 12). I argued in 2013 that the scene of oral performance and the mythological scene were connected in various meaningful ways in *Völuspá R*, especially through “blending” of the oral performance and the mythological scene established by the poem. But I also addressed a crucial challenge to the explanation of deictic references as dependent on oral performance: the process of literary adaptation.

The *Voluspá R* text can hardly be seen as a simple transcription of an oral performance, and neither can the versions of the poem in *Hauksbók* (= *Völuspá H*) and in *Snorra Edda* (= *Völuspá SnE*). In the case of *Völuspá R*, however, the deictic references are indeed difficult to explain without making assumptions about oral performance. My suggestion in 2013 was that oral performance appears to have been an implicit frame of reference for those involved in the process of literary adaption. The research presented in this article, however, shows considerable difference among the three versions of *Völuspá* when it comes to the dependence on oral performance.

The text of *Voluspá H* is probably adjusted to the collection of texts in *H*, which reveals an interest for historical and pseudohistorical works of different kinds (Johansson 2000). Generally, *H* seems to represent a higher degree of literary adaptation than that seen in *R*, and I will investigate how this adaptation may have affected the deictic references in the poem. The version in *Snorra Edda* is the most radical example of literary adaptation of *Völuspá* (in medieval sources), since the poem does not appear as a whole in that work, but as stanzas integrated in the prose of *Gylfaginning*, and as a source for the myths presented there. The three versions of *Völuspá* illustrate how a poem likely to originate in oral tradition is adapted to different literary purposes.

2 The Hauksbók version

Völuspá H differs from *Völuspá R* in a variety of ways. The text is shorter, it lacks several stanzas present in *R* while other stanzas are present in *H* but not *R*. Stanzas that are shared show different degrees of variation,

and the ordering of the stanzas (and blocks of stanzas) is different in the two versions. Quinn (1990) points to the use of present tense in *H*, which is introduced earlier than in *R* and indicates a more apocalyptic focus than *R*. This is, according to Johansson (2000), in accordance with his theory of *H* being adapted to the apocalyptic perspective in the manuscript. It is also important to note that some of the peculiarities of *Völuspá H* are not easily explained as successful results of conscious modification. The ordering of stanzas in *H* causes several problems to the understanding of the mythological events, leaving out crucial myths, such as the myth of Baldr's death, and disturbing the causal links between myths; some revisions may more easily be explained as the results of defective transmission rather than as expressions of editorial plans (Mundal 2008: 216–218).

The most important difference between *Völuspá R* and *H*, when it comes to presence of a double scene is that *H* lacks the *útiseta* section (*R* 29). In *R* 29 a mythological scene is developed in which the *völva* appears as speaker and Óðinn as listener. And the *útiseta*—which temporally precedes the mythological performance of *Völuspá*—may explain the difference in tense in the following two cases:

<i>R</i>	<i>H</i>
<i>Sal sa hon standa</i> (37) ‘She saw a hall standing’	<i>Sal sier hon standa</i> (34) ‘She sees a hall standing’
<i>Sa hon þar vaña</i> (38) ‘There she saw wading’	<i>Ser hon þar vaða</i> (35) ‘There she sees wading’

In *R*, the *útiseta* section provides a background for the use of past tense in these references, and in other past tense references to the *völva* as perceiver. Her visions in such cases have occurred in the *útiseta*, or in the period between the *útiseta* and the moment of speaking. The use of present tense in the cases quoted above (in *H*) is in harmony with the fact that the poem does not provide any background for the use of past tense. One stanza from the *útiseta* section is also quoted in *Snorra Edda* (Finnur Jónsson 1931: 22). Hence, it is reasonable to suggest that the section belongs to an old layer of the *Völuspá* tradition, perhaps to some written original of all three versions of *Völuspá*. It is tempting to think that an

editor thought the *útiseta* section too complex and attempted to simplify the poem by removing these stanzas and the associated past tense.

The absence of the *útiseta* in *H* also affects the understanding of the poem in other ways, since the mythological motivation for the speech of the *völva* is absent. This means that a potential audience is never enlightened on the background for the reference to Óðinn in stanza 1_{5–8}.⁸ The reference is also different from the one in *Codex Regius*:

<i>R</i>	<i>H</i>
vilðo at ec ualfavþr	villtu at ek vafödrs
uel fyr telia	vel fram telia
forn spiöll fira	forn spiöll fira
þau er fremst um man.	þau er ek fremz vm man.

The significant difference is *Valföðr*, which is usually considered to be in the nominative case (with a vocative function) in *R*, and clearly in the genitive in *H*. The *R* version was interpreted above as directed to Óðinn, stating his wish that the *völva* present her knowledge to him (cf. the *útiseta* section). The meaning in *H* is difficult to grasp without emendation. To read stanza 1 without emendation, *villtu* may be seen as third person plural, not as second person singular with enclitic *þú* ‘you’ (cf. R 1), and the third person must then be taken to refer to men (cf. *megir Hemdallar* in the first half stanza). To preserve the genitive *Vaföðrs*, it seems necessary to associate the name with *vel* (read as *vél*, ‘deception, fraud’) or with *forn spjöll fira* ‘past events of men.’ *Valföðrs vél* could refer to one of Óðinn’s many deceptions or to ‘deception’ as a general trait of Óðinn’s involvement in past events (*forn spjöll*). This would lead to the following reading: ‘They wanted that I tell of Valföðr’s deception, the past events of men, the first I can remember.’ The reading *forn spjöll fira Vaföðrs*, ‘past tales about the men of Vaföðr’ (“fjerne Frasagn om Vaafaders mænd”, Gísli Sigurðsson 2001: 12) is possible although ‘Vaföðrs men’ is a somewhat unclear reference. Both readings are diffi-

8 It is possible that the mythological setting of the poem was well known, and hence assumed as a background for interpretation. In *R*, the *útiseta* section is located near the middle of the poem, and unless the setting was known, the audience would initially not understand why the *völva* addresses Óðinn in *R* 1. However, this unclarity may be considered a device for creating an effectful tension or disequilibrium in the audience.

cult to support, since they do not entirely fit the subject matter that the *völva* presents: Her memories are not only about Óðinn's deceptions or the men of Óðinn, whoever they may be. In this case, the possibility of defective transmission seems more likely, and emendation a more reasonable solution.

Whatever the explanation for the form *vafþörs* is, the first stanza in *H* differs from *R* in not referring to Óðinn as a listener (unless emended). This can be seen in connection with the absence of the *útiseta* section in *H*, which in *R* establishes a mythological background for Óðinn as a listener. Since this background is omitted in *H*, the editor may be trying to suspend Óðinn as a listener in *H* 1. However, the *Vituð er enn* refrain is present in the last lines of exactly the same stanzas as in *R*, as far as these stanzas are present in *H*.⁹ This may suggest that the refrain was fairly stable in transmission, although *H* 25 has a peculiar wording: *uitv þer einn enn edr hvat?* Here, Óðinn may be singled out as a listener in the singular form *einn* (see Quinn 1990: 314). In the case of *Völuspá H*, however, it seems that Óðinn is mostly suspended as listener, while the references to the human audience remain.

Although there are hardly any traces of a dual audience in *Völuspá H*, the situation is different when it comes to the speaker. There is no *útiseta* section in *H*, but the identity of the speaker as a mythological *völva* is established already in stanza *H* 2, as it is in *R* 2, by references to her upbringing among the giants in the mythological past. Thus, her identity is presented in *H* as it is in *R*, though her position vis-à-vis gods and humans is considerably less clear due to the absence of the *útiseta*. The end line of the poem contains, however, a reference to the 'sinking' of the mythological *völva*: *nú man hon sokkvaz* 'now she will sink', almost identical with the last verse of *R*.

Throughout *H* there are references to the mythological *völva* both in the first and the third person, much in the same way as in *R*. Except for the *Geyr Garmr*-refrain, which will be presented below, the use of *ek* and *hon* is identical in those stanzas which *H* share with *R*. In the appendix (p. 110–11) these and other possible references to performance are listed with suggestions as to the nature of the *deictic centre*, the speaker embedded in the text. References to the human speaker and enacted character

9. R 28 = H24, R35 = H30, R38 = H35, R40 = H25, R49 = H41, R59 = H55, R60 = H56; exclusively in R: 29, 34.

in stanzas *H* 1–18 are identical to stanzas *R* 1–19, and do not demand explanations specific to *H*. The dwarf *bula* states human listeners as beneficiaries (*H* 14) in both cases. When the enacted *völva* is addressed as *hon* in stanza *H* 24–26 we can suggest the same reasoning as that given in the analysis of *R*: the third person indicates that the deictic centre has shifted from the mythological *völva* to the human speaker (see Thorvaldsen 2013: 111–119).

Stanza 31 contains the first occurrence of the *Geyr Garmr*-refrain, but the refrain is slightly different from that in *R* (in lines 5–6):

<i>H</i>	<i>R</i>
Framm se ek lengr[a], ¹⁰	Fiolþ veit hon frǫða,
fiqlð kann ek segia	fram se ec lengra
'I see further ahead, much I can tell'	'She has great knowledge, I see further ahead.'

The refrain, which is repeated five times in *H* (31, 36, 42, 47, 51), is the only case in which the use of *ek/hon* differs between *R* and *H*. While the refrain in *R* marks the distinction between the human speaker and the mythological *völva*, the *H* version does not present such a contrast *within* the refrain. The surrounding stanzas from 24–59, however, all refer to the mythological *völva* in the third person. Thus, the most likely interpretation of *ek* is that it refers to the human speaker and her own knowledge and abilities as a seer. According to the logic of the double scene, the third person references to the mythological *völva* dismiss her as a speaker and make the human performer occupy the role as a speaker. Hence, the *H* version clearly establishes a duality between enacted character and human speaker, although the *H* text is somewhat less complex on the speaker side than *R*.

I suggest that the *H* version of *Völuspá* reflects a limited adaptation of an originally oral form to the written medium. But the present text in *H* still preserves the effects of the double scene on the speaker side, and this indicates that the oral performance still functioned as an interpretative frame for the poem. The tendency in both *H* and *R* is the same: to establish the mythological *völva* as a speaker in the first part of the poem, and then exile her to the third person in the last part of the poem, letting

10. The manuscript reads *lengr* and has according to Bugge (1867, 22) never had the form *lengra*.

the performer herself stand forth as the speaker. But both manuscripts ascribe parts of the vision to *hon*, the mythological *völva*, also when the human performer functions as the speaker. Thus, the performer reflects the *völva* as a perceiver in addition to herself, and actively blends the two viewpoints in her narration of mythological events, exactly as in *R*. A similar process occurs in the first part of the poem, as we saw in the analysis of *R*, when the mythological *völva* is enacted as the speaker, but still blends her own viewpoint with that of the human performer (Thorvaldsen 2013: 120–22).

It seems reasonable to argue that these effects would only be preserved in *H* if the editor saw the poem as a speech by a human performer to a human audience (and presumed that the readers or listeners would do the same). Since the first stanza of the poem (in both *H* and *R*) clearly addresses a human audience, an oral performance is a likely frame within which to read and write the poem. In this manner, the *H* version of *Völuspá* reflects many of the specifically oral features of *Völuspá* although literary adaptation is seen in the simplifications of addressees and to some degree in the simplification in references to the speaker (the omission of the *útiseta* and the successive adaptation of tense).

3 The version in *Snorra Edda*

The use of *Völuspá* in *Snorra Edda* is fundamentally different from that in *R* and *H*. While *Völuspá* is presented as a complete whole in *R* and *H*, only parts of the poem are integrated into the prose discourse of *Snorra Edda*. *Völuspá* seems, however, to be a major source for *Gylfaginning*, the part of *Snorra Edda* that presents Old Norse mythology. In addition to the quoted stanzas, there are examples of what seems to be paraphrases of other stanzas, and the overarching presentation of the world from the times of creation to the world destruction seems at least partly to be based on *Völuspá* (see Mundal 1992).

Before turning to the specifics of *Völuspá SnE*, it is important to note that *Gylfaginning* presents a narrative frame that greatly affects the quotations of a poem like *Völuspá*. The frame presents King Gylfi of Sweden who seeks out the gods disguised as an old man. The gods are, however, aware of his approach and conjure up an illusion of a hall in which three characters called *Hár* (High), *Jafnhár* (Just-as-high) and *Priði* (Third) an-

swer his questions about gods and mythology. Thus, all quotations from *Völuspá* are given within direct speech of either one of these three characters (mostly Hár), and it becomes a matter of literary quality to avoid the double scene embedded in *Völuspá*, which would complicate and disturb the frame story of *Gylfaginning*. Thus, the *Hljóðs bið ek*-stanza (*HR* 1), which describes a human audience (and in *R*, Óðinn), is not quoted or paraphrased in *Gylfaginning*, neither is *HR* 2 which describes the past memories of the speaker and reveals an aspect of her identity. The last stanza of *Völuspá*, which refers to the sinking of the mythological *völva* is likewise omitted.

It is hardly plausible to argue that the version of *Völuspá* quoted by Snorri did not contain these stanzas, since they are present in both *H* and *R* (*HR* 1–2, *H* 59/*R* 62), and since Snorri's version does contain a part of the *útiseta* section known from *R*. He quotes several lines from the *útiseta* section without radical differences to *R*: *Alt veit ek, Óðinn ... vitoð ér enn, eða hvat?* (cf. *R* 29). The verses reveal little about the speaker, other than a somewhat hostile attitude towards Óðinn, and are not quoted in *Gylfaginning* for its reference to the *útiseta* and the setting of *Völuspá*, but to illustrate the myth of how Óðinn hid his one eye in the well of Mímir. The prose is at this point describing the ash Yggdrasil and the well of Mímir is located below one of its roots. However, the verses do present Ódinn as a listener, and they do contain the *Vituð er enn* refrain, which within the setting of *Völuspá R* is taken to refer to the human audience and Óðinn. This refrain is also quoted in a stanza similar to *H* 41/ *R* 49 (Finnur Jónsson 1931: 72). The setting which is established in *Völuspá H* and *R* is not completely omitted in *Gylfaginning*, but is foregrounded only in these two cases. The omissions of the other stanzas which foreground performance in *H* and *R* suggest that Snorri—as a gifted and structured author—would not allow the setting referred to in *Völuspá* to interfere with and disturb the narrative frame of *Gylfaginning* itself.

This is also seen in the way quotations from *Völuspá* are introduced in *Gylfaginning*. The identity of the mythological *völva* remains obscure throughout *Gylfaginning*, although her sex and kind are indicated by the title *Völuspá* (the prophecy of the *völva*). The stanzas are introduced by the three characters Hár, Jafnhár and Þriði, who make no serious attempt to describe the *völva* and her performance. The most common introduction to the stanzas is *svá sem segir í Völuspá*, ‘as it is said in *Völuspá*’ and

similar formulations.¹¹ The title is omitted in several cases, i.e. in *svá sem hér segir*, ‘as it is said here’,¹² or even simpler: *svá segir* ‘it is said’ (Finnur Jónsson 1931, 70n). The introduction of the stanzas from the dwarf *bula* is the only case in which the speaker is personified with a third person pronoun: *Ok þessi segir hon nöfn þeira dverganna*. One of the manuscripts, *Codex Upsaliensis* (De la Gardie 11, 4to), however, has *Ok segir þeim nöfn þeira*, ‘and [he] tells them their names’, in which case the dwarf Durinn (*Dyrinn*) of the preceding stanza is probably seen as the implied subject of the sentence (Finnur Jónsson 1931, 15), thus leaving no references to the *völva* as speaker in *Codex Upsaliensis*, except as an implication of the title *Völuspá*. In two cases where the other manuscripts refer to the title of the poem, *Codex Upsaliensis* instead reads *Svá sem her segir* and *Svá segir* (Finnur Jónsson 1931, 19, 70). *Snorra Edda* avoids, it seems, foregrounding the *völva* as speaker of *Völuspá* when quoting stanzas, and the editor of *Codex Upsaliensis* hides her presence most eagerly.

Gylfaginning’s presentation of the dwarf *bula* requires some further comments. Within the section quoting the *bula* there are two prose comments that seem partly to interpret stanzas from *Völuspá* that are omitted in the quotations, but that appear in both *H* and *R*. For our purpose the most notable aspect of this is the complete omission (also in prose paraphrases) of verse lines foregrounding performance in the dwarf *bula*. The interjected speaker comment *nú hefi ek dverga/rekka ... rétt um talða*, ‘now I have listed dwarfs/heroes correctly’ (*HR* 12) is omitted. In *HR* these lines are bound by alliteration to the preceding line *Nár ok Nýráðr* (*R*) /*Nýr ok Nýráðr* (*H*), while *Reginn ok Ráðsviðr* (*HR*) precedes *rétt um talða* and these two lines constitute a long line. In *Snorra Edda*, the two short lines of dwarf names appear alone, without being paired by alliteration to another short line. The other dwarf names listed in the same block, however, appear within regular long lines. It is reasonable to suggest on

11. *Svá (sem) segir i Völuspá* (Finnur Jónsson 1931: 11, 15, 19, 20, 22, 26, 47, 70) and *svá er sagt i Völuspá* (Finnur Jónsson 1931: 14).

12. *(Svá) sem hér segir* (Finnur Jónsson 1931: 19n, 24, 73n, 75).

the background of the omissions described above, that they are torn out of a stanza similar to *HR* 12 to avoid quoting the interjected speaker comment. The same explanation is relevant for the verse lines *mál er dverga / í Dvalins liði / ljóna kindum / til Lofars telja*, ‘it is time to list the dwarfs in the flock of Dvalinn for the families of men’ (*HR* 14) which address humans as beneficiaries of the *þula*, and indicates the presence of a human audience. Even the concluding remark on the value of the dwarf *þula* in *H* 16/*R* 15, might have been considered alien to the setting of *Gylfaginning*, and hence omitted: *þat mun (æ) uppi / meðan qld lifir, / lang-niðja tal / Lofars hafat*, ‘That shall be remembered as long as the world lives, the list of the male progenitors of Lofar.’ The exact nature of the dwarf *þula* in Snorri’s original of *Völuspá* is unknown, but it probably did contain the verses referring to performance. After all, these are part of the poem in both *H* and *R*, and the suggested omissions are in harmony with the general impression of how *Völuspá* is integrated in *Gylfaginning*. The performance setting embedded in *Völuspá HR* is mostly hidden or kept in the background by not quoting the stanzas which foreground it, and by introducing stanzas from *Völuspá* without identifying the speaker.

This leads to questions concerning the deictic phenomena analysed in *Völuspá RH* above, and especially the *ek/hon*-shift. The shift was explained above based on oral performance, and specifically the distinction between human performer and enacted *völva*. When *Gylfaginning* suppresses this setting to keep its own narrative frame in the foreground, the use of third person *hon* in references to the mythological *völva* would be hard to interpret. Apparently, the immediate speaker of the text is one of the three speaking gods in *Gylfaginning*, and a third person reference *hon* would associate the deictic centre with the god who speaks in the frame story, rather than with the image of an (female) oral performer, as it does in *Völuspá RH*. Luckily, no quotation of *Völuspá* in *Gylfaginning* includes a third person reference to the mythological *völva*, although three of the quoted stanzas have such references in both *H* and *R*.

H and *R* are quite similar in the use of *ek* and *hon*, which suggests that the deictic effects were originally part of *Völuspá*, and the deviation in *Gylfaginning* can be taken as adaptations to the purposes of this specific prose text:

Völuspá H and R

1. *Sal sér hon standa*
‘She sees a hall standing’
2. *Sal sér/sá hon standa*
‘She sees/saw a hall standing’
3. *Sér/sá hon þar vaða*
‘She sees/saw wading there’

Völuspá SnE

- Sal veit ek standa*¹³
‘I know a hall standing’
- Sal veit ek standa*¹⁴
‘I know a hall standing’
- Skulu þar vaða*¹⁵
‘There they shall wade’

The introduction of first person in cases 1–2 above is necessary to avoid a third person reference which would confuse the reader or listener who perceives the text as spoken within the frame narrative of *Gylfaginning*. Case 3 serves the same purpose of deictic simplification by removing the reference to the perceiver. The modifications of the verbs—*vita* instead of *sjá*—can also be seen in light of this, since *sjá* ‘see’ refers to the prophetic vision of a *völva* while ‘know’ is more or less neutral in respect to the identity of the speaking or perceiving subject. This is best seen as part of Snorri’s general tendency to avoid describing the *völva* and her act of prophecy. The general strategy is successful from a literary point of view, since the double scene embedded in *Völuspá* would cause unnecessary complications to the frame story established in *Gylfaginning*. (See also Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason 2014: 100.) The setting presumed and referred to in *Völuspá* has little relevance to *Gylfaginning*, for it is the mythological subject matter narrated by the *völva* which is important there, not the mythological *völva* herself.¹⁶

4 The stages of literary adaptation

The presence of oral deixis and references to performance in all versions of *Völuspá* suggests that the poem was composed for oral performance. Some kinds of references to performance are remarkably similar in *H* and *R*: the use of *ek* and *hon* is identical in those stanzas which are shared

13. *Völuspá H* 61/R 57 and *Gylfaginning*, chapter 9 (Finnur Jónsson 1931: 26)

14. *Völuspá H* 34/R 37 and *Gylfaginning*, chapter 40 (Finnur Jónsson 1931: 75)

15. *Völuspá H* 35/R 38 and *Gylfaginning*, chapter 40 (Finnur Jónsson 1931: 75)

16. The absence of the *völva* might be related to the general tendency in *Snorra Edda* to suppress the female characters of mythology (see Mundal 1992).

between the two manuscripts (except in the *Geyr Garmr*-refrain). The *Vituð ér enn* refrain addressing human speakers and occasionally Óðinn (*R*) is placed in exactly the same stanzas in all three versions, as far as the stanzas are shared. This may suggest that important aspects of the deixis in the poem originate in an oral form preceding the written versions and were probably part of the common written original which the present versions may, at least partly, derive from. The alternative interpretation of oral deixis of *Völuspá* may seem unlikely: that the poem was composed in writing with oral performance in mind.

Although the three versions of *Völuspá* in *R*, *H* and *SnE* reflect increasing degrees of literary adaptation, this cannot be seen as chronological development. The youngest of the texts (*H*) preserves a fuller picture of performance than *Snorra Edda*, which was composed before the writing of both *R* and *H*, but after the first written version (**R I*), according to Dronke's stemma (1997: 65). And the high degree of literary adaptation in *Snorra Edda* results from the function of the poem in *Gylfaginning*, as subordinated to the prose frame presented there (it is not primarily caused by a failing understanding of the double scene embedded in the poem). A chronological line of reasoning may still be relevant to *R* in comparison with *H*, since both the mythological subject matter and aspects of the oral deixis may be misunderstood, or only partially understood, in *H*, which is the youngest preserved manuscript of *Völuspá*.

Without going into the stemmatic arguments presented by Dronke and Johansson, the present analysis suggests that oral performance played an important role in the transmission of *Völuspá* even after the poem occurred in written form, for what appears to be an unusually complicated use of deixis and perspective would, as argued here, be easily interpretable within an enacted oral performance. The most likely explanation is that the knowledge of Eddic tradition and performance would form a background for the written versions, so that even private or silent reading of the poem would invoke the setting of a performer speaking to an audience.

If contact with oral performance was completely lost, the oral deixis seen in *H* and *R* would disturb the reading, and it is very likely that editors would have modified the poem accordingly. After all, comparison of the three versions reveals a considerable degree of alteration (Mundal 2008), and it would be unproblematic to change all cases of *hon* 'she' (referring to the mythological *völva*) to the first person *ek*, or the other way

around. However, such editing would disturb the blending of the two speakers which seems important in both R and H. The tension between the two speaking identities and their different points of view—which is emphasized in the *Geyr Garmr* refrain in R—is indeed central to the presentation of mythology in both *Völuspá H* and *R*.

5 Deixis, performance and literary adaptation

The double scene is a concept that points out the important relationship between performance and subject matter. In other cases than *Völuspá*, however, speakers do not conceptualize two distinct scenes but rather expand the present scene of performance by such means as addressing supernatural beings. This is the case in *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, which I have discussed in a previous publication (Thorvaldsen 2011). There Egill communicates with higher powers as well as human beings in a series of verbal attacks on King Eiríkr blóðøx and Queen Gunnhildr (and their allies). These utterances appear to have a magical function in the saga, and virtually expand the scene of performance to include gods and spirits who arguably partake in the saga story. Similar sorts of expansion are noted in other texts, for example in the Christian oaths *Gríðamál* and *Tryggðamál* found in Icelandic and Norwegian law codes from the Middle Ages (see Thorvaldsen 2011 with references). Hence, ‘the expanded scene’ may be a better term for the general phenomenon of associating the concrete scene of performance with a supernatural or fictional context. ‘The double scene’ may still be used in the case of *Völuspá*, since the expansion occurring there clearly establishes a distinction between performance and mythological setting (which is required to gain the effects of blending analysed above). I suggest that ‘the double scene’ may be used as a subordinated term referring to such variants of ‘the expanded scene’ as that seen in *Völuspá*.

The analysis of *Völuspá* raises some questions concerning deixis in other Eddic poems. For example, the use of third person in references to the speaker is not unique to *Völuspá*, and occurs in a number of Eddic poems (for references, see Detter and Heinzel 1903b, 30). Loki calls himself *Laufeyjar sonr* ‘the son of Laufey’ in *Lokasenna* 52; in *Atlamál* 33, Vingi swears an oath in which he refers to himself in the third person as *hann* ‘he’; Freya refers to herself as *hon* ‘she’ in *Hyndluljóð* 4. One could

ask if the explanation given in the analysis of *Völuspá* is applicable to these cases, and it is certainly possible to explain them similarly. If these texts were adapted to oral performance, real or imagined, the room left by relegating the enacted character to the third person would—according to the reasoning used in the analysis of *Völuspá*—be filled by the human performer. The likeliness of such interpretations clearly depends on an extensive analysis of deixis and perspective in the specific texts, and considerations of how the written sources could be related to oral performance, and the degree and form of literary adaptation.

A poem which has some deictic peculiarities that resemble those of *Völuspá*, is *Hávamál*, which has mostly been understood as presenting the speech of Óðinn. In many cases, however, the deictic centre could just as well be occupied by a human performer:

Ungr var ek forðum
fór ek einn saman;
þá varð ek villr vega;
auðigr þóttumsk
er ek annan fann;
maðr er manns gaman. (*Hávamál* 47)

'I was young once, I travelled alone, then I went astray; I thought myself rich when I met someone else, for man is the joy of man.'

Although Óðinn is known to be an explorer, the perspective here seems more human than divine; the audience would recognize the feeling of richness from meeting others on a solitary journey, and the stanza appeals to their own experience and emotion. The following stanza, however, introduces the myth of how Óðinn acquires the mead of poetry:

Inn aldna iqtun ek sótta,
nú em ek aptr um kominn;
fátt gat ek þegjandi þar;
morgum orðum
mælta ek í minn frama
í Suttungs solum. (*Hávamál* 104)

'I visited the old giant, now I have come back; I did not get much there from being silent; with many words I spoke to my advantage in Suttungs hall.'

Here, the speaker is clearly Óðinn, who according to *Snorra Edda* manages to steal the mead of poetry from the giant Suttungr (Finnur Jónsson 1931: 84–85). The stanza emphasizes how Óðinn’s rhetoric skill enabled the clever theft, a skill that is emphasized as expedient in the preceding stanza (*Hávamál* 103). In the quoted piece and the stanzas following it, Óðinn speaks of his own benefit from strategic speech in his capture of the mead of poetry. In a later stanza, Óðinn is addressed in the third person by a speaker who expresses distance from the verbal trickery of Óðinn (see *Hávamál* 110).

These shifts in deixis and perspective in *Hávamál* may suggest that we face effects similar to those seen in *Völuspá*. The enacted character and oral performer are deictically distinguished and even appear to be in opposition (cf. the *Geyr Garmr*-refrain in *Völuspá R*). But *Hávamál* has long been considered a composite poem (see Evans 1993), and the deictic references in the poem have been taken as belonging to different older sources merged into the present text (in *R*). The relationship between oral performance and literary adaptation (or maladaptation) would be crucial to the study of oral deixis in *Hávamál* and other Eddic poems, for the written versions are (needless to say) always literary adaptions, although in different degrees and ways, as illustrated in the case of *Völuspá*. Although the possible references to performance in *Hávamál* are enigmatic and need further studies (especially the deictic expressions), the examples given above are difficult to see as mutually exclusive, and as evidence for a composite poem. The presence of a double scene, reflected in deixis and other references, are understandable if the text was originally associated with oral performance.¹⁷

Although it may be impossible to date any Eddic poem precisely without presuming too much about the transmission of the text, the written form of many Eddic poems seem to suggest enactment in varying degrees, and hence an origin in oral performance (Gunnell 1995). But literary adaptation is a fact, and parts of Eddic poetry may be the product of the twelfth century and later. The problem is that we seldom know, and that even those who changed or composed Eddic poetry in the late period

17. An interesting theory of the ‘I’ in *Hávamál* was proposed by Ottar Grønvik (1999, 45–62), who argued that parts of the poem express *unio mystica*, the speaker’s ecstatic identification with the god. This explanation bears some resemblance to the theories of the speaker in *Völuspá* being possessed by the spirit of the *völva*, or being in a state of ecstatic trance (see Thorvaldsen 2013: 112).

may have understood the tradition as one of oral performance, and treated it accordingly, as argued in the case of *Völuspá*. Although it is not possible to map the exact journey of *Völuspá* from original composition to the writing of the preserved versions, the present work argues that the versions of *Völuspá* in *H* and *SnE* reflect different degrees of literary adaptation (compared to *R*), even though all versions preserve traces of oral performance. The examples from other poems briefly described above, indicate the relevance of studying how the concept of the expanded scene may affect the reading of Eddic poems generally, especially when it comes to deixis and perspective.

The question of authorship is left out of the present work, although the unknown author of *Völuspá* has often been the subject of scholarly discussion; for example, both Sigurður Nordal and Ursula Dronke speak of the author and the authorial plan in some length, as it is common to do in Eddic studies. Questions concerning the author are certainly relevant for the understanding of *Völuspá*, but the idea about *one* creative act of composition is problematic. Eddic poems are generally—like Icelandic family sagas—surrounded by anonymity. Snorri does not name the authors of Eddic poems in *Gylfaginning*, while at the same time identifying several authors of skaldic poetry in *Skáldskaparmál*. This may suggest that Eddic poetry was not seen as the product of single authors, but of a tradition which encompasses shared forms, narratives and knowledge. Authorship in Icelandic family sagas and eddic poetry may be considered ‘distributed’ (Ranković 2007; Thorvaldsen 2012). Still, *Völuspá* and other Eddic poems are characterized by a unique artfulness, and the original authors may have managed to put their lasting mark on the texts. Although the differences between the versions of *Völuspá* are substantial, a big part of the text is similar in the complete versions (in *H* and *R*), including phrases and stanzas which are remarkable and memorable. If the poem were composed in the conversion period and transmitted orally for generations until it was committed to writing, the personality and importance of the author would have faded, while the performer and the specifics of performance would remain essential for the interpretation and transmission of the text.

Appendix. References to speaker and audience in *Völuspá H*

The columns *First person references* and *References to audience* include all first and second person references in *Völuspá H*. The references to the audience also includes those given in the third person. The column *Third person (völva)* includes third person references to the völva, but excludes the uncertain identification of *Gullveigr/Heiðr* with the mythological *völva*. Due to the similarities in the shift between first and third person in references to the speaker in *R* and *H*, please refer to Thorvaldsen (2013) for arguments concerning how the *deictic centre* is identified according to these codes:

ek_A — the human performer

ek_B — the mythological *völva*

ek_{AB} — blend of *ek_A* and *ek_B*

Note also that since the repeated Geyr Garmr-stanza is heavily abbreviated, the references that are implied are given in square brackets.

<i>H</i>	Third person <i>völva</i>	First person references	Deictic centre	References to audience
1		bið ek	<i>ek_A</i>	
			<i>ek_A</i>	allar helgar kindir
			<i>ek_A</i>	mogu heimdallar
			<i>ek_B?</i>	villtu
		ek	<i>ek_B?</i>	
		fram telia	<i>ek_B?</i>	
		ek man	<i>ek_B?</i>	
2		ek man	<i>ek_B</i>	
		mik	<i>ek_B</i>	
		man ek	<i>ek_B</i>	
12		hefi ek talða	<i>ek_{AB}</i>	
14			<i>ek_A</i>	liona kindum
19		ueit ek	<i>ek_A</i>	
24	veit hun		<i>ek_A</i>	
	ser hon		<i>ek_A</i>	
			<i>ek_A</i>	uitu þer
25			<i>ek_A</i>	uitv þer einn
26	man hon		<i>ek_A</i>	
31		se ek	<i>ek_A</i>	

34	sier hon	<i>ek_A</i>	
35	ser hon	<i>ek_A</i>	
		<i>ek_A</i>	vítv þer
36	[sé ek]	<i>ek_A</i>	
	[kann ek segja]	<i>ek_A</i>	
41		<i>ek_A</i>	uitv þer
42	[sé ek]	<i>ek_A</i>	
	[kann ek segja]	<i>ek_A</i>	
47	[sé ek]	<i>ek_A</i>	
	[kann ek segja]	<i>ek_A</i>	
51	[sé ek]	<i>ek_A</i>	
	[kann ek segja]	<i>ek_A</i>	
52	[Se]r hon	<i>ek_A</i>	
55		<i>ek_A</i>	úítu þer
56		<i>ek_A</i>	vítv þer
57	ser hon	<i>ek_A</i>	
59	man hon sókkvaz		<i>ek_A</i>

Sammendrag

De tre versjonene av *Völuspá* har betydelige ulikheter i referansene til taler og publikum. I 2013 presenterte forfatteren en undersøkelse av slike referanser i *Codex Regius*-versjonen av diktet og argumenterte for at de underlige deiktiske særegenheterne er spor av muntlig fremførelse. Denne artikkelen avslutter undersøkelsen av taler og publikum i *Völuspá* ved å gi en detaljert analyse av de andre versjonene av diktet i *Hauksbók* og *Snorra Edda*. Det blir hevdet at de to versjonene representerer høyere grader av litterær tilpasning enn det vi ser i *Codex Regius*-versjonen. *Völuspá* er et sjeldent tilfelle der det er mulig å studere tilpasningen av en muntlig kunstform til det skriftlige mediet i detalj. Denne tilpasningen forklares ikke hovedsakelig ut fra kronologisk utvikling, men ut fra ulike litterære formål og ut fra en gradvis svekket forståelse av det muntlige opphavet og den muntlige kunstformen.

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