

Deictic Traces of Oral Performance in the Codex Regius Version of *Völuspá*

By Bernt Øyvind Thorvaldsen

This article offers an interpretation of the references to the speaker and audience in the *Codex Regius* version of *Völuspá*. It is argued that these expressions can be explained from the background of oral performance, including the much debated references to the speaker in both first and third person. The immediate proximity between speaker and audience enables effects which are documented in oral storytelling from other contexts: the scene of performance is directly associated with the stories being told, even in deictic references. This article's point of departure is Lars Lönnroth's suggestion that *Völuspá* presents a double scene, a meaningful interplay between the concrete performance and the mythological frame story referred to in the poem. While Lönnroth commented mainly on *Völuspá*'s first eight stanzas, this article investigates the entire poem, as preserved in the *Codex Regius* manuscript.

1 Introduction

The Eddic poem *Völuspá* presents Old Norse myths and fragments of such myths from the beginning of the world until the doom and beyond. The most comprehensive version of the poem is preserved in the manuscript *Codex Regius 2365 4°* (=R) from c. 1275, which is copied, at least partially, from a now lost manuscript. I limit this study to the R version of *Völuspá* (referred to as *Völuspá R*), though the poem is also preserved in *Hauksbók (AM 544 4° = H)*, which is about half a century younger than R (*Völuspá H*). In addition to these versions, many stanzas of *Völuspá* are quoted within the presentation of Old Norse mythology in *Gylfaginning (Snorra Edda)*. The poem's title is given only in *Snorra Edda*, and means 'the prophecy of the *vǫlva*', a female character described

in several Old Norse texts as being able to perceive future events and reveal hidden knowledge—a soothsayer, a visionary, a prophetess.¹

It is often assumed that Eddic poems originated in oral tradition and, if this is the case, it affects the interpretation in several ways. In a recent article on *Völuspá*, Terry Gunnell (2013) points to the importance of the musical aspect of *Völuspá*, not only caused by the ordinary rules of the *fornyrðislag* metre, but by additional effects of assonance and rhythm;² another important point Gunnell makes is that the written texts, if ultimately representing oral performance, are far from “complete”, since performances would contain a much wider range of signs than those caught in writing (see also Gunnell 2006). The mimicry, the gestures, the movements are lost forever, although daring scholars have gone very far in reconstructing such details.³ Gunnell (1995) has convincingly argued that the editors of *R* and *AM 741 I 4°* supply information in the Eddic dialogues that compensate for the inevitable loss of information occurring when an oral form is presented in writing. The editors added convenient notations of speaker identity and inserted more or less successful prose explanations.

The specifics of the written medium require such adaptations, partly due to what is termed *deixis*. The *deictic expressions* “have in common the feature of being defined only with respect to the instances of discourse in which they occur, that is, in dependence upon the *I* which is proclaimed in the discourse” (Benveniste 1971: 226); they are “determined in relation to a specific speaker and addressee and a specific time and place of utterance” (Matthews 2007: 96). An utterance is anchored to a person (*I*) in a certain moment in time (*now*) and at a specific location (*here*). In this article, I term this point of reference as the *deictic centre* (cf. Matthews 2007: 96). The deictic centre may shift to a character other than the speaker (for example, in the direct speech of a novel), and expressions like *I*, *here* and *now* then refer to the character and her location, not that of the narrator. Such shifts are termed *deictic shifts* in this article and elsewhere (see Duchan, Bruder and Hewitt 1995). If any poem com-

1. See Samplonius (2001) for a comprehensive discussion of the role of *völur* in Old Norse literature and history.
2. Effects of this kind were also treated by the present author in an unpublished PhD trial lecture in Bergen, 25th of January 2007, titled “Om eddadiktningens estetikk, særlig framføringsaspektene, og tekstutgivelse” (On the aesthetics of Eddic poetry, especially aspects of performance, and text editing).
3. In the case of *Völuspá*, see especially Gutenbrunner (1958).

posed for oral performance is confined to written form, the deictic references may pose some challenges. If a poem is transcribed simply as it would have been performed, the context on which the words depend is practically lost. This situation may lead to adaptive strategies, such as the marginal notations of speaker identity investigated by Gunnell (1995).⁴

The deictic expressions in *Völuspá* have caused several problems for interpreters of the poem, especially the use of both first and third person in what appears to be references to the speaker (more on that in section 2.2). Judy Quinn (1990) is, as far as I know, the only scholar who has explicitly addressed *deixis* as a linguistic category in the reading of *Völuspá*. In relation to the shift between first and third person in references to the speaker, she draws attention to a reported performance of the Mwindo epic (from Congo) in which the performer speaks in the first person when narrating the actions of the hero and, even in the voice of the hero, impatiently addresses the scribes, who are too slow in transcribing the performance. David Herman (2004) points to similar deictic effects in American “conversational storytelling” which—like the Mwindo epic—depend on the immediate interaction between speaker and audience. In a first person narrative told by a woman claiming to have seen her dead brother’s apparition, the speaker creates a *deictic blend* of the story location and the location in which the story is told (my emphasis): “Now my bedroom was ... window is right *there*, two double windows. And I seen him when he come up standing just as pretty as I ever seen him in my life a-standing *there*.” Here, the speaker gesticulates in association with the deictic adverb *there* as if the speaker’s bedroom at some past moment in time were present in the moment of speaking (Herman 2004: 66–67).⁵ The deictic blend is a concept closely related to oral performance and enables an understanding of phenomena that are not easily understood on the basis of deictic shifts only.

I suggest that the unusual deictic references in *Völuspá R* are comparable to those reported from the Mwindo epic performance and the American apparition story. An important point of departure for investigating this possibility is a short chapter on *Völsupá* by Lars Lönnroth in

4. See also Johansson (2005) on the process of literary adaptation in the case of *Skírnismál*. The general problem with written texts as sources to oral performances are treated by John Miles Foley in *How to Read an Oral Poem* (2002, see especially: 58–78).

5. Comparable effects are also documented in the enactment of modern drama (see McIntyre 2006).

Den dubbla scenen, ‘The Double Scene’ ([1978] 2008: 29–52), in which he reads *Völuspá* as if it were performed by a woman for a thirteenth century audience. The *double scene* refers to the poem’s dual setting, the speaker’s concrete performance and the mythological setting in which the *völva* addresses Óðinn. Lönnroth investigates how the meaning of *Völuspá* can be understood within this dual frame. Gunnell also addresses possible connections between double scenes in other Eddic poems (see Gunnell 2006, 2011).

The objects I study in this article, however, are possible verbal references to oral performance in *Völuspá*, especially deictic references.⁶ Lönnroth gives convincing interpretations of some references to the audience, but he focuses most of his attention on the poem’s eight first stanzas, and it may be fruitful to extend the analysis to the entire text. Since performance references form my main subject, myths will be treated only when they are directly relevant to the performance. Although this scope is narrower than Lönnroth’s, my basic method is the same. Oral performance serves as a hypothesis in interpreting the poem. Below, I argue that the double scene may have caused the deictic complexity of *Völuspá*. I have chosen to avoid a specific setting as a hypothetical oral performance, such as an Icelandic farm in the thirteenth century (Lönnroth). My analysis is limited mostly to *deixis* and perspective, and does not require such delimitations. There is a potentially unlimited number of ways to perform the poem orally. Even if my analysis is based on relatively few hypothetical details, there are admittedly other possibilities which are not accounted for, such as a male performer or several performers. Still, the idea of a female performer in front of a human audience seems quite reasonable if a poem like *Völuspá R* were ever performed orally.

2.1 *Foregrounding of performance*

In this section, I address the cases in which performance is foregrounded in *Völuspá R*. I treat the many references to the speaker in first and third person separately in section 2.2 below.

6. Preliminary thoughts on the specific subject were presented in chapter 8 of my PhD-thesis (Thorvaldsen 2007), and as a paper on The Thirteenth International Saga Conference in Durham (Thorvaldsen 2006). In Thorvaldsen (2011), similar effects are investigated in *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, and in the legal oath *Trygðamál*.

There are no prose additions in *Codex Regius* to explain the poem's setting, neither is any title given to delimit the speaker's identity or the poem's genre. The first stanza of the poem starts with the speaker asking for attention:⁷

Hliods bið ec
 allar kindir
 meiri oc mini
 mavgo heimdallar (*R* 1₁₋₄)

(I ask all families to listen, greater and lesser sons of Heimdallr.)⁸

The last two verse-lines form an apposition to *allar kindir* and refer to the greater and lesser sons of Heimdallr, the different social strata of human beings.⁹ Similar ways of introducing a poem by asking for silence were also familiar to Old Norse audiences (Sigurður Nordal 1927: 14–15). In *Haraldskvæði* by Þórbjörn Hornklofi, men are asked to listen while the poet describes the fighting of Haraldr Finehair (*Hlýði hringberendr, / meðan frá Haraldi / segik odda íþróttir, Skj. I, B: 22*); Eyvindr Finnson asks for attention while he enumerates the forefathers of Earl Hákon back to the gods (*Viljak hljóð ... meðan hans att ... til goða teljum, Skj. I, B: 60*). Indeed, to introduce a performance by asking the crowd for attention must be an almost universal phenomenon.

The second half-stanza is usually interpreted as the speaker addressing the god Óðinn:

7. Old Norse spelling follows the standard of Heggstad (et al. 2008), although editions are quoted with their own standard of spelling; *Voluspá R* is quoted from Bugge's edition (1867: 12–18), and so is *Völuspá H* (op. cit.: 19–26); thus, manuscript spelling is preserved, but unlike in Bugge's edition, the abbreviations are not marked and neither are line and page shifts. Translations are my own responsibility, although several are quoted or adapted from Larrington (1996) and Dronke (1997).
8. In Old Norse, *kind* could refer to a wider concept of 'kind' and a narrower, but clearly related, concept of 'family' (see examples Fritzner 1891: 282), and both meanings are applicable to these lines. Old Norse *kind* is, however, translated 'family' throughout this article since the modern English word covers not only 'family' in the narrow sense, but also 'descendants' and 'group'.
9. The attempt to interpret *megir Heimdallar* as a reference to gods only (von See 1981: 514–516) is in my opinion unconvincing. It is perhaps possible to stretch the meaning of *mogr* to mean 'friend, fellow', but this strenuous exercise is not needed. I see few reasons to dismiss the sources identifying Heimdallr as a progenitor of men (in the prose introduction to *Rígsþula*, and in *Hyndluljóð* 43).

vilðo at ec ualfǫþr
uel fyr telia
forn spioll fíra
þa er fremst um man. (R 1₅₋₈)

(You wish, Valfǫðr, that I tell the past tales of men, the earliest I can remember.)

The manuscript form *vilðo* is read as having an enclitic second person singular pronoun *þú*, and *ualfǫþr* is read as an heiti *Valfǫðr*, referring to Óðinn. The speaker is addressing Óðinn directly and states that the god wants her to present tales from the past (*spjall* could also refer to the words themselves; see *Lexicon poeticum*: 530).¹⁰

When the poem is interpreted within an oral performance, the first stanza addresses the present human audience, the second includes Óðinn as a listener and primary motivator for the speech act. Thus, the audience witnesses an exchange between the speaker and the god that emphasises the authority and importance of the speaker and what is being said (Lönroth [1978] 2008: 40–42). It is impossible to know if Óðinn was somehow represented in a performance, by an actor or perhaps an object. The use of second person and the direct address to Óðinn, however, show that Óðinn was part of the performance, whether wholly or partially imagined.

In the second stanza, the speaker starts to unveil memories of the past, establishing her performance as a mythological character:

Ec man iotna
ár um borna
þa er fordom
mic fǫdda hofdo
nío man æc heima
nío iviþi
miot uið mǫran
fyr mold nedan. (R 2)

10. Another possible interpretation is offered by Gísli Sigurðsson (2001: 10–12), and this is commented in the interpretation of R 29–30 below.

(I remember giants, born in the beginning of time, they who once brought me up; nine worlds I remember, nine expanses, the famous tree of fate below the earth.)¹¹

The ‘I’, referred to by the pronoun *ek* and first person verb forms, is clearly no minor witch, but a mythological character that existed even before the present material world came into being. Even if *Völuspá* is imagined to be performed in a primarily pre-Christian religious context, it is unlikely that a human performer was seen as originating in the period where Ymir was still alive (*R* 3), the primordial giant from whom our material world was built, according to other sources.¹² *Völuspá R* places the creation of human beings in stanza 16, so the human performer is not relating her own experiences. Thus, *enacting* must occur if something like *Völuspá R* was performed orally—even if the performer was seen as possessed by the spirit of a *völva* or somehow communicated with spirits (see Dronke 1997: 27–30). It is likely that the performed identity was established even before the first words were spoken in oral performance, simply by the performer’s behaviour and clothing, the physical setting itself, etc.

The second stanza establishes the speaker as entering the role of a formidable mythological *völva* (who perhaps speaks through a possessed performer). The double scene is established and the ancient memories of the enacted *völva* lead way into the descriptions of the early times of creation which follow.

From stanza 3 to stanza 9, the poem presents creation myths in the past tense and the speaking *völva* does not refer to herself. The succeeding stanzas elaborate a *þula*, a poetic list of dwarf names, until the speaker stands forth again within the *þula* in stanza 12, speaking in the present perfect:

11. There are several uncertainties in the reading of this stanza, but those are of little importance to the question of performance. What exactly does the *völva* remember when she mentions *nío iviþi*? The noun is interpreted as *iviði* above, perhaps referring to ‘plains, expanses’, but is attested nowhere else. In the *Hauksbók* manuscript, the corresponding verse line is *niu iuidiur* (nine giantesses; see *Lexicon poeticum*: 325). The meaning of *mjötviðr* is probably ‘measuring tree’ and can be interpreted as the ‘tree of fate’ (Yggdrasil).
12. *Grímnismál* 40–41, *Vafþrúðnismál* 21, *Gylfaginning* (Finnur Jónsson 1931: 14–16).

nú hefi ec dverga
... rett um talþa. (R 12_{6...8})

(Now I have listed dwarfs correctly.)

The *nú* in this stanza clearly refers to the moment of speaking, and the next reference to the performance act occurs in stanza 14:

Mal er dverga
idvalins liði
liona kindom
til lofars telia. (R 14₁₋₄)

(It is time to list the dwarfs in the flock of Dvalinn, for families of men, back to Lofar.)

If *ljóna kindir* is to be understood as ‘families of men’, which is commonly assumed (see Bugge 1885: 218–19), this could be interpreted as a reference to the human audience addressed in the first stanza, in somewhat similar wording. Thus, the dwarf *þula* is dedicated to men, the present audience, and the importance of the *þula* for them is emphasized in its closing:

þat mvn vppi
meþan auld lifir
langniþia tal
lofars hafat. (R 15₁₁₋₁₄)

(It shall be remembered, the list of Lofarr’s forefathers, as long as mankind exists.)

From the perspective of performance, it is clearly important that families of men (*ljóna kindir*) are presented as beneficiaries or experiencers of the *þula*. If the poem was meant for oral performance, audience interests and perspective would, to some extent, affect the presentation. Dwarfs are known to supply precious and magical objects to both gods and men and knowing their names may not be a disadvantage, as is pointed out by Sigurður Nordal (1927: 38).

In the succeeding stanzas, there are references to the *völva* as ‘knowing’ or ‘remembering’ in *R* 18, 21 and 28. In these stanzas, the present tense is, as in other cases of foregrounded performance, taken to refer to the moment of speaking within the performance. Similar phrases occur in succeeding stanzas and will be commented on in section 2.2.

The next case of foregrounded performance is the last line of *R* 28: *uitoþ er en e. hvat?* (Do you know enough, or what?), which also appears in eight succeeding stanzas (in abbreviated form: *R* 29, 34, 35, 38, 40, 49, 59, 60). Within our hypothetical oral performance, the second person plural pronoun *ér* can be seen as addressing both the human audience and Óðinn (cf. *R* 1–2). The present tense refers to the moment of speaking in performance, as it does in the cases already mentioned.¹³

Thus, the tense of the *Vituð ér enn* refrain in *R* 28 is contrasted with the past tense of the succeeding lines of the *útiseta* section:

Eín sat hon uti
þa er in aldni com
ygióngr asa
oc iaggo leit. (*R* 29_{1–4})

(She was sitting alone outside, when the ancient, terrible god arrived and stared her in the eyes.)

The third person pronoun *hon* is usually interpreted as referring to the speaker, and the pronoun occurs with the same signified in *R* 28 (*veit hon* ‘she knows’, *sér hon* ‘she sees’), who may be identical to the *völva* Heið, described in *R* 23, and even Gullveig in *R* 21–22 (see Samplonius 2001: 221–28, Mundal 2002). Óðinn approached her while she was sitting alone outside (*Eín sat hon uti* in the past tense). The following lines are usually understood as the *völva* speaking within the prior scene. The present tense is then anchored to the past *útiseta*:

hvers fregnit mic
hvi freistiþ min
alt ueit ec oðin

13. Present tense in reference to performance is used in *R* 14; the present perfect in *R* 12 is also relative to the moment of speaking (cf. the deictic adverb *nú*): *nú hefi ec dverga ... rett um talþa* (now I have listed the dwarfs correctly).

hvar þv aþga falt
ienom meþra
mimis brvni (R 29₅₋₁₀)

(What do you want to know? Why do you try me? I know everything, Óðinn, where you hid the eye in the famous well of Mímir.)

These lines are placed within quotation marks by Jón Helgason (1971: 7), while other editors have included some or all of the succeeding lines:

dreckr mióð mimir
morgin hverian
af veþi v.
v. e. e. h. (R 29₁₁₋₁₄)

(Every day Mímir drinks the mead of V[alfǫðrs] pledge. Do you know enough, or what?)

Wherever the quotation marks are placed or not placed, the *útiseti* section clearly describes a past event explaining how Óðinn approaches the *vǫlva* to make her speak, in accordance with R 1: *vildø at ec ualfaþr / uel fyr telia* (You wish, Valfǫðr, that I tell)...¹⁴ The tradition of sitting outside (*útiseti*) to gain special knowledge (and perhaps objects) from spirits, is referred to in Old Norse literary texts as well as law codes (for references, see Gísli Sigurðsson 2001).

I am in full agreement with Gísli Sigurðsson (2001) and several other scholars noting that the lines above resemble an *útiseti* motif. I find it more difficult, however, to believe that the *vǫlva* is the one who seeks knowledge and visions from Óðinn, as argued by Gísli Sigurðsson, rather than vice versa, since this would mean that the questions *hvers fregnit mic / hvi freistiþ min* (What do you want to know? Why do you try me?) are considered to be spoken by Óðinn. If that were the case, the following lines form a curious reply from the *vǫlva*: *alt ueit ec oðin* (I know everything, Óðinn) ... If Óðinn asked *hvers fregnit mic / hvi freistiþ min*, and supplied wisdom and knowledge to the *vǫlva*, the *vǫlva*'s following answer

14. Examples are Detter and Heinzl (1903 a: 5) who mark R 291–14 as direct speech; Dronke (1997: 14) ends direct speech after *af veþi v.* (line 13); Bugge (1867: 5) avoids indication of direct speech.

would seem out of place, as a rather harsh and hostile statement about Óðinn's missing eye. If she sought Óðinn's wisdom, would she not play the somewhat humbler role of the one seeking assistance?

The second person plural forms *fregnið* and *freistið* are also difficult to explain if the questions are uttered by Óðinn for, according to Gísli Sigurðsson's interpretation, there is only one *vǫlva* in this scene. Although the intrusion of direct speech from Óðinn in stanza *R* 29_{5–6} is rejected and the *vǫlva* is seen as the speaker, the problem of the plural persists, since there is only one listener within the *útisetu*, Óðinn.¹⁵

If oral performance frames interpretation, *everything* in *Vǫluspá* is uttered by the human performer, who, in the beginning of the poem, clearly enacts the mythological *vǫlva* speaking to Óðinn (*R* 1–2); but she also refers to the presence of a human audience (*R* 1 and 14). The speaker blends the mythological setting and the immediate setting of the performance, and it is tempting to suggest a similar background for the plural in *hvers fregnit mic / hvi freistiþ min*. Although these words are supposed to be uttered in the past, sometime before the poem is performed, the speech in the *útisetu* section is spoken to the human audience in an oral performance. It would be in agreement with the blending of scenes earlier in the poem, that blending occurs between the past *útisetu* scene and the present performance scene, also affecting deictic expressions like the second person plural in *hvers fregnit mic / hvi freistiþ min*.

In short, it is not only Óðinn who wishes to hear the *vǫlva*'s speech, the human audience would certainly side with Óðinn in this respect: they are, after all, listeners. Hence, the second person plural in *hvers fregnit mic / hvi freistiþ* should be interpreted as including *both* Óðinn and the human audience. The relevance of this interpretation is also indicated by the *Vituð ér enn* refrain, which occurs immediately before the *útisetu* section, as noted above, and as the last line of *R* 29 (abbreviated in the manuscript as *v. e. e. h.*). The refrain also applies the present tense referring to the moment of speaking. This is quite important since the *útisetu* section continues in the past tense after the refrain is uttered in *R* 29 (stanza 30 ff.). Hence, the refrain can hardly be seen as being uttered in the past *útisetu* only. Even the second person plural of the refrain in *R* 29 can be

15. Dronke argues (1997: 136) that the plural may refer to Óðinn as representing all the gods and reports a similar case from *Baldur's draumar*. Dettner and Heinzl (1903 b: 39) suggest a polite form in *hvers fregnit mic / hvi freistiþ min*, but this form is hardly used in eddic poetry, and is hard to explain in association with *þú* in the same stanza.

understood as including Óðinn in the *útiseta*, in addition to the human audience in the moment of speaking.

The deictic references in the *útiseta* section are certainly understandable within the frame of an oral performance, while cumbersome to understand within a reader's illusion of a solemn meeting between the *vǫlva* and Óðinn. Perhaps this problem of *reading* the *útiseta* section is why editors have disagreed on where direct speech ends in *R* 29, placing the final quotation mark at different locations. The manuscript itself does not mark direct speech in any way and editors do well in following the manuscript at this point (as is done for example by Bugge 1867: 5). After all, *Vǫluspá R* is complex when it comes to *deixis* and the concept of direct speech may oversimplify the possibilities present in oral performance.¹⁶

The succeeding stanza (*R* 30) describes a much debated transaction in Eddic scholarship. The two introductory lines are easily understandable and are uttered in the past tense: *Valþi henne herfawðr / bringa oc men* (*Herfawðr* chose for her rings and necklaces). These are generally perceived of as gifts from Óðinn to the *vǫlva*, given to bribe her into speaking about her memories and visions. The succeeding lines are, however, more difficult to interpret:

fe spioll spaclig
oc spa ganda. (*R* 30₃₋₄)

They can be read without emendation as objects given to the *vǫlva* by Óðinn. In the first line, *fe* can be read as 'money, goods' and *spioll spaclig* as 'wise words'; another possibility is to read the line as *féspjǫll spaklig*, referring to some kind of cunning curses used to obtain goods (see Sigurður Nordal 1927: 67–68). The form *spa ganda* has been interpreted as acc. pl. of *spágandr* 'spirit of prophecy' (Dronke 1997: 15), but more likely refers to magical staffs used in the process of gaining prophetic wisdom and vision from spirits (see Price 2002: 175–204). Although Óðinn may bribe the *vǫlva* with some kind of esoteric knowledge or spells, the magical staffs of prophecy are best understood as being presented to the *vǫlva* in the beginning of her *útiseta* to enable the supernatural acquisition of knowledge and visions and to make her share her memories and visions

16. A minimal definition of direct speech is: "The direct quotation of something said, thought etc." (Matthews 2007: 107).

with Óðinn. And, immediately succeeding this transaction of gifts, the poem relates:

sa hon uitt oc vm vitt
of verold hveria. (R 30₅₋₆)

(She saw far and wide over every world.)

Thus, the *útisetá* section in stanzas 29–30 precedes the pronouncement of *Vǫluspá* itself; it forms a retrospective glimpse into an initial cause for the visions of the *vǫlva* and the *Vǫluspá* performance. As we have seen, this retrospective scene is deictically blended with the performance scene in stanza 29.

The performance is also foregrounded in stanza 31, which resembles the dwarf *þula* in style and wording, although it is much shorter. It is said in the past tense that ‘she saw’ the female mythological characters of *valkyrior*, who had assembled for the purpose of riding to the warriors; followed by a list of six such females, concluding with the following lines:

nv ero talþar
nǫn nor herians (R 31₉₋₁₀)

(Now, the women of Heriann [Óðinn] are listed.)

The present perfect of this formula is clearly anchored to the act and moment (*nú*) of speaking. There is a temporal gap between the vision in past tense (she saw) and the telling of it in the present tense.

In stanza 43, however, the *vǫlva*’s knowledge and visions are presented in the present tense:

Geyr garmr mioc
fyr gnipa helli
festr mvn slitna
en freki rena
fiolþ veit hon frǫða
fram se ec lengra
vm ragna ræk
rǫm sigtyva. (R 43)

(Garmr bays loudly before the Gnipahellir. The fetter will break and the wolf run free. Much she knows of knowledge; I see further ahead to the terrible doom of the victory-gods.)

This is a new refrain repeated in abbreviated form as stanzas 46 (*Geyr nv g.*) and 55 (*Geyr n.*). The second half of the stanza applies the present tense of speaking, since it apparently presents what the speaker knows (*veit hon*) and what she sees (*se ec*), which will be discussed in more detail below. Even the present tense in the first half of the stanza may refer to the moment of speaking (*geyr*); the same goes for the adverb *nú* ‘now’ in the two succeeding occurrences of the refrain (*nv* i R 46, and *n.* in R 55).¹⁷ The refrain is important to establish a connection between the moment of speaking and the temporal aspects of the vision. The baying of Garmr, mostly taken as a reference to the monstrous wolf Fenrir, seems to be occurring simultaneously with the performance, an ominous sign of the impending doom where the wolf will break loose from his magical chain. The last stanza of the poem (R 62) contains another probable reference to a mythological scene involving the *vǫlva*. Without going into the much debated interpretation of the flying *Níðhoggr* (see Mundal 1989), the last line of the stanza has often been read as a reference to the *vǫlva*: *nv mǫn hon seyqvaz* (now she will sink), and without emendations, the third person pronoun can hardly be taken as a reference to anybody else. The sentence refers to the *vǫlva* disappearing, perhaps by sinking into the ground by sorcery in the immediate future. Sigurður Nordal (1927: 16–17) nonetheless claims that the *vǫlva* in *Vǫluspá* should not be considered dead and, certainly, her sinking does not imply that she returns to her mound or grave. Nowhere is she said to be raised from the dead by Óðinn or others when Óðinn approaches her in the *úttisetá* section. The ‘now’ (*nú*) is, according to the interpretation given here, a reference to the present moment of speaking, which is shared by speaker and audience. The use of the third person, seemingly referring to the speaker here and elsewhere in the poem, thus calls for further investigation.

17. Sigurður Nordal (1927: 16) gives another explanation to temporal *deixis* in the refrain, arguing that the ‘now’ (*nú*) of R 46 and 55 refers to the same moment in time as that of the first occurrence (R 43).

2.2 Ek and hon

Sigurður Nordal (1927: 16) mentions the third person references in *Vǫluspá* and states that the *vǫlva* is both the speaker and the object of the speech. Siegfried Gutenbrunner (1957) argues that the use of third person reflects “self-objectification” (Selbstobjektivierung), and associates the use of *hon* with the performer being gradually displaced or suppressed by enacting the *vǫlva*; he writes that “der Vortragende zum Spielen der Seherinnenrolle gedrängt wird” (p. 9), and presents the idea as helpful for reading *Vǫluspá*—and as a point of departure for an article that was published a year later (Gutenbrunner 1958). That article presented a rigid hypothesis of a possible performance, specifying such details as onstage movement of the performer and the way in which the audience was seated. Einar Ól. Sveinsson (1962: 324) argues that *ek* is used mostly when the *vǫlva* describes the past and present, while the third person *hon* is used in foretelling the future. He draws attention to how persons with schizophrenic disorders sometimes refer to themselves in the third person and suggests that the poet must have observed the phenomenon and incorporated it in the poem.

Quinn (1990) follows a line of reasoning concerning the shift of pronouns which is close to that of Gutenbrunner. She comments on the *Geyr Garmr* refrain in *Codex Regius* and claims that *ek* refers to “the experiencing subject” and *hon* to “the medium of knowledge”. She argues that the first person pronoun is gradually replaced by that of the third person in *Vǫluspá*, meaning that “the subjective voice of the *vǫlva* fades and she functions in the text as a medium between the substance of the vision and its audience” (Quinn 1990: 314). Margaret Clunies Ross (1990: 224) refers to Gutenbrunner’s term “self-objectification” and considers the use of first and third person in *Vǫluspá* on the background of narratology. She stresses the “seeress’s role as focalizer as well as narrator of a series of temporally and logically bound narratives” (Clunies Ross 1990: 224).¹⁸ In *Vǫluspá*, the first person is used when the subject matter is of special importance to Óðinn, Clunies Ross argues. Thus, the *vǫlva* adapts her viewpoint according to the subject matter and its relation to the listening god. Clunies Ross also suggests an element of psychological realism in the unusual shift of pronouns in *Vǫluspá*, since even subjects of hypnosis reveal “multiple ego-states”, and a *vǫlva* would arguably be inclined

18. The *focalizer* defines the viewpoint of a narrative which is not necessarily that of the *narrator*; see Mieke Bal’s *Narratology* (2009) for a recent presentation of these terms.

to states of trance—a theory not dissimilar to that presented by Einar Ól. Sveinsson.

In the second volume of *The Poetic Edda*, Ursula Dronke (1997: 27–30) presents the following understanding of the shift between *ek* and *hon*:

He [the author of *Völuspá*] has only a single speaker, but he creates a spirit world for her to converse with. The speaker is ‘I’, the other is always ‘she’. The poet warns us from the outset that even the ‘I’ is not necessarily a stable human being: she is alive, ostensibly human, addressing a human audience in stanza 1, and yet in stanza 2 she remembers being a primordial fosterling in the giant world of death. The poet is preparing us for a poetic world of heightened imagination, in which *völur*, reincarnated, remembered their former lives, gazed in trance at the hidden habitations of the cosmos, spoke with spirits under the night sky, had constantly close to them, talking, a ‘she’, a second self, another being, who communicated her own experiences. (Dronke 1997: 27)

As I understand it, Dronke considers the first person *ek* to reflect a human *völva* (who is remembering a past incarnation in *R* 2). This human speaker, who is herself a visionary, communicates with (and is partly possessed by) the spirit of a greater *völva* (third person *hon* in *Völuspá*) who “plays a vital part in the life of the gods themselves” (Dronke 1997: 28).¹⁹ But in addition to the didactic *völva* (first person) and the prophetic *völva* (third person), she also posits another ‘she’ expressed in the last stanzas of *Völuspá* (in *R*, stanza 56 and 61).²⁰ In the case of the *Geyr Garmr* refrain quoted above, where ‘she’ (*hon*) is said to possess great knowledge and the first person *ek* to see further into the future, Dronke suggests that “one *völva* outpaces the old knowledge from the other” (1997: 29).

There are several different explanations for the shift between *ek* and *hon* in *Völuspá*, some are mentioned here, and I will attempt yet another explanation. In some respects, however, I develop important aspects of

19. Also Andreas Lombnæs (2001: 136) argues that reciter is possessed by the spirit of the *völva*.

20. It remains unclear to me how this second ‘she’ is related to “*Völva C*”, described later, as “a narrative figure in a myth of the past, *Heiðr*” (Dronke 1997: 99).

Dronke's theory. My core argument is based on analysis of *deixis* and *perspective* (the latter will be defined in section 2.2.2). Although *Völuspá* is a complicated poem, it is, in my opinion, possible to explain the references to the speaker in a simpler and more coherent way than previously done. It is tempting to quote the words of Karl Bühler at this point, who gave professorial advice on the understanding of deictic references:

The theoretician of language should not begin to speak esoterically from out of philosophical abysses, nor should he prefer reverent silence when he comes across these phonetically harmless entities [*i.e. deictic references*] in the lexicon and is required to characterize their function. Rather, he should admit that it is perhaps quite curious how they work concretely in actual speech, but that it can be precisely stated. (Bühler 2011: 117, 1934: 102)

Mostly, deictic references are immediately understandable within the original context of an utterance. In the *Codex Regius* version of *Völuspá*, however, the deictic references admittedly appear “curious” both on the speaker's and audience's side.

The references to the audience side were explained above by presuming that the background of the poem lie in oral performance and it seemed that the audience was established as shown in figure 1. Note that this figure uses four Old Norse personal pronouns to denote speakers and audience (*ek* ‘I’, *þú* ‘you’ and *hon* ‘she’ in sg.; *ér* ‘you’ in pl.). These are, when relevant, marked according to the setting: A=concrete per-

| | | |
|-----------------------|-----|---|
| | B | Óðinn (<i>þú_A</i>) |
| Speaker (<i>ek</i>) | A+B | Blended audience (<i>ér_{AB}</i>) |
| | A | Human listeneres (<i>ér_A</i>) |

Figure 1. The audience of *Völuspá R*

formance and B=mythological setting or AB =blended setting A+B (see examples of this in section 2.1).

The speaker refers to a dual audience, the human audience (*ér_A*) and the implied divine listener Óðinn (*þú_B*), and these are combined sequentially in the text. In stanza 1, the speaker addresses human listeners and Óðinn; then a human audience is referred to again in the dwarf *þula* (R 14). Ac-

According to the interpretations above, there are also second person plural forms that probably refer to both Óðinn and the human listeners ($ér_{AB}$ in fig. 1): at least some occurrences of the *Vituhð er enn* refrain and the questions posed by the *völva* in the *útisetá* section (*R* 29₅₋₆). Thus, the *Codex Regius* version of *Völuspá* establishes a dual audience whose two fields—the immediate context of performance (A) and the mythological setting (B)—are actively blended by combining references to A and B. It could be expected that the deictic references to the speaker may be related to the double scene much in the same way as the references to the audience.

2.2.1 Who speaks?

According to figure 2, it is possible to distinguish two speakers in *Völuspá*

| | | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|-----|--------------------------------|
| The <i>völva</i> | (ek_B , <i>hon</i>) | B | Óðinn ($þú_A$) |
| Blended speaker | (ek_{AB}) | A+B | Blended audience ($ér_{AB}$) |
| The performer | (ek_A) | A | Human listeners ($ér_A$) |

Figure 2. The speaker of *Völuspá* R

R, the human performer and the mythological *völva* (who is enacted by the performer):

So far, I have referred to “the speaker” without distinguishing fully between these two speakers. We saw above that the human performer establishes an enacted identity as a mythological *völva* (ek_B in figure 2) in both the introductory stanzas and the *útisetá* section. In the beginning, she addresses Óðinn directly (*R* 1, but also in *R* 29), relates her memories from a distant past before the creation of the world (*R* 2), and later underlines her extensive knowledge (*R* 29). However, when the poem is read in terms of an oral performance, we can also assume the presence of a human speaker throughout the entire performance (ek_A in figure 2). The relevance of this assumption is seen in references to the human audience, which, according to the previous section (2.1), seems to be addressed throughout the poem, in stanzas *R* 1, 14 and 29 and then in the *Vituhð er enn* refrain, occurring nine times from *R* 28 to 60. However, the use of *hon* in references to the mythological *völva* is the clearest example of how the human performer sometimes comes to the forefront as the

speaker of the poem by suspending the *völva* to the third person, in a sense by ‘unmarking’ her as speaker.²¹ In short, and unlike a written text, the performer is always present and embodied in the performance. This has the potential to give any oral utterance an *ek* ‘I’, a deictic centre. Hence, I suggest that *hon* implies *ek_A*.

Gutenbrunner’s term “self-objectification” is not consistent with this explanation, for Gutenbrunner claims that the use of *hon* indicates that the *performer* (der Vortragende) is suppressed, objectified. According to the interpretation I have given here, the use of third person indicates only an “objectification” of the mythological, enacted *völva*. This is not a process of objectification or suspension of “the self” in singular, rather a suspension of the “enacted self”. This understanding of the shift between *ek* and *hon* is, in principle, quite similar to that of Dronke, who also underlines the distinction between the human performer and the mythological *völva* (the “didactic” and the “prophetic” *völva*). A problem with Dronke’s theory, however, is that the use of the first person is automatically seen as referring to the human performer, which in the case of *R 2* (*Ec man iotna*, I remember giants ...) leads Dronke to explain the performer’s memories as impressions from a former life. In accordance with what has already been said about the introductory stanzas, I suggest that the deictic centre of *R 2* is the mythological *völva*, as enacted by the human performer.

There is a further phenomenon concerning the speaker that Dronke does not address: in addition to *ek_A* and *ek_B*, there are cases in the poem in which the first person references can be seen as a blend of the human performer and the mythological *völva* (*ek_{AB}*), such as in the *útisetá* section when the *völva* addresses both Óðinn and the human audience. The blend *ek_{AB}* is, in many cases, based on unclear identification of to whom the first person expressions refers, and it is considered likely that these ref-

21. While first and second person mark speaker and hearer, the third person, according to John Lyons, “is used to refer to persons or things other than the speaker and hearer” (Lyons 1968: 276). He also writes: “whereas first and second person are the positive members of the category of person, third person is essentially a negative notion; unlike first and second person, it does not necessarily refer to participants in the situation of utterance” (Lyons 1968: 277). Lyons’ modification is relevant to *R 1* and 14, since *allir kindir* and *megir Heimdallar* (1) are not marked as second person, and neither is *ljóna kindir* (14). In these cases, the references may even include a wider apostrophic audience than only the present listeners in a performance; the present audience is seen as a part of human kind, much in accordance with the cosmological perspective of the poem.

erences were unclear even to Old Norse audiences, and for good reason: as will be shown, ek_{AB} mostly appears *between* different sections in which the speaker's identity is more or less stable throughout. Thus, these blended references form intersections in which the shift of deictic centre is being gradually effectuated.

When turning to the question of how the deictic centre develops throughout *Völuspá*, the following three categories will be applied to the speaker:

- ek_A — the human performer
- ek_B — the mythological *völva*
- ek_{AB} — blend of ek_A and ek_B

It must be emphasized that determining the deictic centre in each specific case is by no means exact. First of all, its interpretation is based on an oral performance framework (which is admittedly a hypothesis), and it depends on individual interpretative choices, which are debatable in several cases. I could not claim that deictic expressions prove the reading that I am going to present here, although I do claim that my interpretation of the deictic references in *Völuspá R* is both possible and probable within an oral performance framework. I cannot possibly, however, address all uncertainties involved in determining the deictic centre in all cases, but I have—for the benefit of the critical reader—supplied an appendix that include all references to speaker and audience that I take into consideration (see Appendix, p. 125); the identity of the deictic centre is also suggested there. The following table presents an overview and an interpretation of how the 'I' of *Völuspá* develops throughout the *R* version (Figure 3).

I suggest that there are five distinct sections in *Völuspá R* in which the deictic centre is to be considered either the human performer (ek_A in *A*, *C*, *E*) or the *völva* (ek_B in *B*, *D*). In addition, there are three intersections in which speaker identity is blended, functioning as transitional stages in shifts between ek_A and ek_B (*i–iii*).

- A. The introductory stanza addresses a human audience first. It is unclear whether the human audience or Valföðr wants her to relate memories in the second half of the stanza (due to the ambiguity of *vilðo*). Although the later *útiseta* section suggests that Óðinn is the

| Speaker | Stanzas | Addressee (implied addressee) |
|----------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| A. ek_A | 1 ₁₋₄ | $ér_A$ |
| B. ek_B | 1 ₅₋₁₁ | $þú_B (ér_A)$ |
| i. ek_{AB} | 12–13 | $(ér_{AB})$ |
| C. ek_A | 14–29 ₄ | $ér_A (þú_B)$ |
| ii. ek_{AB} | 29 ₅₋₆ | $ér_{AB}$ |
| D. ek_B | 29 ₇₋₁₃ | $þú_B (ér_A)$ |
| iii. ek_{AB} | 29 ₁₄ | $ér_{AB}$ |
| E. ek_A | 30–62 | $ér_A (þú_B)$ |

Figure 3. The speaker in sections of *Völuspá R*

- one that makes the *vǫlva* speak, one could argue that a human speaker (ek_A) could refer to the encouragement of the present audience ($ér_A$), even when addressing Óðinn in the vocative. Since the second half stanza of *R* 1 immediately follows a reference to the human audience and, since it is unclear if the *vǫlva* is referring to the wish of the human audience or Óðinn, the deictic centre in *R* 1₅₋₈ could be classified as ek_{AB} . The reason for questioning this is that Óðinn is the only explicit addressee in section *B*.
- B. The mythological *vǫlva* is established as a speaker and her identity is somewhat elaborated on (*R* 2). Óðinn is not addressed here, although he is referred to in the third person as one of *bvrs synir* (the sons of Burr, *R* 4) and as part of *regin* (gods, ruling powers, *R* 6, 9) and *æsir* (gods, *R* 7).
- i–C. In stanza *R* 12, the performance itself is the subject (*nú hefi ec ... rettum talþa*, now I have ... correctly listed) and the now (*nú*) referred to is the moment of speaking. Thus, the performer takes one step forward in stanza 12 and is identified when the dwarf *þula* is dedicated to ‘families of men’ (dat. pl. *liona kindom*, *R* 14). There are few reasons to believe that the mythological, enacted *vǫlva* would feel any inclination to dedicate anything for the best of human kind. Although it is not stated that she is a giantess, she is brought up amongst the monsters (*R* 2), and her hostility towards Óðinn in the *útisetu* section certainly contrasts with this helpful listing of dwarf names for the families of men. Thus, in *R* 14, the deictic centre has shifted from the mythological *vǫlva* to that of the human performer. Hence, the first

person references in stanza 18 (*Asc ueit ec standa*, I know an ash standing) most likely refer to ek_A . Also noteworthy, the stanza is succeeded by third person references to the *vǫlva* as *hon* (R 21, 28, 29), bringing the human performer to the forefront as speaker.

ii. The questions *hvers fregnit mic / hvi freistiþ min* (What do you want to know? Why do you try me?) are uttered by the mythological *vǫlva* in the *útisetá*, which take place before the first stanza of *Vǫluspá* is spoken. The questions are seemingly addressed to Óðinn (who is the only other person present in the *útisetá*), but the use of second person plural includes the human audience as addressees. In this case, the *vǫlva* (speaking from the past) is again blending with the performer of the present moment of speaking.

D–iii. Section D bears no mark of an unstable deictic centre, for the *vǫlva* addresses Óðinn within the past *útisetá*. Another kind of deictic blending occurs in D, however, since here Óðinn is an addressee both within the past *útisetá* and the present performance (according to R 1). The use of the refrain *Vitudu er enn, eða hvat?* in intersection iii must, however, refer to the human audience (second person plural) and also Óðinn. The temporal *deixis* in ii, D and iii is unique within *Vǫluspá* R, since the present tense is seemingly anchored to the ‘now’ of the past *útisetá*, while the personal *deixis* imply that the present tense also refers to the moment of performance.

E. The human performer is arguably occupying the deictic centre throughout the last half of the poem. There are constant references to the mythological *vǫlva* in third person, as the perceiver who ‘saw’/‘sees’ and ‘knows’, being described by the human speaker. Thus, from R 30–38 the *vǫlva* is located in the past (*sá hon*) probably in the *útisetá*, or perhaps after. The ‘I’ in the first stanza on Baldr (R 32) could, potentially, refer to the mythological *vǫlva* as the speaker. But it could also refer to the performer, who later claims to be a visionary (in the *Geyr Garmr* refrain). In R 32 the performer presents herself as a human *vǫlva*, having seen the death of Baldr and the succeeding revenge. Since the speaker’s identity is unclear—intentionally, I suggest—I have, therefore, considered *Ec sa baldri ...* as an example of ek_{AB} . The blended deictic centre in R 32 does not, however, prepare a shift between ek_A and ek_B , which is why I do not consider it as forming a separate intersection. The *vǫlva* is referred to in the third person in the rest of the poem and sinks into the ground as the last word of

the poem is uttered: *nv mvn hon seyqvaz* (Now she will sink, R 62). Similarly, Óðinn is not explicitly addressed as a listener after the *úttisetá* and he occurs only in the third person in section E. In the three first cases, he is not referred to as an agent (R 31, 33, 42). He is presented only as an agent in the future, when he speaks with Mímir's head (R 45) and falls in battle with Fenrir (R 51). Thereafter, he is obviously out of the picture as an agent, although he is mentioned by different names in R 52, 53, 57 and 59. When both Óðinn and the *vǫlva* are referred to in the third person, not as listener and speaker, it would seem to be the human performer occupying the deictic centre in the surrounding text. Thus, it seems most likely that the *Vitudd er enn* refrain in section E is aimed at the human audience (R 34, 35, 38, 40, 49, 59, 60).

We can now return to the *Geyr Garmr* refrain, which I commented on in section 2.1, for we are now better equipped to consider the rapid shift between third and first person there: *fiolþ veit hon frǫðá / fram se ec lengra* (she has much knowledge, I see further ahead). Sigurður Nordal (1927: 87) considered this shift in pronouns to be faulty, although he offers few arguments to support this view. To Gutenbrunner (1957) and Quinn (1990), the shift causes some friction with the argument of gradual suspension or objectification of the speaker (by the use of third person *hon*), for the refrain appears in the last part of the poem and gives the impression of consciously *emphasizing* and *sustaining* the distinction between *ek* and *hon*. According to the theory presented here, the deictic centre does not change within the refrain, it merely distinguishes between the speaker in the concrete scene of performance (*ek_A*) and the *vǫlva* present in the mythological setting (*hon* implies *ek_A*). In short, the human performer speaks the whole refrain, as she does throughout the second half of *Vǫluspá R.*²²

2.2.2 Who perceives?

The distinction between the one who speaks and the one who perceives is important to the understanding of *Vǫluspá*, as underlined by Clunies

22. At this point the present analysis supports the reading presented by Dronke (1997: 29). But Dronke's idea of a second 'she' in R 56 and 61 is, in my opinion, not needed here, and causes unnecessary complications to the understanding of *deixis* in *Vǫluspá R.*

Ross (1990: 224). The theoretical difference between *who speaks* and *who sees* was elaborated on by Gérard Genette (1980: 185–211), who later chose to include aspects other than visual perception, by posing the question *who perceives?* (1988: 64–71). A fundamental distinction between *speaker* and *perceiver* is generally recognized in literary criticism, although there is considerable disagreement on terminology and theoretical details (see Jahn 2005 with references). I view the *perceiver* as the agent whose perspective (impressions, memories, knowledge, attitudes) is *presented* by the speaker—and may or may not be the speaker herself. From what we saw in the previous section (2.2.1), it is clearly necessary to see the perceiver as separate from the speaker in *Vǫluspá*, in expressions like *sá hon* (she saw) and *veit hon* (she knows). I find it convenient, however, to avoid using narratological terms such as *narrator* and *focalizer* in the analysis of *Vǫluspá*, since these terms are poorly adapted to the specifics of oral performance; these terms are usually considered text internal phenomena, while *speaker* here refers to both the oral performer and the enacted character of the mythological *vǫlva* or a blend of them.

In the table below (figure 4), following the structure of *Vǫluspá* according to figure 3 (p. 117), the column “Speaker (perceiver)” contains, in brackets, what seems to be the presence of a perceiver *other than the speaker* in sections A–E (I will, for the sake of reasonable brevity, mostly leave the intersections *i–iii* out of the following presentation, although they are included in figure 4).

In the case of *Vǫluspá*, all speakers, according to section 2.2.1, are also perceivers (ek_A , ek_B and ek_{AB}). Although we cannot delve into the specific cases, it should be mentioned that other perceivers may be present in *Vǫluspá*, such as the dwarf, Durinn, who is perhaps seen as the source of the dwarf *þula*,²³ and the perspective of the gods is probably present in their discussions of cosmological matters in R 6, 9, 24 and 26. In R 51 Frigg is given the viewpoint when Óðinn’s death is described.

In this section, I will comment briefly on speaking and perception in sections A–E, focusing on the relationship between ek_A and ek_B . Section A requires no comment, since ek_A is the speaker-perceiver there. In section B, the perspective is, at first, clearly associated with the speaker, the mythological *vǫlva*, who addresses Óðinn and relates her earliest

23. Stanza R 10 relates how dwarfs were created from the earth, and ends with the line *sem durin sagði*, which could either mean that Durinn ‘told about’ the creation, or that he ‘ordered’ it, cf. *segja frá* vs. *segja fyrir* (Sigurður Nordal 1927: 40).

| Section (stanzas) | Speaker (perceiver) | Addressee (implied addressee) |
|-------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| A (1 ₁₋₄) | ek_A | $ér_A$ |
| B (1 ₅₋₁₁) | ek_B $ek_B(ek_A)$ $ek_B(gods)$ $ek_B(Durinn?)$ | $þú_B(ér_A)$ |
| i (12-13) | ek_{AB} | $(ér_{AB})$ |
| C (14-29 ₄) | ek_A $ek_A(ek_B)$ $ek_A(gods)$ | $ér_{AB}$ |
| ii (29 ₅₋₆) | ek_{AB} | $ér_{AB}$ |
| D (29 ₇₋₁₃) | ek_B | $þú_B(ér_A)$ |
| iii (29 ₁₄) | ek_{AB} | $ér_{AB}$ |
| E (30-62) | ek_A $ek_A(ek_B)$ $ek_A(Frigg)$ | $ér_A(þú_B)$ |

Figure 4: Speaker and perceiver in sections of *Völuspá R*

memories (R 2). In the succeeding text of section B, however, there are no references to the memory of the *völva*. And it is difficult to see any traces of her as a perceiver with a hostile attitude to both gods and men (cf. R 2, the *útisetá* section). On the contrary, *Míðgarðr* is described in positive terms as *mærr* ‘famous, glorious’ (masc. acc. sg. *mǫran*, R 4), and the gods as *ginnheilug* ‘sacrosanct, very holy’ (neut. nom. pl. *ginnheilog* in R 6; the refrain is abbreviated in R 9). These are words not likely to reflect the attitude of the mythological *völva*, but they may well express the human performer’s perspective (ek_A). It is difficult to determine the perceiver in all parts of section B, but the perspective seldom bears traces of the mythological *völva*, although she is the speaker. One could also ask to what extent the myths presented are even reasonable to understand as memories belonging to the *völva*, as indicated in R 1–2: Was she present when the sons of Burr raised the lands (R 4) and when the gods were approached by the three giant maids for the first time (R 8)?

In section C, the speaker has shifted to the human performer, who refers to the *völva* as third person perceiver, her memory, knowledge and vision: *man hon* (she remembers, R 21), *Veit hon* (she knows, R 28), *sér*

hon (she sees, R 28). But the human speaker also presents her own knowledge (*Asc ueit ec standa*, I know an ash standing, R 18). In fact, the perspective of the mythological *vǫlva* first appears in R 21–22, where the war against the *vanir* and the seemingly immortal Gullveig is described from her memory (*man hon*, she remembers, R 21). Stanza 23 describes Heiðr, who is a *vǫlva*, and there we can trace the human speaker's perspective. The mythological *vǫlva* would, perhaps, not see Heiðr as 'the joy of bad women' (*angan illrar brvðar*). Heiðr is a colleague of the enacted *vǫlva* (or perhaps she *is* the mythological *vǫlva*?) and the derogative description is likely to reflect the loyalties and attitudes of the human speaker and her audience; in many stanzas of the section, however, it is difficult to determine the perceiver (for example in R 25 and 27).

As in section C, the human performer is the speaker in *E*, which contains numerous references to the mythological *vǫlva* as a third person perceiver, most notably in the past tense following the *útisetá* section: *sá hon* (she saw, R 30, 31, 35, 37 and 38). The temporal distance between the moment of speaking and the perception of the myths must, in these cases, be understood in relation to the *útisetá*: the performer reports the *vǫlva*'s visions from the *útisetá* or from the period between the *útisetá* and the actual performance.

The *Geyr Garmr* refrain (R 43, 46 and 55) is important in section *E*, since it serves to foreground the performance, and it underlines the distinction between speaker and perceiver: *fiolþ veit hon frøða / fram se ec lengra* (she has much knowledge, I see further ahead). In stanzas 43–55 there are no references to the human performer and the mythological *vǫlva* other than in the refrain, which may suggest that the human performer is both speaker and perceiver in these stanzas (after all, the performer announces her prophetic abilities in the *Geyr Garmr* refrain). In the poem's final stanzas, there are two references to the mythological *vǫlva* as a perceiver in the moment of speaking: *sér hon* 'she sees' (R 56 and 61).

3. Conclusion

The assumption of oral performance as lying behind *Vǫluspá* enables a better understanding of the deictic peculiarities in *Vǫluspá* R, for example, by explaining the shift between *ek* and *hon*, according to Lönnroth's theory of the double scene. The effects of the foregrounded performance

in *Vǫluspá R*, including the deictic references, would have been easily perceived in an oral performance without any analysis like the one given in section 2, perhaps even without the need for conscious processing. Even a present day performer—I would claim—could enact the text of *Vǫluspá R* in such a way that the troublesome deictic references would be understood within the poem's double scene. Like the modern American storytellers and the Mwindo epic performers (section 2), the *Vǫluspá* speaker utilizes the deictic specifics of an oral performance: the immediate proximity between speaker and audience and the possibility to associate the performance scene with the subject matter being performed. Detailed analysis like this one, must necessarily atomize what would have been perceived as a whole in a performance. I do not claim, however, that *Vǫluspá R* is unambiguous in its references to speaker and audience. On the contrary, the cases of deictic shifts and blends I investigated, are taken to represent an intentional ambiguity enabled by the background in oral performance.

Although the interpretation of deictic references that I suggest is by no means certain, the parallels between the speaker and the audience are taken to confirm the relevance of my interpretation. As I underlined above, the dual audience is established already in stanza 1. Óðinn is not explicitly addressed in present tense referring to the 'now' of performance elsewhere in the poem,²⁴ although he may be implied in the pronoun *ér* in the *Vituh er enn* refrain. The human audience, which is referred to in stanza 1, however, must be implied both in the pronoun *ér* and in the *ljóna kindir* of R 14.

The same duality is observable when it comes to the speaker. The mythological *vǫlva* is most clearly established as a speaker in R 1–2 and R 29–30, but the latter case presents a past event and it is not possible to determine if the *útisetá* was seen as immediately preceding the performance of *Vǫluspá* or if it occurred in a more remote mythological past. However, a major point from the analysis offered here is that the mythological *vǫlva* is only partially enacted, but clearly so in R 1–2 and 29–30. In the rest of the poem, the speaker's identity is more ambiguous, although I take the references to the mythological *vǫlva* in third person to mean that she is effectively dismissed from the role of the speaker, which the human performer assumes, taking the forefront. Sometimes the

24. The present tense of the *útisetá* section is anchored to some moment in the past.

speaker appears to be the human performer and, at other times, the performer enacts the *vǫlva*, but even in the latter cases she mediates the human perspective (see section 2.2). And the perspective of the *vǫlva* is still present in the parts of the poem where the human performer speaks, for the performer reports visions and knowledge originating in the mythological *vǫlva*.

This may suggest spiritual contact between the speaker and the mythological *vǫlva*, perhaps some kind of possession, as suggested by Dronke. The suggestion that the speaker herself is a visionary, albeit a human one, enables the shifts and blends I investigated above without disrupting the stream of mythological images presented in the poem. It does, however, cause a certain tension between the human perspective and that of the mythological *vǫlva*: at one moment the mythological *vǫlva* is describing her pre-creation past amongst giants, while at another, we find the human speaker offering the audience a handy list of dwarf names. In the *R* variant of the *Geyr Garmr* refrain, the performer (*ek*) and the mythological *vǫlva* (*hon*) are even presented in opposition, according to the reasoning in section 2.1 and 2.2.²⁵ The close connection *and* tension between the speakers nonetheless serve to anchor the poem's subject matter to the performance itself: the opposition between the gods and their enemies is reflected in the nature of the two speakers, and the human perspective is effectively represented.

While the oral background to *Vǫluspá R* must be considered a hypothesis, albeit a probable one, the whole discussion of the *Vǫluspá's* oral background is intimately linked to the question of how the three versions of *Vǫluspá* are related to each other. Since there is obviously no room to go into that discussion in this article, I will follow a more general line of reasoning. It is a fact that the oral origin of *Vǫluspá* is being debated and the results presented here suggest only that the assumption of oral performance effectively explains the poem's deictic expressions. This arguably increases the probability that *Vǫluspá R* originates in oral performance, but exactly how and the age of the tradition cannot be determined on the basis of this analysis.

25. The "performer" is referred to in the analysis above as the one speaking the words of *Vǫluspá R* within our hypothetical performance. It should be added here, that a performer would enact not only the mythological *vǫlva*, but the human speaker of *Vǫluspá*. Even if she belonged to the profession of the *vǫlur* herself an element of enactment would be part of the performance.

There are, however, considerable differences between the three versions of *Völuspá* when it comes to *deixis* and performance foregrounding. *H* does not contain the *útisetá* section and the deictic expressions differ in many respects from *R*. *H* is generally too different to allow for the same line of reasoning as that drawn by analysing *R*. The use of *Völuspá* in *Snorra Edda* also reveals significant peculiarities, compared to *R* and *H*. Still, a small point can be made concerning performance foregrounding in *R*, which may be relevant for future investigations of *deixis* in the two other versions of the poem. For the most part, it would not be problematic to change *ek* to *hon* in the text or vice versa and the fact that the deictic peculiarities are preserved in *R* suggests that the scribes were familiar enough with the oral performance of Eddic poetry to understand the function of these deictic expressions. After all, even a silent reader could interpret the deictic references as I have done here, by imagining the text as being spoken by a human speaker to a human audience. If the scribes saw *Völuspá R* as part of an oral tradition that they knew, it is likely that they read and transmitted the poem *as* an oral poem. Thus, I suggest that the considerable differences in *deixis* between these versions may represent different degrees and ways of literary adaptation. It is likely that deictic effects, such as those studied here, would lose their function if the texts were transmitted mainly in writing and the knowledge of mythology and oral performance faded. The occurrence of speaker names in marginal notations or prose insertions in *R* (see the introduction) certainly reveals that the process of literary adaptation was well on its way when *R* was written.

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

The columns *First person* and *References to audience* include all first and second person references in the poem. Note that the column *References to audience* also includes references in the third person. *Third person (völva)* includes third person references to the *völva*, but excludes the uncertain identification of Gullveigr/Heiðr as the mythological *völva* in *R* 21–23 (cf. *H* 26–27). *Deictic centre* suggests the identity of the speaker according to the codes explained in section 2.2. The *Vitud ér enn* refrain is deictically ambiguous in all cases in *R* (it may or may not include Óðinn as addressee). These cases are marked as *ek_{AB?}* below. The *Geyr Garmr*

refrain in stanza *R* 46 and *R* 55 is heavily abbreviated, and only the words of the first line are represented in the manuscript: *Geyr nvg.* and *Geyr n.* Hence, the quotations below are put in square brackets.

| <i>R</i> | Third person <i>vplva</i> | First person references | Deictic centre | References to audience |
|----------|------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | | bið ec | ek_A | |
| | | | ek_A | allar kindir |
| | | | ek_A | mavgo heimdallar |
| | | | ek_B | vilðo |
| | | ec | ek_B | |
| | | | ek_B | ualfapr |
| | | fyr telia | ek_B | |
| | | man | ek_B | |
| 2 | | Ec man | ek_B | |
| | | mic | ek_B | |
| | | man æc | ek_B | |
| 12 | | hefi ec talpa | ek_{AB} | |
| 14 | | | ek_A | liona kindom |
| 18 | | ueit ec | ek_A | |
| 21 | man hon | | ek_A | |
| 28 | Veit hon | | ek_A | |
| | sér hon | | ek_A | |
| | | | $ek_{AB?}$ | uitoþ er |
| 29 | sat hon | | ek_A | |
| | | | ek_{AB} | fregnit |
| | | mic | ek_{AB} | |
| | | | ek_{AB} | freistiþ |
| | | min | ek_{AB} | |
| | | ueit ec | ek_B | oðin |
| | | | ek_B | þv falt |
| | | | $ek_{AB?}$ | v. e. |
| 30 | henne | | ek_A | |
| | sa hon | | ek_A | |
| 31 | Sa hon | | ek_A | |

| | | | |
|----|--------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| 32 | Ec sa | <i>ek</i> _{AB?} | |
| 34 | | <i>ek</i> _{AB?} | v. e. |
| 35 | sa hon | <i>ek</i> _A | |
| | | <i>ek</i> _{AB?} | v. þ. |
| 37 | sa hon | <i>ek</i> _A | |
| 38 | Sa hon | <i>ek</i> _A | |
| | | <i>ek</i> _{AB?} | v. e. |
| 40 | | <i>ek</i> _{AB?} | v. e. |
| 43 | veit hon | <i>ek</i> _A | |
| | se ec | <i>ek</i> _A | |
| 46 | [veit hon] | <i>ek</i> _A | |
| | [se ec] | <i>ek</i> _A | |
| 49 | | <i>ek</i> _{AB?} | v. e. |
| 55 | [veit hon] | <i>ek</i> _A | |
| | [se ec] | <i>ek</i> _A | |
| 56 | Ser hon | <i>ek</i> _A | |
| 59 | | <i>ek</i> _{AB?} | v. e. |
| 60 | | <i>ek</i> _{AB?} | v. e. |
| 61 | ser hon | <i>ek</i> _A | |
| 62 | mvn hon seyqvaz | <i>ek</i> _A | |

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Bernt Øyvind Thorvaldsen
Faculty of Art, Folk Culture and Teacher Education
Telemark University College
Postboks 203
NO-3901 Porsgrunn
bernt.thorvaldsen@gmail.com