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VÖLUSPÁ AND THE COMPOSITION OF EDDIC VERSE

Völuspá is the only eddic mythological poem which has been preserved in two separate texts which do not appear to derive from a common written original. In addition to the texts of the whole poem preserved in Codex Regius (R) and Hauksbók (H), a substantial number of strophes are quoted in Snorra Edda (SnE). It has generally been supposed that the differences between the R, H and SnE texts of the poem are a consequence of divergent oral traditions (Helgason 1971:viii). Studies of the variability between texts of Old Norse poetry (Lönnroth 1971, Fidjestøl 1982 and Harris 1983) have provided us with important findings about the complexion of orally transmitted texts, including the nature of variation in the order of strophes and half strophes in different texts of the same poem. The verse analysed in these studies has all been preserved embedded in prose texts - in legendary sagas, kings' sagas, and in the case of the Helgi poems, in a style of discourse drawn between the transcription of whole poems and the forging of a narrative prosimetrum. The study of the R and H texts of Völuspá enables us to extend this investigation into oral variability one stage further, since it provides evidence of poetic composition in a non-dialogic form, apparently unmediated by the process of quotation. Moreover, the two independent texts of Völuspá allow us to examine textual variation as a function not only of composition, but more significantly, as a function of poetic structure.

The R and H texts differ at all levels of composition - in the content of half lines and lines and their order within half strophes, as well as in the content and order of half strophes. At significant points in the structure the two texts also vary - in the extent to which the frame narrative is developed, the positioning of refrains, the incorporation of additional strophes and the sequence of strophes in the poem as a whole. While the similarity between the texts leaves little doubt that their transmission has depended primarily on memorization (Harris 1985:117) the differences between them indicate that a considerable range of textual variation was possible within this mode of transmission. In the following analysis, I will distinguish different types of variation between texts, with the aim of locating the areas of structure where specific variations appear to be generated. In addition I will note the ways in which the relationship between the speaking subject of the poem and her audience appears to be inscribed in each text.

The subject of textual difference between the two versions has generally been approached with a view to explaining away variation rather than exploring the space defined by the two branches of the extant poem. The synthesised and edited text of the poem which we find in most

editions and which forms the basis of much criticism is predicated on the literary notion of a single original or authentic text which can be retrieved from the sum of extant versions. Because the edited text is an aggregation of all extant strophes it represents a poem that is not only larger than life but which also conceals the integrity of each of the extant versions. A hermeneutic approach to each text leads to an appreciation of the variation in focus and pace between the versions, and provides a rationale for the patterns of repetition and amplification in each text. The fivefold repetition of the "Geyr nú Garmr mioc"¹ refrain in H, for example, is not a literary infelicity, but an indication of the character of the poem preserved in this recording. In the R text the refrain appears three times, but in H it is more frequently repeated and on one occasion after only three intervening strophes. It can be seen from the overall structure of H - in particular the patterning of tenses and the circling of the narrative back to the moment when *røk ragna* is realised - that in this version, the moment of apocalyptic release is held in focus for a considerably longer period than it is in R (that is for the last 28 str. as opposed to the last 21 in R). Thus in H the refrain "Geyr nú Garmr mioc fyr Gniphelli, / festr mun slitna enn freki renna" is repeated throughout the description of events that precede *ragnarök* proper. The reiteration of the image of the wolf breaking free of its bond also serves to link other mythological descriptions more closely with the narrative of doom: in H the vision of the harp-playing herdsman of the giantess, glad Eggþér, is directly preceded by the refrain, as is the description (found only in H) of the yawning jaws of the snake.

In both texts of the poem, there is a progression from the use of the past tense to the present tense, as the presentation of the events leading up to *ragnarök* is made more vivid to the audience. The process of bringing the events of the prophecy into the immediate present is also seen in the use of the deictic² of present time "nú". The "Geyr nú Garmr mioc" refrain first appears in both texts as "Geyr Garmr mioc", but in subsequent appearances the baying of the hound is represented as happening "nú". The strophe in both texts on which the tense change from past to present is pivoted describes the crowing of cocks in Ásgarðr and Niflhel: "Gól um ásom Gullinkambi . . . enn annarr gelr fyr ionð neðan. . ." (str.43). Whereas the tense change occurs in the 33rd strophe of the H version of the poem, in the R text the move to the present is made later, in the 42nd strophe. The temporal structure of the R text is relatively straightforward and linear: a history is constructed using the past tense, up until the crowing of Goldencomb among the Æsir. With the corresponding crowing of the soot-red cock in the underworld, the text shifts into the present, but unlike the H text, it does not dwell there, and moves straight into the predicted future: "Brœðr muno beriaz...".

In the H text the shift into the present tense at the 33rd strophe draws the *spá* itself into the present as well as the events it narrates. Whereas in R the *völva* saw the hall at Náströnd, and saw men wading heavy streams, in H these sightings are reported in the present tense, that is, within

¹ All citations of eddic poems are from the Neckel Kuhn edition.

² I use this linguistic term to denote the spatial and temporal coordinates of utterance. See further Elam 1980:138-44.

the temporal space shared with the audience: "Sal sér hon standa sólo fiarri . . . Sér hon þar vaða þunga straumar". In R the point where the vision and the delivery become contemporaneous only occurs in the final strophes: "Sér hon upp koma" (59), "Sal sér hon standa" (64). From str. 33 onwards, therefore, the events of the apocalypse are presented in H as more immediate to the audience. They are represented as unmediated by any lapse in time between the vision and the spoken prophecy. The point at which this happens in R is in the description of the re-creation of the world, with the result that immediacy is given to a positive vision of the eventual future, rather than to the catastrophic events which intervene.

In str. 45 of both texts an aside is made which functions as a comment on the state of the world both in the dramatised historic present of the poem, and also potentially in the present time of delivery. The aside therefore functions to immediate the matter of the *spá*. The strophe as a whole deals with future time ("munu" occurs in the first and last long lines) but the tense switches to the present in the second half strophe: "hart er í heimi, hórdómr mikill/sœggöld, scálmöld, scildir ro klofnir/vindöld, vargöld, áðr veröld steypiz;/mun engi maðr qðrom þyrma." In the U text of *Snorra Edda* the last half strophe reads: "vingöld vargöld unz veröld steypiz/grundir gialla gffr flúgandi/mun enn maðr qðrom þyrma." Here, the speaker's temporal perspective is closer to that of the audience, although the expectation of demise is still expressed - "unz . . . enn . . .". The speaker in the U version does not assume the position of hindsight, expressed by "áðr . . .", which is found in the other versions. Across different versions of the poem there appears to be considerable play in the use of tenses, and this variability seems to be connected with the position assumed by the speaking subject vis-à-vis the audience.

The order of strophes in each version of *Völuspá* reflects not only differences in the focus and pace of the unfolding vision, but also slightly different interpretations of mythological events. In the table on the following page, the order of strophes in R and H is set out with those strophes occurring as a group in both texts designated by a letter (A, B C etc.). In H, groups A and B are separated by the pair of strophes (group D) describing the rearing of the wolf which will swallow the sun at *ragnarök*: "Austr býr in aldna í Íárnviði/oc fœðir þar Fenris kindir;/verðr af þeim öllum einna noccorr/tungls tíugari í trollz hami." In this version of the poem the strophes serve as a premonition of the cosmic destruction to come, and therefore cast an ominous shadow across the events of the "fólcvíg fyrst í heimi" which is described in the strophes that follow. In R the first two verbs of str. 40 are in the past tense - "Austr sat in aldna . . . oc fœddi þar" - and the strophes are positioned just before the heralding of *ragnarök* by the cocks of each world. The past tense is used to flash back to events of the past which are now germane to the phase of history being narrated. In R the nurturing activities of the old woman are seen as a detail that is relevant to the mechanics of destruction at *ragnarök*, whereas in H, (and possibly in Snorri's source poem, which preserves the same tense construction) the rearing of the wolf functions as an emblem of nascent and ineluctable destruction. In keeping with the attenuated focus on *ragnarök* in H, it is not only the refrain that comes earlier in the series of strophes, but also the crowing of cocks in the three worlds (group E).

Table 1: The order of strophes in the R and H texts of *Voluspá*

R			H		
20	Þaðan koma meyjar	(20)	20	Þaðan koma meyjar	
21	Þat mun hon fólcvíg	(21)	25	} B	
22	Heiði hana héto	(22)	26		
23	Þá gengo/hvárt scyldir æsir	(23)	27	} D	
24	Fleygði Óðinn	(24)	40		
25	Þá gengo/hverir hefði lopt	(25)	41	} A	
26	Þórr ein þar vá	(26)	21		
27	Veit hon Heimdalar. . .vitoð?	(27)	22	} A	
28	Ein sat hon íti. . .vitoð?	(28)	23		
29	Valði henni Herfóðr	(29)	24	} A	
30	Sá hon valkyrior	(30)	34		
31	Ec sá Baldri	(31)	44	Þá kná Vála. .vitoð?	
32	Varð af þeim meidi	(32)	42	Geyr Garmr mioc	
33	Þó hann æva hendr. . .vitoð?	(33)	43	} E	
35	Hapt sá hon liggja. . .[vitoð?]	(34)	38		
36	A felr austan	(35)	39	} C	
37	Stöð fyr norðan	(36)	44		
38	Sal sá hon standa	(37)	45	} F*	
39	Sá hon þar vaða. . .vitoð?	(38)	46		
40	Austr sat in aldna	(39)	47		
41	Fylliz flörvi. . . vitoð?	(40)	etc.		
42	Sat þar á haugi	} E			
43	Gól um ásom				
44	Geyr Garmr mioc	} F*			
45	Brœðr muno beriaz				
46	Leica Míms synir				
47	Scelfr Yggdrasils				
etc.					

(Unbracketed numbers refer to the strophe numbers in the Neckel Kuhn edition; bracketed numbers to the order of strophes in each manuscript.)

* Apart from a few additional strophes in each ms., the order of strophes from str. 44 to the end of the poem is substantially the same. Variations in position within this group are discussed below.

The different order of strophes in H amounts to more than a keener focus on the pervasive nature of *ragnarök*. The sequence of visions in the *spá* assumes narrative shape, even though chronological precedence may not inhere in the events of one vision as opposed to another as they are described in other mythological sources. The inversion of groups A and B in H implies a different emphasis in the mythological scheme by the positioning of the strophes which allusively refer to the chronic problems posed by Loki and the giants in front of the group of strophes describing the Vanir's threat to Æsir sovereignty. It may also imply a different interpretation of the chain of causation leading to the destruction of Æsir society. At the level of structure the concatenation of strophes 25-7 in both texts suggests that their association depends more on the memorisation of a poetic sequence than on any inherent thematic or structural unity within the group.

A different compositional practice appears to be at work in the second half of the poem, in which the events of *ragnarøk* are narrated, where variations in the order of strophes only involve single strophes, and those strophes - or at least their first lines - appear to have a primarily rhetorical function. We have already noted the more frequent appearance of the "Geyr nú Garmr mioc" refrain in H. As well, str. 48, which begins with the rhetorical question "Hvat er með ásom, hvat er með álfom?", appears to have been moveable within the series of strophes describing the events of *ragnarøk*. The formulation, which is also found in *Þrymsqvíða* occurs in the section of the poem where the *vølva* anticipates the eclipse of one "heimr" by another.¹ In R it is placed in the middle of the group of strophes describing the sequence of military onslaughts from other worlds. In H, however, it precedes this group and follows directly on from the vivid picture of the terrified hordes on hell's road.

To sum up then, two types of variations in the order of strophes are apparent in the R and H texts. First are the various combinations of blocks of strophes that appear to have been memorised as units. Although the *spá* is structured as a narrative sequence the visions which constitute it are not always narrative in nature (for example str.19) and even when they are, they are not necessarily related chronologically to other constituent visions. Second is the existence of single strophes which have a primarily rhetorical function and which can be moved for dramatic effect within a particular section of the poem. It is also apparent that half strophes occur in different combinations across versions of the poem, although they generally seem to belong to a particular movement of the text (for example str. 46-7 in R, H and SnE, and str.34-5 in R and H).

Both the R and H versions of *Völuspá* preserve strophes found only in one version of the poem. For the purposes of this analysis I will refer to this material as additional, since the stages of transmission which might reveal the more complex processes of oral or written revision and influence between versions are now not recoverable. In both texts additions appear to be amplifications of the concerns particular to the version as a whole. For instance the concern in the H text with presenting the events of *ragnarøk* as immediate is intensified by the detailed imagining of the stages of destruction, where the speaker pauses at the moment of engulfment:

Gímm lopt yfir lindi iarðar
 gapa ygs kjaptar orms í hæðom;
 mun Óðins sonr ormi mæta,
 vargs at dauða Völvars niða. (H55)

An additional half strophe earlier in the poem also focuses on the emotions of men at the point when total destruction is inevitable - when the ash tree shakes and the giants are loosed on the world: "hræðaz allir á helvegom, áðr Surtar þann sefi of gleypir." (475-8). In both texts of the poem the speaker draws attention to the implications of *ragnarøk* for men by direct reference as

¹At *Þrymsqvíða* 7 the line functions thematically to draw attention to the central concern of that poem - the vulnerable physical and psycho-social state of the *Æsir* bereft of *Þórr's* hammer, as well as occurring at the transition in the narrative from one world to another. For an analysis of this kind of compositional phenomenon see Lönnroth (1981:323).

well as in asides. Among the four events described in the second half of str. 52, "halir" are included in the sweep of description from the clashing of the stony mountains to the cleaving of the heavens. Men's fate at *ragnarok* also appears to be the focus of an aside made in str. 56: "muno halir allir heimstoð ryðia".

The most extensive additions to either version of the poem occur in the middle of R, where a series of strophes include the amplification of the dramatic frame and a narrative digression on the death of Baldr. In the H text the narrative frame of the poem as a whole is sketched in the first and last strophes and in the "vitoð þér enn eða hvat" refrain. In addition to these the R text preserves a dramatisation of an encounter between Óðinn and a *völva*, which provides a more particularised context for the *spá*, and develops the dramatic relationship between the speaker and her addressee. The narrative frame, as it exists in the opening and closing strophes of the poem, is less developed in *Voluspá* than it is in *Baldrs Draumar* or *Hyndliljóð*, two other eddic mythological poems spoken by a *völva* and apparently belonging to a common poetic genre. The scope for developing the narrative context of myth enumeration poems comes primarily from their dialogue form (Hl str. 1-11, 45-50; BD str. 5-6, 13-14) although in *Baldrs Draumar* narrative strophes are also used (BD 1-4). The only other poem of this type which is in the form of a monologue, *Grímnismál*, includes only oblique references to narrative context in the framing strophes of the poem. The digression towards the frame narrative of the poem in R appears to be prompted by the cryptic reference to "veð Valföðrs" (str.27), the pledge of Óðinn's eye in return for a drink from the well of Mímir, where, according to Snorri, wisdom and intelligence are hidden (Jónsson 1931: 23). The digression begins and ends with lines of third person narrative describing events at the level of the frame narrative rather than at the subordinate level of the *spá*:

Ein sat hon úti, þá er inn aldni kom
Yggiungr ása, oc í augo leit:
"Hvers fregnit mic, hví freistið mín?
alt veit ec, Óðinn, hvar þú auga falt:
í inom mæra Mírnis brunni."
Dreccr mið Mírnir morgin hverian
af veði Valföðrs - vitoð ér enn eða hvat? (R28)

Valði henni Herföðr hringa oc men,
fecc spioll spaclig oc spáganda:
sá hon víft oc um víft of verold hveria. (R29)

Óðinn's thirst for knowledge functions in *Voluspá* at a narrative level, providing the stimulus for the recitation by the *völva*, as well as at a thematic level, informing and preparing the *Æsir* for their eventual encounter with doom. By moving towards the context of the *spá* at this point, the narrative and thematic levels are consolidated. The implied dialogue between the *völva* and Óðinn ("hvers fregnit mic") is used to represent their relationship, which is further elaborated in the three-line strophe where the terms of their agreement are narrated. The diction used by the *völva* in str. 28 bears some resemblance to that in wisdom trial poems. The *völva* is cast as a competitor who is being tried by Óðinn, despite her confidence that her knowledge is unmatched: "Hvers fregnit mic hví freistið mín?/alt veit ec Óðinn hvar þú auga falt." The last half strophe unit

of this strophe (2811-13) seems to function in the text as an answer to an unstated question by Óðinn. These correspondences suggest that in filling out the frame story of the poem, the R text has drawn on aspects of the *vǫlva* genre and the wisdom trial genre because the status of the *spá* (as a specific prophecy and as a recitation of complete knowledge) falls between the two.

The R text of *Völuspá* also preserves a substantial narrative digression on the death of Baldr (strs.31-3) which appears to relate to the narrative account formulated in *Baldrs Draumar*. The style of the Baldr episode in *Völuspá* is different from that of the surrounding parts of the poem. The question and answer form of *Baldrs Draumar* produces a concise and straightforward narrative which, when incorporated into the monologue of *Völuspá* is expressed using a relational process ("varð"), pronouns to link the strophes ("þeim", "sá" and "hann) as well as adverbs of concession and time ("þó" and "áðr"). The monologue form of *Völuspá*, however, usually produces condensed and allusive strophes given chronological and causal significance through their position in the poem as a whole. This difference in style can be most clearly seen by comparing the strophes of the Baldr episode with the strophe which follows it in the R text, the second half of which is also found in the H text.

R

Ec sá Baldri, blóðgom tívor,
Óðins barni orlög fólgin;
stóð um vaxinn, völlum hæri,
miór oc mioc fagr, mistilteinn.

Varð af þeim meiði, er mæz sýndiz,
harmflaug hættlig, Hqðr nam scióta;
Baldrs bróðir var of borinn snemma
sá nam Óðins sonr einnætr vega.

Þó hann æva hendr né hofuð kembði
áðr á bal um bar Baldrs andscota;
enn Frigg um grét í Fensqlum
vá Valhallar - vitoð ér enn eða hvað?

Hapt sá hon liggia undir hvera lundi,
lægiam líki Loca áþeccian;
þar sitr Sigyn þeygi um sínom
ver velgíyiuð - vitoð ér enn eða hvað?

BD

Rindr berr *Vála* í vestrslom
sá man Óðins sonr einnætr vega;
hönd um þvær né hofuð kembir,
áðr á bal um berr Baldrs andscota.
Nauðug sagðac, nú mun ec þegia.

H

Þá kná *Vála* vígbönd snúa,
heldr vóro harðgor hopt, ór þomom;
þar sitr Sigyn þeygi um sínom
ver vel gíyiuð - vitoð þér enn eða hvað?

The texts of both the R and H versions of the last strophe begin with formulations which signal a new vision within the *spá*. In neither text is the capture of Loki narrated, but references are made to his confinement in both first half strophes. The significance of this vision of Loki therefore rests on its position relative to the series. The order of strophes in R implies that Loki's capture and punishment comes as a consequence of the murder of Baldr. In H, this strophe follows str. 24, where the Vanir are described using their battle magic to overrun the Æsir at the end of the first war of the world, and it is followed by the refrain "Geyr Garmr mioc". The sequence of three strophes therefore describes three broad periods in world history: infiltration by the Vanir, controlled stasis and final destruction. The middle state is characterised in terms of the

extremely powerful bonds the Áss Víli makes to contain and isolate the threat of destruction personified by Loki.

A comparison of the R and H texts of *Völuspá* suggests that it is the monologue form of the poem which provides the scope for narrative extension and elaboration. The state of two other monologue poems, *Hyndlolið* and *Hávamál*, bears out this observation, although in both cases it is not clear whether accretions date from the period of the poem's oral transmission or later. It is significant, I think, that it is in monologue poems that we characteristically find shifts between discursive modes - most prominent in *Hávamál* but also apparent in the incorporation of lists in *Völuspá* and *Grímnismál*. As far as we can judge from extant texts, the potential for digression would appear to be curtailed in *sennur* and wisdom trials because of their dialogue form. (Elaboration in these poems would presumably have to be cast in dialogue form according to the style of the genre.) It is also noteworthy that the majority of additional strophes in R occurs as one series following the modification to the frame of the poem, perhaps indicating that once the structure of the memorised poem has been altered, the way is open for more extensive revision than one finds in other sections of the poem (cf. Lönnroth 1971:18).

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Because one dimension of an oral poem, its performance, is ephemeral, no written record can completely represent the poem as it was orally received and transmitted. The performance of the poem is only written into the text in a partial way, which necessitates a reading that takes into account whatever hints are provided by the written text about the performance text. (While we cannot establish how directly our texts are based on oral recitations, it would seem unlikely that all the characteristics of performance could have been erased during the period of written transmission. By the same token if the texts have been written down from memory the version recalled is likely to have been remembered as a performance.) In the manuscripts preserving the eddic poems, the only written aid in this connection is in the form of marginal notation indicating changes in speaker in dialogue poems. Whatever non-verbal signals were deployed during the performance of an eddic poem, they have left no textual mark. Nevertheless certain compositional patterns of the text can, I think, be seen to reflect aspects of oral performance. I have noted in passing in the preceding analysis places where the relationship between the speaking subject of the poem and its putative audience seems to have given rise to variations between the texts. The patterns of repetition in H for instance, might be viewed as the textual reflex of the pitch of oral performance. (The other constituents of pitch - intonation, volume, speed etcetera, are unrecorded in a written text of the poem.) It may also be possible to map a range of other textual reflexes of performance by examining modulations in the relationship between speaker and audience between texts of the poem. For instance, shifts in tense may, in some cases, be the textual reflex of a move by the performer to effect immediacy, or to change the pace of the delivery.

One area of modulation implicit in the form of a monologue is the target of the speaker's address. A dual audience is implied by the opening strophe of both texts of *Völuspá*: "Hlióðs bið ec allar helgar kindir/meiri oc minni mōgo Heimdalar;/vildo, at ec, Valfoðr, vel fyrtelia/for spíoll

fira, þau er fremst um man." The recitation is described by the *vǫlva* as taking place in the presence of an audience, although the apparent instigator of the delivery, *Valfǫðr*, is the direct addressee of the poem. Throughout the H text the *vǫlva* directs her recitation to this single addressee - "vitoð þér enn eða hvað?" - although references crop up which clearly have the larger audience in mind. The description of this audience as "allar helgar kindir/meiri oc minni mögo Heimdalar" seems to imply men as well as gods, since in the prose introduction to the poem *Rígsþula*, *Rígr*, the father of mankind, is identified with the god *Heimdallr*. As well, it is the "forn spioll fira" that the *vǫlva* intends to relate, and the word "fira" can refer to either men or gods, depending on the context. In the R text, however, the plural pronoun is used throughout, suggesting that it is to the broader audience, those whom the *vǫlva* has asked for a hearing, that the *spá* is addressed: "vitoð ér enn eða hvað?"

In the first strophes of the poem, the first person singular nominative pronoun "ek" is used to establish the speaking subject (11), her relationship to her addressee (15), and her credentials as seer (21-4). During the course of the recitation, as the audience is drawn into the vision, the pronoun "hon" replaces "ek", as 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. By the end of the poem her subjectivity, as it is inscribed in the first person pronoun "ek", has disappeared altogether, and the text ends with the words "nú mun hon sœcqvaz". For the greater part of the vision the audience has been drawn to identify with the point of view of the *vǫlva* and participates in the revelation of what she remembers, knows and sees. The shifting of grammatical perspective in oral recitations in other cultures has been noted by Ong (1982:46), although the example he cites, *The Mwinda Epic* preserves a shift from the third person into the first when the narrator describes the actions of the hero. The process of audience identification works the other way round in *Voluspá* where the audience is admitted into the fiction related by the *vǫlva* and the dramatic context of her *spá* is overwhelmed by the substance of her vision. Thus in *Voluspá*, in contrast with other monologues like *Grímnismál*, there is only a cursory end frame, and a perfunctory resolution of the mythological narrative situation: Óðinn has been effectively silenced by the description of his own death.

In the H text of the poem, the shift between "ek" and "hon" occurs only once at str. 27: "Veit hon Heimdalar. . .", with "ek" not appearing again in the introductory half lines of the remaining strophes of the poem. "Ek" does appear, however, a further three times in the second half strophe of the "Geyr nú Garmr mioc" refrain, where attention is drawn to the speaking voice in the act of prophesying: "fram sé ec lengr, fiolð kann ec segja/um ragna rœc, rœmm, sigtýva" (H). In R, both the pronouns "ek" and "hon" are found in this refrain, indicating that at these points in the text a subtle distinction is upheld between the medium of knowledge - "fiolð veit hon frœða" and the experiencing subject - "fram sé ec lengra". The shift in pronominal use within the same line highlights the ease with which the audience could adapt to a change in perspective on the part of the speaking subject.

In R the pronoun "hon" also first appears in the strophe "Veit hon Heimdalar", although within the block of additional strophes (strs.28-33) "ek" is used to introduce the vision of Baldr's death. The next strophe in the R text to begin with the formulation [subj] [verb of perception] [obj] is str. 34 which as I noted previously seems to conform to the compositional mode of the poem as a whole, in contradistinction to the Baldr series of strophes. Str. 34 accordingly reverts to the use of the third person pronoun "hón" ("Hapt sá hon liggja. . .) The appearance of "ek" in the Baldr series might either be a by-product of the amalgamation of additional material into the structure of the *spá*, or it might constitute an emphatic return to the eye-witness speaker at this point in the performance. Theoretically at least, the deictic and pronominal shifts in point of view may have been part of the reciter's art, drawing the audience close to the matter of the poem and building up suspense.

Spatially, the speaker in *Voluspá* is constructed as the observer of a panorama, where the world is transformed into a stage, and world history into a series of entrances and exits from that stage. Thus the use of the deictic pair of verbs "koma" and "ganga" is essential to the construction of the point of view of the *vǫlva*, and, where their use differs, the variations provide an example of the way in which perspective might have been constructed within the situation of a recitation. The speaking subject is positioned within the cultural space of the *Æsir*, to which giants, valkyries (and in H "inn ríki") "koma". In keeping with the panoramic quality of the prophecy, the specific directions from which they come is often stated, for example, "Hrymr ecr austan" or "Surtur ferr sunnan". The use of the verb "koma" indicates movement towards the speaker, with the corollary that whatever comes towards the *vǫlva* is perceived within the context of the poem as immanent for mankind, for example "Sér hon upp koma qðro sinni/lorð ór ægi..." (str.59). The perspective of the speaker in relation to an audience of men is most clearly shown by the deictic redefinition of the speaker's position in str. 17: "Unz þrír qvómo ór því líði/qflgir oc ástgir, æsir, at húsi", where she speaks from the location at which humans are found and inspired with life and "ørlög". In str. 22 she again speaks from within the world of men: "Heiði hana héto, hvars til húsa kom". In two later strophes, the adverbial "þar" is used to describe the unknown territories of Náströnd and Iotunheimr, which are alien territories to both gods and men ("Sá hon þar vaða. . ." (str. 39) and "Sat þar á haugi..." str.(42)). At certain points in the poem, then, the perspective of the *vǫlva* is aligned with that of men through particular deictic usages, although in the poem as a whole the *vǫlva* is conceived of as a speaker from another world, identified most closely with giants.

The perspective of the *vǫlva* only varies across texts at the point of conflict between the gods and the alien forces, who by now have all arrived on the scene (strs.55-6). In describing the encounters between *Víðarr* and *Fenrir*, and *Þórr* and the *Miðgarðsorm*, the texts of R, H and SnE differ in the perspective the speaking subject takes up. In Snorri's text of these strophes the directional verb is "ganga", which is used to describe the action of the god protagonists: "Gengr Óðins sonr við úlf vega"; "Gengr inn mæri mögr Hlóðyniar". That is, this text represents the scene of conflict at some remove from the *vǫlva* and therefore from men. This might indicate that

in Snorri's source poem the proximity of threat was controlled and the realisation of conflict was distanced from the audience to some extent. It may also have been the case that the use of either "koma" or "ganga" was affected by the context in which a strophe was quoted.

The R version however, continues to regard the events as arrivals, announcing in the opening half lines the contests between Viðarr and the wolf and Þórr and the Miðgarðsorm in these terms: "Þá kœmr inn micli mögr Sigfœður"(str. 55) and "Þá kœmr inn mœri mögr Hlóðyniar" (str. 56) In H, "koma" is used in str. 55, but the verb used in the first line of str. 56 is unclear in the manuscript. The perspective in both R and H nevertheless seems to continue to be anchored to the gods' (and by extension men's) point of view, with the god heroes coming to fight off the invaders. In the R text, the use of the verb pair "koma" and "ganga" is complicated by the remainder of str. 56. The verb "ganga" is used in the second long line, in what appears to be an extension of the first line: "Þá kœmr inn mœri mögr Hlóðyniar./gengr Óðins sonr við úlf vega;" This shifting of perspective - viewing the fight from the point at the centre of the stage to which the *völva* has drawn us, as well as from the distant standpoint from which future events and the actions of the gods are habitually regarded - demonstrates the complexity in point of view that could be maintained in eddic composition, and which was probably susceptible to change during oral transmission.

Whatever the pre-history of the versions of *Voluspá* recorded in the R and H manuscripts the texts themselves do not bear witness to explicit revisions. In this respect the case of eddic mythological poetry is at variance with eddic heroic poetry, which show signs of deliberate revision (Harris 1983:22-31). The only direct address by the composer of an eddic mythological poem to its audience is made in *Hymisqvíða*, a third person narrative of Þórr's adventures:

Enn ér heyrtr hafíð - hverr kann um þat
goðmálugra gœrr at scilia -
hver af hraunbúa hann laun um fecc,
er hann bæði galt born sín fyrir.

Hymisqvíða 38

This is also the poem in the eddic mythological corpus exhibiting the clearest signs of skaldic reworking. Drawing attention to the prowess of the speaker or to the utterance as artefact are characteristic of skaldic composition, but not generally of eddic. The majority of eddic mythological poems are cast as monologues or dialogues, and present the words of the gods as unmediated by human poetic craft. Indeed in thirteenth century texts eddic mythological poetry is represented, in some contexts at least, as the words of the gods themselves. (See for example the introduction to a quotation from *Locasenna* in *Gylfaginning* ch 11: "sva sem hér er sagt at Óðinn mælir sjálfir við þann Ás er Loki heitir". In *Ynglinga saga* too, Óðinn is represented as speaking in verse.) Within this eddic convention it is only in a third person narrative that it would be possible for the reviser's voice to be heard.

The overt reference to the Second Coming in the penultimate strophe of the H text -

Dá kœmr inn ríki at regindómi,
öflugr, ofan, sá er ölllo ræðr

probably represents a Christian reworking of pagan mythology to bring it into line with changed cultural beliefs, although it is not possible to ascribe the addition to a particular point in the transmission of the poem. The reworking appears to be isolated to an additional half strophe incorporated into the *spá*. As far as this instance of textual variability is concerned, then, it seems that the change made to the *Voluspá* text was deliberate but subtle.

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