

## The Double Scene in Performance: Deictic Blending in *Vǫluspá*?

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In *Den dubbla scenen: Muntlig diktning från Eddan til ABBA* (1978) Lars Lönnroth analysed *Vǫluspá* according to his theory of a double scene. This theory is founded on the importance of performance in oral literature. He claims that *Vǫluspá* evokes a twofold audience and a twofold scene: the audience of the actual performance, and a mythical scene in which the speaker addresses Óðinn. This double scenery has great aesthetic value, since the viewpoint of the audience is expanded to a mythical level.

In theory on viewpoint there are some terms and concepts which will be imported to this study of the double scene. In a forthcoming book, Dan McIntyre will discuss point of view in drama from the perspective of cognitive theory. One of his theoretical points of departure is 'deictic shift theory', which focuses on how the deictic reference point ('deictic centre') changes in narrative (see for example Stockwell, 2002, 41–57, Galbraith, 1995). This theory applies the concept of a 'deictic field' to describe blocks of texts defined by one viewpoint. Within a narrative, viewpoint changes through deictic shifts. The most obvious example is when a story shifts from third person narrative to direct speech. In drama, however, McIntyre argues that the concept of a deictic field is too simple, since it 'suggests that a reader's presence within one deictic field prohibits his or her being simultaneously aware of another deictic field'. He gives several examples of how the actual scene of the performance may merge with the scene being enacted. An example from experimental drama is *The Chicago Conspiracy* by John Burgess and Marowitz (1974), in which members of the audience are treated as prisoners.

It is, however, not only in professional drama that a merging of the story and the event of story-telling may occur. David Herman has studied storytelling in conversation, and observes that speakers sometimes map the location of the conversation with the locations within the narrative. Spatial deictic expressions ('here', 'there') and gesticulations, are then vehicles by which the event of telling and the events being told may be combined (Herman, 2004). Herman (2003) was, it seems, the first to apply the term 'deictic blending' to this process.

In the following analysis the Hauksbók and Codex Regius versions of *Vǫluspá* are viewed in the context of a hypothetical oral performance. In this way, the three basic deictic aspects (the anchoring of utterance to space, person and time) will be studied and related to the concepts of deictic fields, shifts and blending. The overall intention is to investigate whether these terms might be useful within the theory of the double scene. I will return to the problems of the hypothetical oral performance in the conclusion of the paper.

### The locations

Most of the poem consists of references (implicit or explicit) to locations within a chain of myths. These myths form the major structure of the poem and range from primordial times and places to the new world succeeding the destruction of the old one

(*ragnarök*). In most cases there is both a temporal and spatial distance between the event of telling and the events told about. This paper will not discuss locations within the vision, but rather the locations related to performance itself.<sup>1</sup>

The actual scene of the performance is significant to all forms of oral literature. In our case this scene need not be defined in detail, but can simply be imagined as the place where a performer expresses the text to an audience and where audience and performer are in audible and visual contact. The scene of the performance is a deictic field in itself, since the text is expressed and perceived within that scene.

There are no direct references to the actual performance scene in *Vǫluspá*,<sup>2</sup> but there are probable references to the persons within it. In the first stanza a human audience is addressed in the phrase 'the higher and lower sons of Heimdall' (*meiri ok minni / megir Heimdallar*). Also the refrain, 'Do you know enough, or what?' (*Vituoð ér enn eða hvað?*<sup>3</sup>), occurs several times and within a performance would surely be understood as a reference to the audience.

The most puzzling phenomenon in the Codex Regius version of *Vǫluspá* is apparent even in the first stanza of the poem, where the speaker addresses both human beings (including the present audience) and Óðinn almost simultaneously. In this way the actual scene of performance expands to a mythical level. Myths are not only observed at a 'narrative distance'. The telling of the myths is encapsulated in its own myth. In the Codex Regius version of the poem there are some 'frame stanzas' (29–30), which explicitly refer to the mythical scene of performance (stanza 29, translation from Larrington's *The Poetic Edda*):

Ein sat hon úti,	Alone she sat outside,
þá er inn aldni kom,	when the old man came,
yggiungr ása	the Terrible One of the Æsir
ok í augu leit:	and he looked in her eyes:
'Hvers fregnið mik?	'Why do you question me?
Hví freistið mín?	Why do you test me?
Alt veit ek, Óðinn,	I know everything, Óðinn,
hvar þú auga falt:	where you hid your eye
í enum mæra	in the famous
Mímis brunni!	well of Mimir.'

The mythical scene is one in which Óðinn meets a woman character and confronts her. Thus, as Lönnroth has noted, the Codex Regius version of *Vǫluspá* creates a double scene: the actual performance scene and its counter-part on a mythical level. As such, *Vǫluspá* operates in two deictic fields related to performance: the actual and the mythical field.

The two locations of the double scenery are not present in the same way in *Hauksbók*, since the explicit presentation of the mythological frame is absent, and any second person reference to Óðinn is based on emendation or uncertain interpretation. The second half of the first stanza in *Hauksbók*, however, has (by emendation) a

<sup>1</sup> See Quinn (1990, 316–317) on the relationship between speaker and vision.

<sup>2</sup> All references to stanza numbers are to Sophus Bugge's numbering of the Codex Regius and *Hauksbók* versions (*Norræn fornkvæði*, 1876, 12–26).

<sup>3</sup> In Codex Regius stanzas 28, 29, 34, 35, 38, 40, 49, 59, 60; in *Hauksbók* stanzas 24, 25, 30, 35, 41, 55, 56.

vocative reference to Óðinn and is certainly addressing someone in the second person singular.<sup>4</sup> It is nevertheless difficult to distinguish clearly between the two locations in Hauksbók.

If we focus on the double scenery as a spatial effect only, there are several aspects of *Völuspá* which are not taken into consideration. For example, in the first stanza of the poem, the speaker in Codex Regius addresses Óðinn in the second person (*bú*) and refers to herself with the first person pronoun (*ek*). Then in the quoted frame stanza 28, Óðinn and the seeress are both referred to in the third person (*hon-inn aldní*). In the first stanza the present tense is applied, while the frame stanza (lines 1–4) is in the past tense. This is reason enough to have a closer look at the two other basic aspects of deixis, that of person and that of time.

### Speaker and audience

The actual scene of performance includes a speaker and an audience. There seems to be no reason within the texts to suggest that more than one speaker was involved in the performance. In the first stanza the speaker addresses both mankind and Óðinn, and is thus speaking both in the performance location and in the mythical scene:

Hljóðs bið ek allar	Attention I ask from all
[helgar] kindir	the sacred people,
meiri ok minni	greater and lesser,
mögu Heimdallar.	the offspring of Heimdall;
Viltu at ek, Valföðr,	Father of the slain, you wished
vel fyr telja	that I should declare
forn spjöll fira,	the ancient histories of men and gods,
þau er fremst um man.	those which I remember from the first.

We should note that [helgar] *kindir* / *meiri ok minni* / *mögu Heimdallar* in stanza 1 also seems to address a wider audience. This is in harmony with the perspective of the vision: *helgar kindir* in Hauksbók (by emendation in Codex Regius) is possibly a reference to the gods, while *meiri ok minni megir Heimdallar* (in both manuscripts) probably refers to the myth of how the social strata were initiated by Heimdallr.<sup>5</sup> The refrain *Vituoð ér enn eða hvað?*<sup>6</sup> would in performance be perceived as a reference to the present audience, and possibly also the mythological recipients.

The speaker is in the foreground of the first stanza and identifies herself with the first person pronoun *ek*. In the performance scene the pronoun would be associated with the performer. Then in the second half-stanza she is suddenly addressing *Valföðr* in the vocative and is thus also speaking (in the first person) within the mythical scene.

<sup>4</sup> In the Hauksbók version of the first stanza, the speaker addresses someone in the second person singular, but there are no vocative references (as in Codex Regius) to Óðinn, unless we accept the common emendation of *vafðors* (genitive) to the nominative form. Quinn presumes that the refrain line *Vituoð hér enn eða hvað?* in stanza 25 is a reference to Óðinn (1990, 314).

<sup>5</sup> The prose introduction to *Rígsþula* identifies the god Rígr as Heimdallr, and the kinship between Heimdallr and human beings seems also to be reflected in *Hyndluljóð* 43.

<sup>6</sup> On the variants of the refrain see Quinn (1990: 314).

In Hauksbók, however, the reference to mankind is present, whilst the reference to Óðinn is uncertain (see footnote 946).

Also, in the second stanza of the poem (in both manuscripts) the first person speaker associates with the past beyond creation and with the mighty giant forces. She claims to have been raised among giants and have memories from the primordial Chaos. In this way one could suggest that the speaker identifies with the role of the *vǫlva*. There is, however, no absolute distinction between the speaker in the performance proper and her mythical counterpart. It seems more reasonable to say that the references to her twofold identity serve to merge or blend the actual and mythical fields of performance.

In both manuscripts a peculiar shifting of personal pronouns might be related to the blending of the speaker and the mythical *vǫlva*. In the second half of an apocalyptic refrain in Codex Regius (stanzas 43, 46, 55), the pronouns referring to the speaker shift even within the same long line (translation from Larrington's *The Poetic Edda*):

Fjǫlð veit <i>hon</i> fróða.	Much wisdom <i>she</i> knows,
Fram sé <i>ek</i> lengra	<i>I</i> see further ahead
um ragna rök	to the terrible doom
roðm sigtíva.	of the victorious gods.

As observed above, the *vǫlva* is referred to in the third person within the frame stanzas, where she is interacting with Óðinn. At this time, the speaking performer observes the mythical *vǫlva* at a 'third person distance'. But when the *vǫlva* speaks to Óðinn, a deictic shift occurs and the speaker temporarily lends her voice to the mythical seeress. In the quoted refrain the shifting of pronouns referring to the speaker can be understood in the same way: the speaker changes her position within the double scenery of the poem, thus creating a highly effective deictic blending of the two scenes.

Throughout the poem there are several references to mythic wisdom and memory, and to prophetic abilities. These are attached both to the first and third person (*ek* and *hon*), and apply the verbs *vita* 'know', *muna* 'remember' and *sjá* 'see': *ek veit* – *hon veit*, *ek man* – *hon man*, *sér ek* – *sá hon*.<sup>7</sup> These are also examples of how the speaker helps establish the blended scene: *hon* always refers to the *vǫlva* in the mythological scene, while *ek* identifies the performer in both scenes, a performer whose abilities and identity merge with that of the mythical *vǫlva*.

The same shift of pronouns is present in Hauksbók, but with some differences. Firstly, the shift does not occur in the apocalyptic refrain (stanzas 31, 36, 42, 47, 51) as it does in Codex Regius: *Framm sé ek lengr. / Fjǫlð kann ek segja*. Also, as Quinn notes, the Hauksbók version shifts from *ek* til *hon* in stanza 24, and only the quoted refrain applies the first person pronoun thereafter. Codex Regius, on the other hand, has occurrences of the first person pronoun later in the poem. In both cases there is a development throughout the text from first to third person references. But while Codex Regius mixes the two pronouns, even within the same line, Hauksbók has a tendency towards greater blocks of text within one deictic field (applying either *ek* or *hon*).

<sup>7</sup> In Codex Regius the expressions occur in stanzas 1–2 and 18–61, in Hauksbók stanzas 1–2 and 19–59.

### Time in *Vǫluspá*

The shift from past to present tense in *Vǫluspá* might be related to mythical chronology: some myths tell of things which have happened, others of things happening, and others of things to come. Else Mundal (1989, 215–216) argues that the present tense in the latter part of *Vǫluspá* is rather used as a tool to intensify the vision. Judy Quinn (1990, 305–306) elaborates on the effect of the temporal references and tense in the Codex Regius and Hauksbók versions of the poem and writes: 'In both texts of the poem, there is a progression from the use of the past tense, as the presentation of events leading up to *ragnarök* is more vivid to the audience' (op. cit., 305). Without going further into the shifts of tense in the vision itself, the following is a short look at the tenses specifically used in relation to the speech act.

As one could expect, the present tense is generally applied for utterances related to the speech act itself. The speaker asks the audience to listen, and whether Óðinn wants her to tell about the mythical past (stanza 1). The refrain *Vitud ér enn eða hvat* is also in the present tense, independently of the surrounding tenses. The present tense is also applied when the poem describes what the speaker knows (*veit hon*) and remembers (*ek man—man hon*). However, the act of seeing (expressed with *sjá*) is more complicated. In Hauksbók the present tense is applied in all occurrences, but in Codex Regius both past and present tense is applied. This is rather peculiar, for the past tense creates a temporal distance between the act of speaking and that of prophetic vision. However, in the frame stanzas (see 28, lines 1–4) we also observe the past tense being used to represent the mythical scene. In that case, it is probable that the scene is supposed to have occurred before the speaker started to present her vision. The past tense marks the stanzas as a retrospective glimpse into the myth of how the *spá* was motivated.

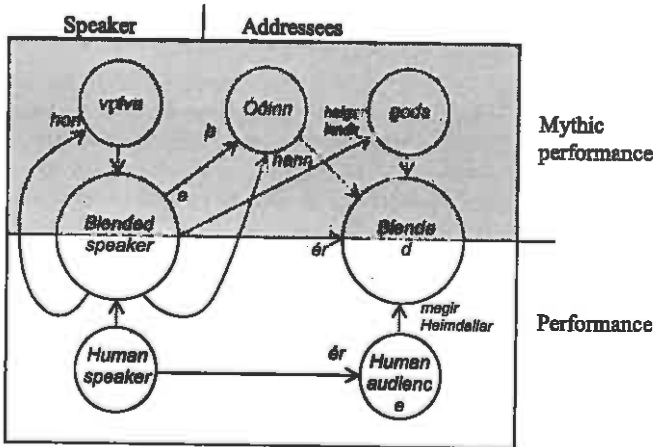
If the past tense in Codex Regius was consistently applied to prophetic seeing, it could easily be explained. The vision preceded the performance of its subject matter. However, the present tense is also applied and a logical explanation for the shift between past and present in these cases does not seem obvious. Of course, one could claim that *ek sá / hon sá* is related to the nature of the speaker. She sees in the present, and saw in the past, and what she tells might be seen on different occasions. Another rather far-fetched explanation, firmly located in the lack of knowledge on eddic performance, is that non-verbal elements in the dramatic performance cause the shift of tense. The performer might have acted out the prophetic seeing and then returned to verbal performance. In that case the past tense is a natural choice. When the present tense occurs, it is because the speaker sees and speaks in the same moment. These explanations are problematic, since they add details to the hypothetical oral performance – details that are impossible to confirm or dismiss.

### Conclusion

A strong indication that the concept of deictic blending is applicable to the poem in Codex Regius can be seen in the shifts in pronouns that refer to the twofold speaker. The first person pronoun would, in oral performance, be associated with the speaker. However, *ek* is also alludes to the mythical *vǫlva*, when the speaker claims prophetic

ability, origin among giants, and memories beyond the creation of the world. The *ek* is drawn into the mythical scene when the performer addresses Óðinn, and the pronouns *ek* and *þú* are applied. Then, in other cases, the speaker shifts her position when she refers to the *vǫlva* in the third person. Here it is important to emphasize that the human speaker is still present in an oral performance, and as a speaker she is still in some sense the deictic centre of the utterance.

Both the blending of speaker and audience is represented in the following illustration, where arrows symbolize how one character refers to another, while the dotted arrows represent the process of blending. Some of the deictic references are also written close to the arrows.



The Hauksbók version differs from that of Codex Regius, in the sense that the mythological frame is absent, and the two locations are at best implicit. A wide 'cosmic' audience is present and so are references to the human audience. Still, there *is* blending between the performer and the mythical *vǫlva*, although *ek* and *hon* shift less rapidly than in the Codex Regius version. Another difference is that the act of seeing is consistently referred to in the present tense in Hauksbók, in both past and present in Codex Regius. The Hauksbók version does not play on the deictic complexity of performance in the same degree as the Codex Regius version. The deictic references in the text (including the tenses related to the speech act) are simpler in Hauksbók. When explicit framing is absent, however, it also means that the double scene is vaguer.

In a way you could say that *Vǫluspá* is playing on the duality of dramatic performance: the mythological and actual scenes, the audiences populating both scenes, the identity of the performer and the performed identity.

The performance of *Vǫluspá* is of course a hypothetical situation, but applying the theory of the double scene does seem to explain some phenomena within the poem. It is obvious that ignoring the written performance of the text is highly problematic, because the texts are results of such performances. The deictic effects within *Vǫluspá*

could be the same if the text was performed from a manuscript, or from memory based on reading. As long as the text is spoken by a person and listened to by others, the possibility for a double scene is present. This means that the differences in the deictic effects in two manuscripts cannot easily be used as arguments for one of the texts being more or less 'oral'. It is safer to conclude that the deictic effects seem to be oriented towards spoken communication, and in this case to avoid generalizing abstractions such as 'orality' and 'literacy'.

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