

Ursula Dronke, ed. *The Poetic Edda*. Vol. 2, *Mythological Poems*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997. 457 pages.

The splendid first volume of this edition, containing four of the heroic poems in the *Poetic Edda*, appeared in 1969, and this second volume has been eagerly anticipated. In it, Dronke turns to five mythological poems: *Völuspá*, *Rígsþula*, *Völundarkviða*, *Lokasenna*, and *Skírnismál*, with *Baldurs draumar* included as a brief appendix to the edition of *Völuspá*; these are said in the Preface to “relate in some way to the period from the ninth to the eleventh century, when Norsemen were in most familiar contact with the Irish and the Anglo-Saxons” (vii). Otherwise, the selection of poems and their unorthodox ordering (besides the inclusion of *Rígsþula* from outside the Codex Regius) are left unexplained; readers may prefer to draw their own conclusions about the date and provenance of each poem, and simply accept the volume as a series of separate editions of individual texts.

These editions are, however, very uneven in extent: *Völuspá* occupies 153 pages, *Rígsþula* 80, *Völundarkviða* 100, but *Lokasenna* a mere 44 and *Skírnismál* only 42. Each edition consists of a text with an interesting and thoughtful parallel translation, an introduction divided into variously named sections, and a commentary on the poem concerned. The book ends with a long, undivided bibliography (415–43), but there is no glossary.

### *Völuspá*

*Völuspá* survives in differing forms in R (Codex Regius) and H (Hauksbók), with a third version for those stanzas which are also quoted in SnE (*Snorra Edda*); the establishment of its text is a complicated task. Dronke has developed a new and complex idea of its structure and content, and this sometimes seems to influence her selection of its text: “Without a conception of the structure of the poem we have no basis for determining the best text. At the same time, without some evaluation of the texts we cannot determine the structure. The two studies, poetical and textual, must develop alongside each other”

(25). Where we must choose between different versions, this is unavoidably true, but all ideas of structure should surely be secondary to textual evidence: they have no authority of their own, and I would have preferred an analysis which began unambiguously from the actual manuscript readings and placed “The Texts of *Völuspá* and their Relationship” (61–92) before instead of after “The Structure” (25–30) and “The Sequence of Ideas” (30–61). However, while Dronke rarely names the earlier editors who have suggested emendations that she adopts, she is meticulous in recording the manuscript readings, so it remains possible for the careful and experienced reader to reconstruct more conservative texts if desired.

Her exposition of the relationship between the witnesses is in most respects lucid and convincing. Supposing that *Völuspá* originated in oral tradition around the year 1000 and received its first written form (which she calls \*R I) by about 1200, she argues that there was an interpolated text (\*R II, including the interpolated names of dwarves, stt. 10–16) which was the source both of R (ca. 1270) and of \*H I, a carefully rationalized text made for Snorri Sturluson ca. 1225. The demonstration of how the changes apparently made at this stage fitted Snorri’s mythographic purpose (68–70) is elegant and convincing. \*H I was then the basis for a much cruder revision (\*H II), itself the source of H (ca. 1340).

However, this argument seems vulnerable at two points. The catalogue of dwarves is clearly interpolated, but the best argument for this is not its inappropriateness in terms of literary structure (which might simply represent a bad artistic “mistake”), but the facts that two names (*Ái* and *Eikinskjalði*) appear more than once each, and that it contains obvious opening and closing formulae from more than one dwarf-*þula* (12.6–8 is clearly the end of such a poem, while 14 and 16.5–8 are the beginning and end of another). The list of dwarves is thus not merely an interpolation, but a composite one.

When Dronke attributes other interpolations to \*R II on “structural” grounds, she is in danger of creating the poem in the form she wishes it to have. Thus st. 5.5–10, on the primeval uncertainty of the heavenly bodies,

are rejected because they conflict with her view of st. 5.1–4 as depicting a decisive sun already running in her appointed course (66–67, 116–17). Interpretations of 5.1–4 which would reconcile it with the following lines (e.g., those of Sigurður Nordal and Gerd Wolfgang Weber) are ignored. Similarly, st. 10 is regarded as interpolated because it is inconsistent with the view of the creation of dwarves in her emended text of 9.5 (*hvárt skyldi dverga for hverr . . .* [R, SnE] or *huerer . . .* [H], Dronke 67–68, 122); but st. 10 does not look like the opening of a *þula*, and 9.5 *hverr* or *huerer* ‘who’ could be interpreted as meaning that the Æsir need the dwarves to create wealth for them (as Dronke acutely argues, 38), but want to avoid most of the labour of creating them themselves. This would explain the activity of Mótsognir and Durinn in st. 10 without any conflict between the two stanzas.

Dronke rejects all the text which is found only in H, and dismisses its order of stanzas wherever it differs from that of R. Sometimes this is clearly right: Neckel’s stt. 34, 55H look like inadequate replacements of the substance of st. 34.1–4, 52 (Neckel’s 35.1–4, 55 [*Edda: Die Lieder des Codex regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern*, vol. 1, *Text*, ed. Gustav Neckel and Hans Kuhn, 5th ed. (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1983), 8, 13]); and the order of stanzas in the middle third of the H text produces such absurdities as the rebuilding of the wall of Ásgarðr by the Giant Builder before the war with the Vanir, whose destruction of its previous wall is what makes the employment of the Giant Builder necessary.

However, some lines found only in H are less obviously spurious. Dronke combines Neckel’s stt. 46 and 47.1–4 into a single long stanza (her st. 45) and dismisses as a clumsy addition by \*H II the next four lines in H: “hræðaz allir / á helvegum, / áðr Surtar þann / sefi of gleypir” (87). But the prose of *Gylfaginning* chap. 51 shows knowledge of these lines, and Nordal’s interpretation of this quatrain as “all are afraid on the ways to Hel before Surtr’s kinsman (i.e. fire) swallows it (i.e. Yggdrasil)” still seems sound. If Snorri knew these lines, they must either have been interpolated at an earlier stage or else they are an original part of the poem. Similar considerations apply to the much disputed Neckel

st. 65, which seems to assert the arrival of a quasi-Christian divine ruler; this could be a pious Christian interpolation, but it must have been part of some texts of the poem before the \*H II reviser did his work, since it is echoed in *Hyndluljóð* 44 (see Neckel and Kuhn 295; *Völuspá*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, 2d printing [Reykjavík: Helgafell, 1952], 150–51; *Völuspá*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, trans. B. S. Benedikz and John McKinnell, Durham and St. Andrews Medieval Texts 1 [Durham: Dept. of English Language and Medieval Literature, 1978], 119–20).

At one point Dronke acknowledges a case for adopting the stanza-order of H+SnE in preference to that of R. Her st. 49 (Neckel 48), beginning “Hvat er með ásom?,” appears in H+SnE just before her st. 46, containing the first appearance of the refrain about Fenrir breaking free; this effectively dramatizes the belated alarm of the gods before the actual battle begins. In R this stanza interrupts an elegant sequence of three “attack” followed by three “defence” stanzas (her stt. 47–48 and 50–53, and for her argument see pp. 69–70) which narrate the beginning of the battle itself, when it is too late for the council mentioned in 49.4.

Remarkably, Dronke never explicitly discusses the date and provenance of *Völuspá*; she assumes the usually accepted origin in Iceland around the year 1000. She does touch on an important piece of dating evidence when pointing out (138–39) that the list of valkyrie-names in st. 30 probably indicates knowledge of *Hákonarmál* (more particularly since the name *Geirskögun* here suggests a misunderstanding of *Hákonarmál* 12 and produces a form shared only by these two poems); this indicates strongly that this stanza was composed after ca. 962–65. Conversely, Nordal has already pointed out (1952 edition, 143 n. 1; trans. 1978, 110 n. 1) that the climax of *Völuspá*’s description of Ragnarök (Dronke’s st. 54) seems to be deliberately echoed in Arnórr jarlaskáld’s *Þorfinnsdrápa* 22 (ca. 1065, and see Diana Whaley, *The Poetry of Arnórr jarlaskáld* [Turnhout: Brepols, 1998], 265); this implies that *Völuspá* was known by the 1060s.

Dronke’s paraphrase-analysis of the structure of the poem is informative and often persuasive, though I would have liked to

see a clearer distinction between the “framework”—what she now calls the “present” of the poem—and the content of the *vǫlva*’s information, and would be inclined to regard the final stanza as a return to the “now” when Ragnarǫk is about to start, rather than as a clearing-up of the bodies of those who did not deserve to live on in the reborn world (60–61). It is unfortunate that she refers to the perfect renewal of the world after Ragnarǫk as “cyclic” (59, 101–2), since Schjødt has used the same term differently, to suggest an endless cycle whereby the gods of the re-born world will be subject to the same struggles as their predecessors. Dronke’s view of the re-born world is more akin to “an image of heaven” (104), and I agree with this.

Dronke sees the poet as distinguishing between at least two and possibly as many as four different *vǫlur* (27–30, 99–101). The speaker who refers to herself as *ek* is seen as a living woman, sympathetic to Óðinn and possibly his priestess, who addresses a human audience in the presence of a statue of the god; she is regarded as primarily didactic in function, and Dronke calls her “the living *vǫlva*” or “*Vǫlva A.*” The character referred to as *hón* is regarded as a spirit, associated with the realm of the dead and mocking or hostile towards the gods, who speaks through the “living *vǫlva*” while the latter is in a séance-like trance; her function is mainly divinatory and prophetic, and she is called the “prophetic *vǫlva*” or “*Vǫlva B.*” But in the refrain lines in stt. 43, 46, 55: “*Fiqlǫð veit hón frœða—/ fram sé ek lengra,*” Dronke sees a reversal of roles between these two. When the reborn world appears, she suggests (on frankly admitted subjective grounds) that there is a third voice, “another she,” whose viewpoint is more celestial (30); but when making comparison with the Christian sibylline tradition (99–101), Dronke no longer refers to this third voice, but instead uses the term “*Vǫlva C*” to refer to *Heiðr* in the myth glanced at in st. 22 (who is assumed not to be the narrator of the poem because she is identified, conventionally but perhaps unsafely, with *Gullveig* in the preceding stanza).

I think that the text fails to support these distinctions, even with the role-reversal admitted by Dronke. The pronoun *ek* cannot refer to a living woman when she claims to

remember the nine worlds of the dead and a time before *Yggdrasil* had grown above the ground (st. 2); nor is *ek* without prophetic powers, since she foresaw the fate hidden for *Baldr* (st. 31). Conversely, *hón* performed the magic ritual of “sitting out” to make contact with spirits, as she would not have needed to do if she had been a spirit herself (st. 28); and Óðinn paid her for her prophecy (probably a ritual needed to initiate it), as if she were herself the prophetess rather than a mere called-up voice from the dead (st. 29).

Nor does it seem likely that the information provided by Old Norse *vǫlur* was believed to be always delivered via something resembling a modern séance. The *vǫlur* described in *Eiríks saga rauða* chap. 4 and *Qrvar-Odds saga* chap. 2 do go into trances to make contact with spirits, but the spirits do not speak through them, but rather give them private information which the *vǫlur* can retail (and be paid for) afterwards, usually in response to questions, when in normal possession of their faculties.

The scanty evidence of poetic genre also suggests that there need be only one *vǫlva* in the poem. The closest generic relative of *Vǫluspá* is *Baldrs draumar*, where it is explicit (st. 5) that Óðinn summons the *vǫlva* from the dead (as Dronke suggests [158], she is probably the troll-woman *Angrboða*); and the *vǫlva* in *Helreið Brynhildar* also speaks out of a stone on the road to *Hel*, and is presumably dead. More distantly related instances of the calling-up of the dead in order to gain wisdom or power from them may be seen in “The Waking of *Angantýr*” in *Heiðreks saga*, and in *Svipdagsmál*. It seems most likely that there is a single *vǫlva*, summoned from the dead by Óðinn to prophesy against her will, who is basically hostile to the gods and exults in their moral and physical downfall, but is forced to go on until she must relate the final triumph of the world re-born. Perhaps her use of the pronoun *ek* indicates her normal state of consciousness, and *hón* her trance state, when she is “outside the body.”

The section on the Christian context gives a fascinating account of Christian sibylline poetry and its possible influence on the Norse poet through knowledge of it in Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England—but such poetry is not the only or even the most obvious

source of possible Christian influence, and some mention might have been made of Wolfgang Butt's comparison with homilies like those of Wulfstan, or with a whole list of biblical echoes, which probably became known to many Norsemen through missionary preaching.

Dronke's notes are detailed, interesting, and often original. Among those which I find particularly illuminating are those on "ginnunga" (3.7), "æsir" (7.1), "ór þeim sæ" (20.3), "Heiði" (22.1), "ganda" (22.4), "tívor" (31.2), "eitrdala" (35.2), "mjötuðr kyndiz" (45.1–2), "bróðir Býleipz" (48.7–8), "en gífr rata" (50.6), "Hlínar" (51.1).

The relevance of the citation of myths from other cultures is not always clear, though in the note on st. 20.3 there is an exemplary use of Finnish and Lappish analogues which demonstrates that the spirit-realms concerned have names derived from Old Norse. Citation of Irish or Welsh myths may assume a general influence on the neighbouring culture of the Norse world, though this is never made explicit; but use of material from classical or Indian myths (e.g., in the notes on stanzas 21–24 and 60.1) employs sources so distant in time and place that some justification for using them seems needed. Occasionally, such far-flung exploration leads to simpler explanations from nearer home being overlooked—see the elaborate account of Indian sacrificial rituals involving horses in the note on *Yggdrasil*, st. 19.2, which omits the obvious explanation, that for this poet the word is a gallows-kenning, like *Sigars hestr* (Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Erfidrápa Óláfs helga* 1.8), *Sigars jór* (Eyvindr skáldaspillir, *Háleygjatal* 6.5), used of the World Tree because it was the gallows or "steed" of *Yggr* (i.e., Óðinn, cf. *Hávamál* 138, *Grímnismál* 54.2).

Despite its accuracy and wide erudition, I have two general reservations about this edition. The first is that it presents Dronke's own reading of the poem clearly but sometimes fails to present the ideas of others adequately (or at all). The note on st. 17.4–8 does not mention the interpretation of *Embla* as "vine"; that on st. 18.1–2 omits the possibility that *óðr* may relate to intellect (which would explain the myth of Hœnir's imbecility in a way that would make it a "god-disabling" myth, like the pledges of Óðinn's eye and

Heimdallr's hearing); that on st. 41.6 ignores Strömbäck's interpretation of *gaglviði*; that on st. 50.3–4 ignores Nordal's argument that the story of the sword in *Skírnismál* is pointless unless we assume the underlying myth to be the one found in *Lokasenna* and *Gylfaginning* (1952 edition, 137–38; trans. 1978, 103–4). I think that it remains the responsibility of any editor to furnish the reader with the evidence with which to form his or her own view, and that this edition does not always allow this.

My second reservation is that this edition has a habit of revealing large assumptions in passing, sometimes in no more than a parenthetical phrase. Thus we are told that Baldr's death takes place in winter and is a sacrifice for the renewal of the world (53); that the Hæðcyn legend in *Beowulf* is an euhemerization of the death of Baldr (98—is it not in fact closer to the legend of Heiðrekr and Angantýr in *Heiðreks saga*?); that Þórr's nine dying steps represent the nine worlds of the dead (109); and that the one-eyed Óðinn is the sun (136). Some such assumptions, notably those connected with Loki, seem derived from the world-view of later medieval Christianity (which may make them unlikely as applied to *Völuspá*): that Loki "plays the part of the incorrigible sinner" (55); "in achieving Baldr's death Loki is performing Óðinn's will," and that his alias as *Þökk* suggests "that Loki knows perfectly well his own theological role" (95). Of course a book allows only limited space, and perhaps the editor has felt time's wingéd footsteps and the urge to record all the possibilities she has thought of; but one has a responsibility to distinguish clearly between argument and speculation, and future scholars will have bright ideas of their own.

#### *Rígsþula*

Any editor of *Rígsþula* must recognize the imperfections of its text in W (Codex Wormianus), the sole manuscript, but the extent to which these can be corrected is a matter of doubt. Most of the poem consists of three parallel episodes in which Rígr visits the house of a human couple (whose names—Ái and Edda, Afi and Amma, Faðir and Móðir—represent human ancestry), gives them advice and shares a meal with them, gives them advice again and lies between them in bed

for three nights before going on his way. Nine months pass, and the wife bears a son whose name (Þræll, Karl, or Jarl) represents a rank in society; he grows up to develop the skills appropriate to his class, achieves a suitable mate, and they have children whose names and activities further identify the class of society concerned. The editor's problem, apart from the fact that some single lines have obviously been omitted, is that this pattern is imperfectly repeated in the text as it now stands. To what extent should one emend in order to make the repetitive pattern appear more perfect?

Some emendation is necessary on simple grammatical or metrical grounds. We may compare W's text of st. 32.1–4 with Dronke's version: W "Fram setti hon / scutla fulla, / silfri varða / á biðð"; Dronke "Fram færði hón / fulla skutla, / silfri varða / [setti] á biðð." The last line in W clearly lacks the verb *setti*, but replacing it produces a clumsy repetition, so Dronke slightly recasts the first couplet, and this seems wholly justified, as in a similar repair at 40.8. But sometimes she also composes to supply lost material; in st. 7, the comparison looks like this: W "Íóð ól Edda, / íósu vatni / hǫrvi svartan, / hétu Þræl"; Dronke "Íóð ól Edda, / íósu vatni. / Hǫrvi [vafði] / [hǫrund] svartan. / [Hǫfug vóru augu]— / hétu Þræl." The third line lacks a verb in W, but Dronke's ingenious reconstruction adds the statement that Þræll's *skin* is black (not just his hair—a point which she later uses during her argument about the poem's origins—see 186, 189), and also leaves an odd last line, for which a companion line has then been composed for which there is no evidence. Similar creative composition has taken place at 8.6 and 48.7; in all three cases, significant meaning has been added from the editor's imagination for which there is no warrant in the manuscript.

Elsewhere, it is details of the repetitive story pattern that have been lost from the manuscript text. The largest such omission is in Rígr's second visit, to the middle-class Afi and Amma. Here it seems right to supply the repetitive sitting down between the couple to eat (Dronke 17.3–6, repeated from 3.3–6 and 30.3–6), the woman bringing in dishes (18.5–6, repeated from 4.5–6), Rígr giving advice before bed (19.1–2, repeated from

5.1–2 and 33.1–2) and his departure (20.3–4, repeated from 6.3–4 and 34.3–4). But Dronke also provides a middle-class menu. St. 18.1–4, on the bread produced by Amma, is a quatrain composed by herself "on the models of 4/1–4 and 31, to illustrate the difficulties involved"; and 18.7–8: "Var kálfr soðinn / krása beztr," are moved from their position in the manuscript after 4.8, on the grounds that such fare is too good for a thrall's feast. This may be true, but perhaps Norse thralls ate better than we assume, and such editorial methods could remove any unexpected detail and produce a text distorted to fit the editor's expectations, which could then be interpreted in a circular way to confirm those expectations. Dronke acutely describes the poet's method thus: "He lets parallel episodes and identical narrative phrases revolve like a merry-go-round; when the merry-go-round stops, we notice change" (175).

She points out some non-repetitive elements: unlike the representatives of the lower and middle classes, the noble Jarl and Erna have no daughters, only sons; and there are others (the grotesque physical description of Þræll is not matched with descriptions of Karl or Jarl, and more surprisingly, there is no description of the activities of Karl's sons to parallel those of the sons of Þræll and Jarl in stt. 12 and 43). The recognition of such elements is vital to the interpretation of the poem, but requires the editor to refrain from intervening to remove them when they are awkward or unexpected.

At 32.11–12 (Neckel 33.3–4), where Rígr is preparing to sleep between Faðir and Móðir, Dronke emends "reccio gerði" to "[réðz at sofna]," a repetition of 4.10 and 18.10, on the grounds that the manuscript phrase is a near-repetition of Þræll and Þír making their unofficial bed together (st. 11.6). She then adds 33.3–6, an exact repetition of the lines in which Rígr lies between the other two couples (5.3–6 and 19.3–6). But the manuscript text here could be defended as a ritualized form of the symbolic cuckolding by the god, in which deference to the noble rank of the man makes the poet imply it euphemistically when Rígr makes the bed, rather than stating it directly, as in the other two episodes.

Dronke regards two other couplets as suspect: 23.7–8, where Karl and his wife Snør

may be getting “above themselves” in distributing rings (but might not successful farmers distribute bracelets as heirlooms within their family group?); and 45.2–4, where Konr ungr’s learning how to calm fires, raging seas, and sorrows is regarded as inconsistent with st. 44, where the verb *kunni*, used of his previous accomplishments, has been taken to imply an instinctive knowledge that does not have to be learned. I think that in both these cases we should adapt our understanding to the text rather than vice-versa.

The ending of *Rígsþula* is lost, and here the parallel episodes have been left behind and can give us no help. The surviving text ends with a crow (whose speech Konr ungr has learned to understand, see 45.1) upbraiding him for hunting birds, pointing out that he could be fighting for the even wealthier patrimony of kings Danr and Danpr. Dronke speculates on what Konr ungr’s response would have been, suggesting that he may have achieved marriage with a princess by peaceful means and thus have been linked to the legendary origins of the kingdom of the Danes (see 236–38); this is possible, though the speeches of birds to heroes in *Fáfnismál* and *Brot* are prophetic, and if the same were true here, it would seem to be implied that Konr ungr will have to fight for his kingdom.

The major part of Dronke’s introduction to *Rígsþula* is entitled “The Genre, Provenance, and Date of the Poem” (174–208). She links its genre to early skaldic poems about the family origins of rulers (*Ynglingatal* and *Háleygjatal*), and suggests that the poet has deliberately extended this genre. After briefly surveying previous opinions about the age of the poem’s political themes (and hence its probable date), she includes a section on “Analogues to the Political Themes,” which she defines as “The Progress of Man,” “The Peripatetic Guest and Partner of Wives: King and God,” and “The Three Estates: Their Origins and Their King.” This includes some fascinating new material derived from early Irish, Old English, and Norwegian laws, and an Irish tradition of a peripatetic king in the Hebrides who always sleeps with the wife of his host but has no wife of his own (190–92)—unfortunately, the source does not say whether this king is thought of as Pictish, Celtic, or Norse in language and culture.

However, this is mingled with other material, derived from many different cultures and periods, which seems to me to be irrelevant, including comparison with a four-class society in Hindu India (195). Dronke also argues (185–88) that the colouring of the three sons of Rígr is part of an ancient Indo-European colour-symbolism: Þræll is *svartan* (st. 7)—though whether of skin or of hair is uncertain, see above—Karl *rauðan ok rióðan* (st. 21), and Jarl fair-haired and bright-cheeked (st. 35). Most of her analogues concern the symbolic colours of clothes or body-painting (none is about hair- or skin-colour), and one comes from sub-Saharan Africa. This non-Indo-European source suggests the alternative explanation that distinct human cultures may have invented similar colour symbolism independently of each other, because of a common tendency to associate white with light and purity, red with blood and battle, and black with the earth.

In considering the poem’s derivation of kings from jarls, Dronke suggests (198) that the word *konungr* may not have been used in Norse before the ninth century, while she regards *jarl* as an ancient word, indicative of magic as well as of secular rule, and links it to the runic Norse **erilar**, which some older-*futhark* runesmiths use to refer to themselves. This can hardly be right: Finnish *kuningas* preserves the loan-word in a form which must have been borrowed before the operation of syncope in Norse; and while the career of Hákon jarl inn ríki demonstrates that the role of a *jarl* might retain a magic/religious element even in the tenth century, runic Norse **erilar** is hardly relevant: it is not found after the seventh century, is unlikely to have been known to the poet, and in any case may be connected with the tribal name of the Heruli rather than with the word *jarl*.

Dronke then turns to the origin and date of *Rígsþula*, concluding that its mixture of Norse and Celtic motifs with some Old English influence on its vocabulary might suggest an origin among the “Anglo-Norse circles of northern England” during the Anglo-Danish rule of Cnut and his sons (1016–1042). However, she also argues that some form of the poem was already known to some late-tenth-century skaldic poets, notably Úlfr Uggason and Stefnir Þorgilsson, and may have been

familiar among the entourage of Hákon jarl. The evidence here is so slight that all arguments must be speculative, but it is hard to see why it would matter to an aristocratic poet in northern England who was king in far-off Winchester; the culture of his own local patron would surely be much more important. This might point towards a date in the second quarter of the tenth century, when Hiberno-Norse power was significant and sculpture demonstrates that there was some continuing tolerance of pre-Christian myths, and to an area such as Cumbria rather than to York, where the Hiberno-Norse kings were brief and precarious incomers.

However, Dronke makes a good case for an early origin for this poem; she shows how the society envisaged in the poem differs from the medieval European division into *oratores*, *bellatores*, and *laboratores* (a three-class system, but one which is quite different from that in *Rígsþula*, 196–98); this argument has recently been strengthened by Sverre Bagge's demonstration ("Rígsþula and Viking Age Society," delivered 4 July 2000 at the Eleventh International Saga Conference in Sydney) of how different the social structure in *Rígsþula* is from that depicted in *Konungs skuggsjá*; see also Frederic Amory's article "The Historical Worth of *Rígsþula*" in this journal issue.

#### *Völundarkviða*

Here there is less need for textual comment (but see 290–96), but Dronke suggests a number of new emendations to the text of R, some of which seem obvious improvements:

10.5–6: R "Gecc brúnni / bero hold steikia"; Dronke "Gekk brúnni bero / [biart] hold steikia." Adding the alliterating adjective here allows *brúnni bero* to be treated as a dative phrase within a single line, "from the brown she-bear."

18.1–2: R "Scínn Níðaði / sverð á linda"; Dronke "Skínn Níðaði / [skyggt] sverð á linda." This repairs the inadequate alliteration with a very apt adjective.

28.7–8: R "allra nema einna, / ívið gjarira"; Dronke "allra né einna / íviðgirna." Dronke ingeniously suggests that the meaningless form *ívið gjarira* may be a distorted attempt to render OE *inwidgyrene* 'malicious snares' (320); this would fit the context well, and in

view of the other Old English features of the poem's language it seems probable (though emendation of 28.7 seems unnecessary).

29.1: Dronke emends *Vel ek*, for which no exact parallel can be found in ON, OE, or Old Saxon, to *Vél á ek* 'I have a trick/device'; this is probably an improvement, and if correct, may refer to Völundr's wings as a flying device (like those tied to the smith figure in the Anglo-Norse sculptures), rather than a *fjaðrhamr* 'feather skin/bird transformation' such as we see on the Ardre stone.

Dronke's emendation at 2.5–6 seems to me to be unnecessary and a little tendentious: R "ǫnnur var Svanhvít, / svanfiaðrar dró"; Dronke "Ǫnnur um Slagfinn / svanfiaðrar dró." This is adopted to give the stanza a thrice-repeated pattern of maiden embracing named man (but why should the pattern not be varied in the middle?). A by-product of it (cf. 306) is to remove the use of *draga* in the German-derived sense 'to wear'; this enables Dronke to ignore this usage in her argument that the swan-maidens story was added in Scandinavia by the poet himself (see below, 123–24).

It is also suggested (264) that something (perhaps ten lines) is lost at the beginning of st. 26, where Bǫðvildr appears with her broken ring; I think this results from a tendency to see the Völundr-Bǫðvildr relationship in an unduly romanticized light, perhaps under the influence of *Velents þáttr*, and prefer the text as it stands. The sudden reintroduction of Bǫðvildr shows the inevitable result of her trying to divorce the wearing of Völundr's ring from its magical and symbolic meaning, that the wearer is his *brúðr* (st.18, Neckel st.19).

Dronke regards 11.6 and 15.5–8 (which name the swan-maidens as Hervor and Hlaðguðr, daughters of Hlǫðvér, and Qlrún, daughter of Kjárr) as later corruption of lines which are now lost; she suggests (256) the possible lost line *ok hylði sik* 'and had hidden herself' for 11.6. That the maidens are all sisters is no problem (despite Dronke's note on st. 2.8), for Hlǫðvér derives from the Frankish imperial name Chlodoweh (i.e., Clovis), who might also be called Kjárr (= Caesar). The difficulty is that there are four names for the three swan-maidens, and Dronke reasonably suggests that the two which alliterate on *h*,

along with their human royal father, are a late addition to the tradition. However, this need not imply that the stanzas which name them are textually corrupt; the poet might already have known a tradition in which the maidens had royal ancestry, and could have regarded *Svanhvítr* as a nickname for either *Hervor* or *Hlaðguðr*; modern readers may find such royal ancestry less “numinous” than if their origins had been left mysterious, but the poet need not have shared this feeling, and may have been constrained by the tradition he inherited.

Dronke’s introduction to *Völundarkviða* begins (as for all the poems in the volume except *Baldrs draumar* and *Lokasenna*) with an interpretive paraphrase of the poem’s content (255–58). One need not agree with every detail of this—for example, I find inscrutable submission to fate rather than tenderness in the swan maidens embracing their husbands—but this and Dronke’s other paraphrases are a valuable lesson in how this kind of poem asks to be read, with its taut sparseness casting each detail into sharp focus and demanding a human response which will link all such details convincingly. There is then a useful “Comparison of *Völundarkviða* with Its Analogues” (or, more exactly, a comparison of each of the poem’s major motifs with the same motif in the analogues—258–69), which occasionally wanders to distant periods and cultures, such as Japanese legends of corpses buried under the forge of a smith (268), but is for the most part a penetrating comparison with the other versions of the *Völundr* legend, especially *Velents þátrr*.

In “The Origins of *Völundarkviða*” (269–90), Dronke puts forward her own view of the genesis of the poem. Her understanding and interpretation of the literary sources is interesting and valuable; this applies especially to her handling of the references to *Weland* in King *Ælfred’s Boethius* (284–85), where she points out a moral view of the tale that reflects sympathy for its hero. One might add that *Ælfred’s* underlying point seems to be that while oppressive human beings were unable to deprive *Weland* of his wondrous God-given skill as a smith, time has done so, and so the achievements even of the most illustrious pre-Christian Germanic heroes are ultimately transitory.

I find her treatment of the iconographic sources less convincing, particularly where she reads the Leeds and Ardre carvings as depicting an airborne rescue of *Bøðvildr* by *Völundr* (271–72). There is no support for this in any literary source, and the sculptors have probably conflated two different moments of the story—the flight of *Völundr* and the previous seizing of *Bøðvildr* (who on the Leeds Cross is carrying an object that could be either a ring or a drinking horn). Dronke’s reading of the lid of the Franks Casket as depicting an allegorical “salvation” of *Bøðvildr*/the Soul by *Völundr* as forerunner of Christ (280–82) seems even less probable: the obvious reading is surely a contrast between the unjustly acquired and treacherously repaid gift of the ring in the pre-Christian story in the left panel, and the honestly offered gifts of the Magi to the infant Christ on the right, which will be repaid with eternal life.

The personal names *Völundr*, *Níðuðr*, *Bøðvildr*, and *Þakkráðr* point to origins in a German-speaking area for the story of the vengeful smith, and *Velents þátrr* probably also has a German source. However, there are also strong indications of OE influence on the vocabulary of the poem (at least the words *alvítr*, *gim*, *ljóði*, *iarnnasteina*, *aukin* in the sense ‘pregnant’, and possibly several others), and an English version of the legend with links to the text of *Völundarkviða* is vouched for by *Deor* and receives further support from Metrum 10 of *Ælfred’s Boethius*, the Franks Casket, and the four tenth-century Anglo-Norse sculptures. Dronke suggests that the story may have been brought from Germany to England by eighth-century Anglo-Saxon missionaries; that a lost Old English poem (perhaps of a partly elegiac kind) provided the source for *Deor* and also became familiar to *Ohthere*, the Norseman from Hálogaland whose account of northern Norway is preserved in *Ælfred’s Orosius*; that *Ohthere* returned home via the court of *Haraldr hárfagri*, where he related the tale, thus inspiring the kenning *grjót-Níðuðr* in *Haustlǫng*; that he then told the tale at home, where it inspired the poet of *Völundarkviða*, who added the whole of the swan-maidens story from Lapish tradition; and that the poem was finally revised in Iceland, where the relationship of the swan-maidens to *Hljóðvér* was added.



As she admits, “this is a rough sketch of the possible development of the poem of Vǫlundr in Norway, drawn simply by linking one fortuitous dot of record with another. Other dots that I have not yet found might change its outline, but (I am inclined to think) perhaps not radically” (289). But this symbolic model of transmission obscures the probability that the legend was widely known all over Scandinavia, England, and Germany (see the sculptures, the Berkshire place-name *Welandes smiððe*, the numerous poetic references to weapons or armour as the work of Weland, and even the use of Vǫlundr’s name as a common noun meaning ‘craftsman’ in *Hamðismál* st. 7). Yet it is on this symbolic model that the particular association of the poem with Hálogaland depends; if it was composed in Norway at all, and even if the swan-maidens story was added under Lappish shamanistic influence, might not poets at the royal court or elsewhere have had enough knowledge of Lappish culture to have composed it?

In fact, two points suggest that some version of the Norse poem was probably composed in England, or at least by a poet influenced by English speech and poetic practice. One is that some of the distinctively OE words (*alvítr*, *gim*, perhaps *níta*, which Dronke emends to *njóta* at st. 37.4) look like survivals of OE-influenced forms which also existed in more “standard” varieties of ON, but in other forms (*\*el-vétr*, *gimsteinn*); presumably, they survive because Norwegian and Icelandic reciters and scribes misunderstood them or regarded them as distinct and exotic words. More importantly, the line *um sofnaði* (st. 28.4) shows a distinctively OE metrical pattern but cannot be directly translated from OE, where it would appear as the unmetrical single syllable *swæf*. This suggests that the OE influence on the poem comes from the practice of its poet as well as from its sources.

There may also be reason to doubt the contention that the swan-maidens story was added by the poet himself (or by a Norwegian reviser of his work, if my theory of an Anglo-Norse poet is correct). The OE-derived *alvítr* refers to the swan maidens, as do the phrase *ørlog drýgia* (st. 1.4, 3.10), whose closest poetic parallels are in OE, and the apparent use of

the verb *draga* in the sense ‘to wear’ (st. 2.5–6), which seems to derive from German; and there are undoubtedly significant parallels between the swan-maidens episode in *Vǫlundarkviða* and the south German romance *Friedrich von Schwaben*. Dronke explains *alvítr* as an independent borrowing of an OE word that had reached Scandinavia by other means; she emends st. 2.5 so that *draga* no longer has the German-derived sense; and she argues that *Friedrich von Schwaben* has been influenced by knowledge of *Vǫlundarkviða*, perhaps brought back to Germany by Hanseatic merchants who had spent some time in Norway. Each of these arguments is individually quite defensible, but a simpler overall explanation suggests itself: the swan-maidens story may come from ancient shamanistic practice (not necessarily Lappish, since that nationality is given to Vǫlundr only by the thirteenth-century prose editor), but it was probably already a (sometimes detachable) part of the legend before it came from Germany to England.

Dronke’s introduction to *Vǫlundarkviða* ends with an interesting argument that the character of the goldsmith Cardillac in Hoffmann’s tale *Das Fräulein von Scuderi* and Hindemith’s opera based on it has been strongly influenced by the earliest translation of *Vǫlundarkviða* into German. This seems convincing, but is chiefly of interest to students of Hoffmann and Hindemith, and might perhaps have been a separate short article rather than part of this edition.

The commentary and index of personal names (301–28) may prove to be the most useful part of this edition. I would have liked to see notes on *bast* (st. 8.5), on the enigmatic brown she-bear whose flesh Vǫlundr eats in st. 10, and on how we can establish who is speaking in st. 14.7–10; and perhaps the sexual symbolism of Vǫlundr’s sword might have been mentioned (st. 18). However, most of the notes are very enlightening; among those which I find most valuable are the clear distinction of swan-maidens from valkyries, the etymological and comparative material on *alvítr*, and the note on *drós* (all in st. 1); the exploration of OE poetic parallels for *ørlog drýgia* (st. 1), *háls* (st. 2), *naudir* (st. 12) and *iarknasteina* (st. 25); and the clear, incisive interpretations of stt. 6, 20.2, 28.7–8,

29.1–4, and 33.1. The index of personal names is notable for a valuable collection of other instances of each name (mostly German) and for a clear explanation of the varying forms of the name *Vǫlundr* itself.

*Lokasenna*

Dronke has no separate discussion of the text of *Lokasenna*, but most of her few unexpected emendations to R do improve the text: 3.4: R “iǫll oc áfo”; Dronke “Oll ok áfo” [bitterness and backbiting]. She suggests that *oll* may be borrowed from the rare OE word meaning “contempt,” but also mentions Stefán Karlsson’s appealing suggestion that the reading should be “í ǫllok áfo” [backbiting at the end of the drinking], though she does not adopt this reading (356–57). Her other significant emendations (e.g., *er* for *ec* in 14.6, *fiǫrg ǫll* for *fiǫrgvall* in 19.6, *í ǫngom* for *í ǫndom* in 39.5) have in fact all been suggested by earlier editors.

Again, the notes are mostly valuable and thought-provoking, though a little sparse: for example, I would have liked to see some comment on the name *Fimafengr*, and on the probable fictionality of Týr’s wife and her affair with Loki. But there are excellent explanations of, among other points, the name *Ægir*, the role of Bragi, “sveinn inn hvíti” (st. 20, seen as Heimdallr), Loki’s career as a woman, “Vitka líki” (st. 24), “ballriða” (st. 37), and Loki’s “riddle” in st. 44.

Dronke points out ironic echoes of a number of other eddic poems (cf. st. 6.1–3 with *Vafþrúðnismál* 8; st. 11.1–2 with *Sigrdrífumál* 4.1–2; st. 53.1–3 with *Skírnismál* 37; 64.6 with *Vǫluspá* 26—all of which seem probable—and less certainly, st. 20.6 with *Hávamál* 108 and st. 54.6 with *Hárbarðsljóð* 48); one might add a comparison between the phrasing of st. 59.4–6 and that of *Hárbarðsljóð* 19, which she does not mention. The question of how far one eddic poem can be seen to borrow from another is a complex one and requires some reference to the sceptical arguments raised by Söderberg; the main reason for thinking that there may be deliberate quotation in these contexts is that in each case there is an ironic distortion of the situation in the other poem—thus Loki’s opening demand for a drink from Óðinn as he enters the hall is more pointed if it is a reversal

of Óðinn’s own demand from *Vafþrúðnir* in *Vafþrúðnismál*; Sif’s offer of a drink to Loki as she parades her supposed sexual purity is transformed by the recognition of her words as precisely those of Gerðr’s sexual surrender in *Skírnismál*; and there is a comparable irony in each of the other cases. But it would then follow that *Lokasenna* must in each case be borrowing from the other poem, and that each of them must already have existed in some form when *Lokasenna* was composed; the implications of this for the dating of *Lokasenna* itself needed to be explored.

The notes on 41.6 and on the final prose raise a supposed problem about the fictional occasion of the poem which is also suggested by Söderberg, but which I think is illusory: since Loki is speaking after the killing of Baldr (see st. 28), for which he was bound, Dronke thinks he ought not to be at liberty now, and she comments “The poet improvises as he wishes” (366). But the poem’s action is set at a pivotal mythical moment, after the killing of Baldr but before the vengeance for it, while the gods can still delay fate indefinitely by delaying their vengeance. It is the last moment of their uneasy freedom of choice. This not only explains the moment when the action is seen as taking place, but also why many of the deities are so placatory towards Loki; and it suggests that he has the opposite motive—not just malice for its own sake, but provocation to revenge. Once he is bound, the inevitable course of events leading to Ragnarǫk can roll on, and the gods will be powerless to delay it.

Dronke does not allude to this idea, for her view is that the poem has no serious content. Her brief introduction is divided into three sections. In the first, she argues that the feast in *Lokasenna* belongs to the same cycle of Indo-European legends as the Indian tale of the demon Rāhu, who invades the gods’ feast and is decapitated by Viṣṇu (349–50); this may perhaps be true, but the two stories are so remote from each other in time and place, and there must have been so many adapting poets and storytellers between them, that it is fanciful to attempt to illuminate one story by reference to the other.

In her second section (350–53), she argues that such satires as *Lokasenna* were a safety valve, used to channel licensed revolt

against religious reverence in heathen times. She then uses ancient Greek papyri to suggest that it was seen as dangerous to another person to attribute slanderous statements about the gods to them, even if the statements concerned were false and had not actually been made by that person. Again, this is drawn from another time and culture, but even if it were applicable to pre-Christian Norse belief, it is hard to see how it would work in *Lokasenna*—would it not simply bring down the wrath of the gods on Loki himself (as it does, but that is what he wants), rather than, as Dronke suggests, provoking some other unspecified powers to take vengeance on them?

The gods do not deny Loki's accusations (apart from Bragi and Freyja, who are both demonstrably lying), but Dronke maintains that the deeds of which they are said to be guilty—sexual impropriety, the practice of *seiðr*, “bias”—are not actually very serious. She leaves the last implied accusation against Þórr—that he breaks oaths of safe-conduct—unstated here (though not in the notes). And yet, these are almost exactly the same evils which in *Völuspá* bring down the ordered structure of the world: by whose judgement are they seen as trivial? I agree with Dronke that Loki is genuinely bitter and hates the gods, and also that he himself has no moral purpose, but that is not the same thing as saying that “there is no sincere moral fervour in the poem” (352).

The introduction ends with an interesting account, derived from Carlo Levi, of the southern Italian abuse game of *Passatella*, which is illustrative in comparative terms, and of the more directly relevant account of the burlesque *Syrpuþing* of *Vöðu-Brands þáttur*. That this sort of mock trial could have provided an impetus for *Lokasenna* (either in the period when the story is set or in that when it was written) seems quite likely, and Klingenberg has indeed seen the poem in terms of a trial; but the poet has used this as the starting point for a larger and more threatening theme, which it seems to me that Dronke underrates.

#### *Skírnismál*

The first twenty-seven stanzas of *Skírnismál* are preserved in MS AM 748 I 4<sup>o</sup> (A) as well

as in R, but the two manuscripts are closely related and show some common errors; however, A does enable us to confirm the correction of some minor scribal errors in R. Dronke deals succinctly and well with the relationship between the two manuscripts, and also with the one stanza (st. 42) which is quoted in *Gylfaginning* chap. 37.

Only two textual points require comment: *Skírnismál* 10.4: R “þyria þióð yfir”; A “þursa þióð yfir.” Like Boer and Gering (to whom she does not refer), Dronke adopts the reading of A, and explains: “I take the mountains to represent the edge of the earth, already dewy with evening, behind which the sun-horse will sink and then travel in ogres' territory till Gymir's central palace is reached” (406). This is possible, but depends on a preconceived allegorical interpretation of Skírnir as the sun; such an interpretation was probably present in the poet's mind at some level, but on the literal level of the story, the *difficilior lectio* of R, the better manuscript, should probably be preferred.

35.9: R “mær, af þínom munom”; Dronke “mær—at þínom munom.” This emendation is interestingly justified in a note in which she points out that *munr* is never preceded by *af* elsewhere, and suggests a clever word-play in which *munom* refers first to Gerðr's sexual desire and then to Skírnir's premeditated will; I am convinced by this.

Once again, Dronke's notes are stimulating and useful—see especially those on “fróði” (1.5), “afi” (1.6), “munom” (4.6 and 35.9), “tvennan trega” (29.7), “geita hland” (35.6). There are occasional omissions—it might have been useful in the note on 31.6–8 to mention the widely-known runic charm featuring the word *þistill*, which appears in several inscriptions (e.g., Gørlev I, Sjælland, *Danmarks Runeindskrifter* no. 239) and in *Bósa saga* chap. 5; and the notes on *ergi* and *œði* should have mentioned Paul Bibire's argument that these rune-names may not have evolved until the thirteenth century (“Freyr and Gerðr: The Story and Its Myths,” in *Sagna-skemmtun: Studies in Honour of Hermann Pálsson*, ed. Rudolf Simek, Jónas Kristjánsson, and Hans Bekker-Nielsen [Wien: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1986], 19–40). There are also occasional assertions of opinion unsupported by evidence, e.g., 16.2: “*ökkarn*: Gerðr

refers to the presence of herself and her maid, not to herself and Gymir” (but would not Gerðr be more likely to refer to the hall as belonging to herself and her father than to herself and a maidservant?).

Besides its treatment of the text, Dronke’s introduction to *Skírnismál* has three other sections, of which the first is a paraphrase reading of the text (386–96). This is insightful and particularly memorable in its characterization of Freyr as a spoilt, petulant youth; its consideration of the opening stanzas would have benefited from use of Ruggerini’s analysis of opening scenes in mythological poems (John McKinnell, *Both One and Many: Essays on Change and Variety in Late Norse Heathenism; with an Appendix by Maria Elena Ruggerini*, *Philologia* 1 [Roma: Il Calamo, 1994], 147–57). Dronke has adopted Gunnell’s attractive view of *Skírnismál* as a text for performance and calls this opening section “The Play and Its Plot.” However, she does not share Gunnell’s careful distinction between the performable verse text and its later prose editing (see especially Terry Gunnell, *The Origins of Drama in Scandinavia* [Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995], 229–32), for she suggests that the prose paragraph before the poem reflects a performed dumb-show of Freyr seeing Gerðr and falling in love with her, and that the other prose passages function as stage directions. This would require us to suppose either that the scribe of an antecedent of R and A was recording in full the non-verbal elements of a performance he had seen, or that the poet wrote his play, like a modern dramatist, complete with full stage directions; in a medieval context, either would be unparalleled.

Her second section, “Analogues of the Plot” (396–400), begins with reference to an early Greek myth of the wedding of the sky god and the earth spirit, which is of only distant relevance and seems to have led Dronke towards a gentler and more romantic reading of *Skírnismál* than the text itself might justify. However, it then includes excellent discussions of the poem’s relation to the “sacred marriage” of Hákon jarl to the land of Norway in Hallfreðr’s *Hákonardrápa*; to the Old English charm against unfruitful land; and to a runic love-charm from Bergen which shares some phrases with *Skírnismál*.

The third section of the introduction is an attempt to argue an early date for *Skírnismál*. Dronke sees the poem as preserving in popular form an ancient myth which had ceased to be fashionable among court poets even in the tenth century, and points to its Old English analogue as suggesting “a time of origin when the Norse and the insular races were on familiar speaking terms” (402). But the date of an analogue proves nothing; and two details which she takes to be ancient survivals—the name of the horse *Blóðughófi*, and the use of Freyr’s sword as a threat rather than a gift, as implied in *Völuspá* st. 52 (Dronke st. 50) and *Lokasenna* st. 42—could as easily be late “decoration” or misunderstanding as archaic survivals. Certainly, the lovesick, petulant Freyr who uses a go-between to approach the lady he loves from afar seems suspiciously like many a *fin amor* romance hero (see Heinz Klingenberg, “För Skírnis: Brautwerbungsfahrt eines Werbungshelfers,” *Alvíssmál* 6 [1996]: 21–62; Anne Heinrichs, “Der liebeskranke Freyr, euhemeristisch entmythisiert,” *Alvíssmál* 7 [1997]: 3–36), and this would suggest an origin in the twelfth century or later, as would Bibire’s argument about rune-names (Bibire 19–21), which Dronke does not mention.

Dronke is probably referring to the work of Gro Steinsland when she comments “It is difficult indeed to see any reference to kingship in the poem” (402). This misses the resemblance between the misalliance myths of Freyr/Gerðr and Njörðr/Skaði and the repeated misalliance myths of the Freyr-descended kings who figure in *Ynglingatal* stt. 1–10 and *Ynglinga saga* chaps. 11–19—probably because the myths of Freyr and Njörðr preserve only the first half of the narrative pattern. In the stories of the Ynglingar, the couple have sons who are clearly either “hers” or “his,” and when the king abandons his wife, “her” sons take vengeance on him; he is burned and/or buried beside water; and he is succeeded by “his” son. It would be difficult to apply the whole of this pattern to a god, and the myths of the Vanir use only the first half of it, but *Ynglingatal* seems to demonstrate clearly enough that there was an archaic link between myths of this pattern and the legendary succession of Vanir-descended sacral kings in Scandinavia.

## Bibliography and Conclusion

Dronke's bibliography is very extensive and shows the breadth of reading, imagination, and curiosity that have gone into many years of preparation of this volume. However, while it contains a wealth of interesting and esoteric items, it omits some that are more obvious, and cannot be used as an authoritative reading list for these poems. Among significant omissions published before 1995 are: *Die Edda, mit historisch-kritischem Kommentar*, ed. Richard Constant Boer, 2 vols. (Haarlem: H. D. Tjeenk Willink & Zoon, 1922); Wolfgang Butt, "Zur Herkunft der *Völuspá*," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* (Tübingen) 91 (1969): 82–103; Margaret Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes: Old Norse Myths in Medieval Northern Society*, vol. 1, *The Myths*, The Viking Collection 7 (Odense: Odense Univ. Press, 1994); *Edda: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Robert J. Glendinning and Haraldur Bessason ([Winnipeg]: Univ. of Manitoba Press, 1983), including essays on *Völuspá* by Paul Schach and Régis Boyer, on *Lokasenna* by Heinz Klingenberg, and on *Völundarkviða* by Kaaren Grimstad; Joseph Harris, "Eddic Poetry," in *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide*, ed. Carol J. Clover and John Lindow, *Islandica* 45 (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1985), 68–156; *Völuspá*, ed. Hermann Pálsson (Reykjavík: Háskóla-útgáfan, 1994); Wolfgang Krause, "Gullveig und Pandora," *Skandinavistik* 5 (1975): 1–10; McKinnell and Ruggerini, *Both One and Many*; Edgar C. Polomé, "Some Comments on *Völuspá*, Stanzas 17–18," in *Old Norse Literature and Mythology: A Symposium*, ed. Edgar C. Polomé (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1969), 265–90; Judy Quinn, "*Völuspá* and the Composition of Eddic Verse," in *Poetry in the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Teresa Pàroli (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 1990), 303–19; Jens Peter Schjødt, "*Völuspá*—cyclisk tidsopfattelse i gammel-nordisk religion," *Danske Studier* 76 (1981): 91–95; Rudolf Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, trans. Angela Hall (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993); E. O. G. Turville-Petre, "Fertility of Beast and Soil in Old Norse Literature," in *Old Norse Literature and Mythology*, ed. Polomé, 244–64; Gerd Wolfgang Weber, "Sol per terrae marginem dicitur circuire"

auch in *Völuspá* 5, 1–4?," *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 21 (1971): 129–35. The cited edition of *The Dream of the Rood* should have been that by Michael Swanton (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1970), which largely supersedes the old edition of Dickins and Ross; and it is unfortunate that Icelanders in the bibliography are cited as if their patronymics were surnames, instead of by first names, as is correct Icelandic practice.

This book is a great achievement, and all serious scholars of Old Norse mythology will need to use it. I particularly value its clear elucidation of textual problems, its illuminating commentaries, and its sensitive and imaginative literary paraphrase-interpretations of the poems. It will also be a mine of information about mythological traditions from cultures all over the world (even if not all of these are really relevant *ad locum*).

However, it also has flaws: Dronke occasionally creates the textual details she wants for her interpretations (especially in *Rígsþula*) and often ignores the arguments of those who take different views from hers (especially about date and provenance), rather than presenting the reasons why she disagrees with them. She also seems to me to underrate the seriousness and importance of *Lokasenna* and to impose a single, rather partial view on *Skírnismál*. Perhaps, with the continual growth of modern scholarship, the time is past when a single scholar can hope to produce an authoritative edition of the whole eddic corpus, or even of a major section of it, such as is covered here. While there is much in this book to admire and to learn from, it does not in the end provide the authoritative modern edition of these poems for which many of us were hoping.

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