Baldrs draumar: literally and literarily

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*Baldrs draumar* has more than once provoked scholars trying to use the poem as a source of Old Norse mythology. It has often been considered not only self-contradictory but also ‘a bad poem’ although such evaluations will be rare nowadays.¹ Modern and systematical examinations involving the poem have been made primarily by John Lindow in his book on the Baldr myth, and by Judy Quinn in her studies on prophetic poetry and the völva character.²

In only 14 stanzas the poem presents events concerning the death of Baldr, but in a condensed and puzzling way. Óðinn asks a völva in Hel about the future of Baldr, i.e. the future of the gods, but the reasons for Óðinn’s asking are obscure. Because of Baldr’s bad dreams Óðinn’s first question is who will die, but he obviously knows the answer since he journeys to Hel. There, he does


This paper is a result of my attending the fruitful and inspiring meetings of the Frankfurt Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda on *Baldrs draumar*—which should not be held responsible for my propositions. For a fundamental commentary, I refer to its forthcoming part 1.
not visit Hel herself, but a völva, who first answers his questions in her capacity of being present in the realm of the dead but then in her capacity of seeress. The völva seems particularly dead: she not only resides in Hel but is also buried in a grave within the realm of the dead, and still she is exposed to snow, dew and rain. The rather abrupt ending further underlines the elusiveness of the poem, which thus may appear not only less useful as a source of mythology but also less valuable aesthetically.

If read literally—with the intention of bringing order to the events and identities within the poem and thus finding ‘facts’ of Northern mythology—the poem seems too enigmatic or possibly too confused to provide clear information. On the other hand *Baldr’s draumar* exploits exactly these ‘disadvantages’ to its own advantage. Its poetic effect is based precisely on scantiness and obscurity, to enhance the receivers’ associations and stimulate attempts at interpretation. The situation is one of oral delivery or at least one of transmission and impact on the receiver. What I will try to elaborate in the following is the means by which this work of art uses tradition and expectations precisely by suggesting without pronouncing.

The notion of Óðinn descending to Hel in order to ask about Baldr’s dreams is unknown elsewhere, but the poem in several respects corresponds to *Völuspá* 31–35 (the Codex Regius version): *Baldr’s draumar* 11 is practically identical to *Völuspá* 32.5–33.4. The dating of the poems is complicated, and there may have been other poems treating the death of Baldr. The only assumption I will make here, is that *Baldr’s draumar* and *Völuspá* reflect a more or less common tradition. The reminiscent description of Hermóðr, not Óðinn, attempting to bring Baldr back to life in *Gylfaginning* ch. 49 is not necessarily younger than *Baldr’s draumar*, since Málsháttakvæði 9 mentions Hermóðr as the one trying to make Baldr’s life longer.

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3The *Hauksbók* version, which lacks str. 31, 32, 33 and 35 according to Neckel-Kuhns’s numbering, does not mention the death of Baldr at all, and the Váli mentioned seems more in correspondence with the one described as Loki’s, not Óðinn’s son in *Gylfaginning* ch. 50. Generally on the versions of *Völuspá*, see Quinn 1990.

4The description of the mistletoe in *Völuspá* may be correspondent to *Baldr’s draumar* 9; but only on the condition that hróðhrarm there is interpreted as mistletoe (so, e.g., Dronke 1997). A rather more convincing interpretation of hróðhrarm is Baldr himself (so, e.g., Lindow 1997, 43–44).

5For example, Jónas Kristjánsson 1990 and Pároli 1992, 150–151 n. 48. *Völuspá* seems to have existed in one form or another at least by the middle of the 11th century, since Árnorr Jarlaskáld uses pieces of it in *Pöðsrápa* (Simek 1993, 336). The question of whether and to what extent *Völuspá* reflects pre-Christian beliefs (see Kragerud 1974) is not an issue here, since what is at stake are specific notions of the 11th and 12th centuries.

6For example, Schröder 1964, 330 and Lindow 1997, 102; 117; 125. The alliterating parts of the dialogue between Frigg and Loki in *Gylfaginning* do not necessarily prove that the prose is based on models in verse: as Lindow points out, Snorri may have arranged them thus in order to resemble a traditional dialogue form (Lindow 1997, 59).

7Friggjar þótt svíðr at syni,
sá var taldr ór miklu kyni,
Hermóðr vildi auka aldr,
Thus, *Baldrs draumar* naturally invites us to reconstruct the death of Baldr also using the evidence of mainly *Gylfaginning* ch. 49–50 and *Voluspá*. Further incitement to a ‘factual’, literal interpretation is the fact that *Baldrs draumar* calls for being interpreted according to the riddle genre. As in *Vafþrúðnismál*, Óðinn crosses boundaries to visit a being of another world, hides his identity and poses questions in the form of riddles. In *Vafþrúðnismál*, as also in the *Gátur Gestumbinda* of *Hervarar saga*, Óðinn finally defeats his adversary by asking: “What did Óðinn whisper in the ear of Baldr on the funeral pyre? ” Since that is obviously a question only Óðinn can answer, Óðinn has revealed his identity and the questioning is finished. *Baldrs draumar* takes an end in similar fashion. After asking who is awaited in Hel—answer: Baldr—, who kills Baldr—answer: Hóðr—, who avenges Baldr—answer: Váli or at least the son of Rind8—, he puts to her the ‘impossible’ question which can receive no answer yet reveals his identity, thus causing the end of the dialogue as well as the poem.

1 Senn vóro æsir allir á hingi
oc aðynir allar á máli,
oc um þat rúðo, ríkir tívar,
hví væri Balđri ballir draumar.

2 Upp reis Óðinn, alda gautr,
oc hann á Sleipni söðul um lagði;
reþi hann niðr þaðan Niflhelir til,
moetti hann hvelpi, þeim er ór helio kom.

3 Sá var blóðurg um brióst framan,
oc galdrs fyður gö um lengi;
fram reið Óðinn, foldvegr dunði,
hann kom at hávo Heliar ranni.

4 Þa reið Óðinn fyr austan dyrr,
þar er hann vissi vølo leibði;
nam hann vittugri valgaldr qveða,
um nauðig reis, nás orð um qvað:

5 ‘Hvat er manna þat, mér ökmunra,
er mér hefri aukit erfitt sinni?
var ec snivin sniövi oc slegin regni
oc drífin doggo, dauð var ec lengi.’

6 Vegtamr ec heiti, sonr em ec Valtams;
segðu mér ör helio — ec man ör heimi —:
hveim ero beccir baugom sánír,
fleet fagrliga flóð gulli?

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*(Den norsk-íslandske skjaldeiddsögning B II, 140; see Lindow 1997, 115.)*

8The name Váli is missing in the manuscript, but the verse requires an emendation and ‘Váli’ is an option that makes the alliteration correct.
Formally, Óðinn’s goal is thus to gather information. In essence, though, the questions posed should be seen as a probing of the power balance between æsir and giants just as in Vafþrúðnismál. We can also suppose that the goal is not only to probe but also, if possible, to influence the coming events. This is not only a universal idea of underworld visits, such as in Gilgamesh and the Orpheus myth, but is also apparent in Hermóðr’s corresponding journey. The imminent destruction of order is pronounced already in the first stanza—which is also used when the hammer of fiórr is missing in fiðrymskiða—and reflected in the antagonism of the poem. While information from giants is generally structured by questions put to them, information from a völva is as a rule more independently presented (see Quinn forthc.). Both in its structure of question—answer and in its antagonism, Baldrs draumar thus brings to the fore Óðinn’s confrontations with giants. As a transgression of borders can
principally be described as a question of power,¹ I think it safe to presume that the question of knowledge is subordinated the question of power.¹⁰

The crucial point, to my mind, comes in the twelfth stanza: regardless whether at muni is interpreted as ‘at their will’ or ‘over their beloved’, Baldr appears to be the relevant cause and the question really implies: ‘who will not weep?’ The question is directly connected to the riddles of Vafþrúðnismál and Gátur Gestumbinda through its wording: hveriar ro þær meyiar occurs several times in Gátur Gestumbinda and once in Vafþrúðnismál. In those poems, each question has a specific answer, and in Baldrs draumar the answer to be expected is the waves. However, the question in itself is of less importance than its function. An answer is not given, nor is the status of the answer commented upon as in Vafþrúðnismál and Gátur Gestumbinda. Within the poem, the function of the question is to be unanswerable—just as in Gátur Gestumbinda and Vafþrúðnismál the whole questioning is put to an end by one single question (Holtsmark 1964, 102). It also seems that the function of the question is similar in the respect that just as no one but Óðinn could know what was whispered to him, so he here reveals something that Óðinn would be one of very few to know: which then would prove that he has arrived in Hel not to gather information but to test the balance of power. What reveals Óðinn’s identity might also be a “code slippage” that introduces the Ódinic voice from such riddle contests as the one in Vafþrúðnismál, as Margaret Clunies Ross has pointed out (1990, 225). This would be in accordance with the increasing animosity.

However, the ambiguity of the present riddle merely inaugurates the problems. We do not receive the answer, we cannot be sure in what way it reveals Óðinn, and we also do not know if his answer—you are neither a völva nor wise, but the mother of three giants—is merely an insult or if it should be understood as a definition of identity. Since there seems to have been an understanding that völur and giants were related, the comment does not seem very insulting—cf. Hyndluljóð 4 where Hyndla is called ‘bride of giants’ without any offense¹¹—, and since the structure of the poem requires that also Óðinn’s counterpart be revealed, it seems reasonable to assume that Óðinn’s statement should be understood as more than a simple insult. Thus, the question might be described as intended to be meaningless, but only within the logic of the fiction. When the poetic effect of the poem as a whole is considered, the question is by contrast of great meaning and serves to overdetermine the text. The receiver has been incited to ponder upon a variety of options of

¹See the extensive discussion of Clunies Ross 1994.
¹⁰As Lindow has shown in this connection, the search for knowledge is in many respects vital and has important analogues (Lindow 1997, 39–43). Still, the structure of the discussion makes the question of power primary, not least since the journey into another world in itself generally embodies the struggle for power. In this vein, see also McKinnell 1994, 102; cf. Quinn (forthc.).
¹¹See Quinn (forthc.).
interpretation. Even in order to decide that “mother of three giants” is only an insult, the receiver must evoke all of his/her previous knowledge of the myth. Attempting a literal understanding, the receiver is urged to try to find the answer that the poem laboriously withholds. The associations and attempts at interpretation constitute the beginning of a literary understanding—if the sudden changes from str. 12 are understood not as a clumsy way of ending things but as a consistent way of upholding concentration and suggestiveness.

The only ‘mother of three giants’ mentioned in the tradition is Angrboða, who in Gylfaginning is presented as the mother of Loki’s children, the Fenris wolf, the Miðgarð serpent and Hel—all of whom take important places in the scenario of Ragnarök. Other than this and in Hyndluljóð 40, where Loki is said to have begotten the wolf with her, Angrboða is not much mentioned, but her name, ‘the one who announces grief’, is congenial with the role of the völva in Baldrs draumar. John Lindow, who argues convincingly for this interpretation, has connected this with the question of the waves in str. 12 through an alternative understanding of the name: Angrboða could mean ‘fjord-breaker’ or ‘sea-wave’. This interpretation requires a feminine form boða that cannot be verified, but it results in a very tempting structural correspondence between Óðinn and Loki in the myth. The meaning of the name would thus be transformed from ‘announcer of grief’ into something connected with the waves of the sea. Thus, the question the answer of which should be the waves reveals the identity of the völva. And in reverse: the völva realises Óðinn’s identity because of her close connection with Loki and the forces of Ragnarök. If one interpretation must be chosen, this one seems the best. But others might be considered.

The völva has, a long time ago, been identified as Þókk, the giantess who in Gylfaginning refuses to take part in weeping Baldr out of Hel (Rudolf 1887, 73). The strength of this interpretation lies in the mention of weeping in st. 12: the völva then realises that Óðinn knows not only her identity but also of the important rôle she is assigned in the future events. In Gylfaginning, Þókk is found in a cave, reminiscent of her placement in Baldrs draumar and, for that matter, in Hyndluljóð. In effect, the stanza of Gylfaginning where she refuses to weep would be the perfect answer to Óðinn’s question in Baldrs draumar as to who will not weep over Baldr (were it not that it is in fornyrðislag). The answer, given by the völva/giantess would then be:

12Lindow 1997, 46–47; 59–60: “Just as Odin learns from the seeress Angrboða, Loki’s mate, the details of the death, killer, and avenger of Baldr, so Loki learns from Frigg, Odin’s mate, the details to be used for the slaying of Baldr. Indeed, the parallel runs even deeper, for just as Loki will depose Odin’s son by his interlocutor, Frigg, so Odin has deposed three of Loki’s offspring with his interlocutor, Angrboða, by binding the wolf, casting the Midgard serpent into the sea, and banishing Hel to preside over the realm of the dead. As the focus of these three, especially the sons, is on the end of the world, we may wonder whether Baldr’s focus, too, is there.”
The origin of the stanza is unknown, but if Snorri did not produce it himself, it can be considered part of the tradition of Baldrs draumar and thus relevant to the expectations of the receiver that fills stanza 12 with signification: it would be impossible not to think of Þôkk. If the völva is understood as Þôkk, the tension of the poem seems even more increased, since it is already clear that Baldr will be killed and avenged, while the implicit information here is that he will also be prevented from returning to the living because of Þôkk. This interpretation presupposes the existence of a tradition of weeping Baldr out of hel before Gylfaginning: evidence of such a tradition are Málsháttakvæði 9 (‘they [the æsir] all wept over him’) and Sögubrot af fornkonungum, ch. 3 (‘Baldr among the æsir, over whom the godly powers wept’). These pieces of evidence are not foolproof, and against Þôkk speaks that she is mentioned only in Gylfaginning and there not as the mother of three children. But if the story of Gylfaginning is traditional, she fills a very important function at exactly this junction in the structure of events: the one who fulfills the murder of Baldr, thus enabling the events of Ragnarök as outlined in stanza 14.

The interpretations of the völva as Angrboða or Þôkk seem to exclude each other, but are both tempting. In different ways, they both suggest the events of Ragnarök as a climactic dramatic curve. Óðinn, as the receiver within the fiction, helplessly experiences the coming defeat of the gods as does the receiver of the poem. Now the common denominator of Angrboða and Þôkk is of course Loki. He is obviously the father of the three most threatening giants, and in Gylfaginning it is actually suggested that Þôkk is Loki in disguise. The only scholar I know of who has accepted the possibility of identifying the völva as Loki is Hilda Ellis Davidson, and she did so only in passing. We do not know whether the identification of Þôkk as Loki is original, but it is obvious that Loki might well be named ‘mother’ instead of ‘father’ of the three giants. He is well-known for being the mother of Sleipnir according to Gylfaginning.

14 Friggjar pótti svipr at syni,
sá var taldr ör miklu kyni,
Hermóðr vildi auka aldr,
Eljúñir vann sölginn Baldr,
ðíl greitu þau eptir hann,
aukit var þeim hlárar bann,
heyrinkunn er frá h_num saga,
hvat þarf ek of slíkt at jaga.

Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigting B II, 140; see Lindow 1997, 115—admitting the possibility of such a tradition: Lindow 1997, 128.
and Hyndluljóð, but in Hyndluljóð he is also mentioned as having been made pregnant with ‘every evil creature’. In the situation of antagonism in Baldrs draumar it would also seem a natural form of niðr for Óðinn to call Loki ‘mother’: highly reminiscent of Lokasenna 23, where Óðinn mocks Loki for having given birth to children. In both cases, Loki constitutes a considerable threat to the world order of the Æsir. If the epithet ‘mother of three giants’ is to be considered an insult, the defamation thus lies in the state of motherhood rather than in the connection with giants—Óðinn has also garnered suspicion of ergi by using galdrar.

According to Völuspá 31, Baldr’s fate was hidden—the notion is also prevalent in Gylfaginning. The only one with influence on Baldr’s fate is Loki, and the only one with knowledge of Baldr’s fate is the völva in Baldrs draumar. And this is a peculiarly secretive völva. “The predisposition to answer any question asked of her seems to be another aspect of the female mind as it is represented in myth”, Judy Quinn has asserted (1998, 31). The völva in Baldrs draumar knows more than even a völva should know, and is more reluctant to disclose her knowledge than a völva should be. Still, while identification of the völva as Loki has certain problems to it, there is one more support. In Gylfaginning, Loki is not only said to possibly be Þókk, but the whole story of Baldr’s death begins with his disguising as a woman in order to find out from Frigg what may harm Baldr. Thus, in Gylfaginning, the murder of Baldr is first made possible by Loki’s appearing as a female. The murder is then reinforced when Baldr is prevented from returning from the dead—again by Loki acting as a woman. In the structure of an original tradition, one might expect the number of three instead of two occurrences of Loki preparing Ragnarök in female guise. The third occurrence might have been connected to Óðinn’s final attempt at re-establishing the power balance. The extant poem Baldrs draumar might then be viewed as a very deliberate evocation of all sequences of Baldr’s death: to practically any receiver it must have been nearly impossible not to see Loki—either in disguise or represented by Angrboða and Þókk—in the völva. Thus, the two foster-brothers and adversaries meet in the last decision of which side is the stronger. The whole eschatology is conjured within a few

40 Ól úlf Loki við Angrboða,
enn Sleipni gat við Svaðilfara;
ett þött skass allra feiknast,
þat var bróður frá Byleiðst komit.
41 Loki át af hiarta lindí brendo,
fann hann hæfsviðinn hagstein kono;
varð Loptr þviðgr af kono illri,
þaðan er á foldo flagð hvart komit.

On Lokasenna in this respect, see Meulengracht Sørensen 1988 and Klingenberg 1983. The nið aspect, if this interpretation were accepted, is commented upon by Lindow 1997, 46–47.

On nið and galdrar, see Quinn forthc.

If the words orðleg fólgisn are interpreted in that way (see Quinn 1998, 31).
stanzas—first explicitly and then, when the god/giant responsible is revealed, implicitly, through suggestion. This, then, would mean that the mention of Loki in str. 14 is not merely a definition of time, but an organic end to a detailed sequence of events.

Now the structure of the poem might seem to contradict an interpretation of this kind. As Lindow has shown, in many Old Norse sources a threefold structure of the motif emerges: victim—murderer—avenger (Lindow 1997, 130). This structure is certainly a strong one, and it is highly relevant to the death of Baldr. If one were to judge Baldrs draumar according to this structure, the three elements have been completed already by str. 11, and str. 12 might then seem to be a (possibly unelegant) strategy of finishing the poem. Lindow—and Ruggerini—make a better interpretation of str. 12 connecting the question of who weeps with the burial of Baldr by the sea (Lindow 1997, 45; Ruggerini 1994, 184–185). But the threefold structure of the murder of Baldr is unusually complicated.

The victim, of course, is easy to define. And apart from the account in Gylfaginning, Hôðr is generally pointed out as the single murderer, Váli being the single avenger. Thus, one can say that the threefold structure is implemented. In Baldrs draumar the victim is obviously rendered in str. 6–7, the murderer in str. 8–9 and the avenger in str.10–11. The presence of Loki, though, seems to be stronger than that. If he is considered responsible for the death of Baldr, he should be present. On the explicit level, he is so only in stanza 14 as a symbol of the final Ragnarök. Implicitly, though, str. 12 puts the question of Baldr’s second killer: the one that prevents him from returning from the dead, i.e. Loki or one of his female representatives. The structure can be understood in accordance with Gylfaginning, where there is not one murderer but two: Loki is the one who has Hôðr shoot Baldr. And the avenging party is evident: the æsir together. Gylfaginning thus differs from other traditions, but still implements the threefold structure. Baldrs draumar not only implements one of the structures: it deploys both. The question gives Óðinn’s demonstration of his knowledge and thus power, and its answer cannot be uttered though it is strongly actualised: Loki or one of his female representatives. If the murderer has been doubled, so also the avenger should be doubled. And in stanza 13, the would-be avenger certainly is presented: just as Óðinn revealed the identity of the ‘real’ murderer, so the völva now discloses the identity of the ‘real’ avenger, the one who logically should exact revenge—the mention of Loki in fetters str. 14 is in effect a description of the revenge. A threat is thus being posed, and the conversation must be ended. The request of the völva in (str. 14), that she wants to rest until Loki’s return and the end of the world is then important precisely through the definition of time: Nothing can be changed, the not threefold but fivefold scheme will be fulfilled. After that, Loki will free himself and defeat
his foster-brother.20 Loki and Óðinn are the representatives of the two sides at Ragnarök: the former foster-brothers are now adversaries. Also in this respect, preparations have been made. Fratricide is the Leit-motif: Hóðr kills Baldr, Váli kills Hóðr; Loki has Baldr killed as a means of waging war within which he and his foster-brother are the main protagonists.

If this interpretation is valid, Baldrs draumar builds up a tension that increases to the very end. It is done mainly by evoking the whole scenario of Baldr’s death in the mind of the receiver first explicitly, but then implicitly, through suggestion. But in order to think of the poem as so well-structured, one must accept that the threefold scheme is here enlarged into a fivefold one where Loki is strongly but implicitly present in str. 12–13. The question is thus whether the notion of Baldr having two killers, as well as the notion of all but one trying to weep him back to life, were in the minds of men before Gylfaginning. In regard to the weeping motif, the scant evidence that exists has been mentioned. Regarding the two killers, it is easier to establish the notion. Lokasenna 28 suggests a tradition of Loki being responsible for Baldr’s absence before Gylfaginning, albeit vaguely. Hyndluljóð 29, in turn, explicitly defines Hóðr as the one who did not plan the murder:

Vóro ellifo æsir talðir,
Baldr er hné við banaðúfo;
þess léz Váli verðr at hefnar,
síns bróður sló hann handbana;
átt er þat sett þín, Óttar heimski

Handbani is the legal term of the one who perpetrates a murder, while ráðbani is the term of the one who has planned it (Lindow 1997, 157–158). When handbani is used for Hóðr in connection with Váli’s revenge on him, this requires the existence of a ráðbani: i.e. Loki, though he is not mentioned. But the most striking evidence of a structure implying two murderers and two revenges is given by the Codex Regius Völuspá, stanzas 31–35:

31 Ek sé Baldrí. blóðgum tívor,
Óðins barni, orlog fólgin;
stóð um vaxinn, þöllum hæri,
miór ok miok fagr, mistilteinn.

32 Varð af þeim meði, er meir sýndiz,
harmflaug hættlig. Hóðr nam skjótu;
Baldrís bróðir var of borinn snemma,
sá nam Óðins sonr einnett vega.

32 Varð af þeim meði, er meir sýndiz,
harmflaug hættlig. Hóðr nam skjötu;
Baldrís bróðir var of borinn snemma,
sá nam Óðins sonr einnett vega.

20The meaning and order of events in str. 14 cannot be treated here: see Allén 1961 and Lindow 1997, 46-47.
The description of the central events concerning Baldr’s death is parallel in both poems. Just like Baldrs draumar, Voluspá presents the victim (31), the murderer (32), and the avenging brother (32–33: practically the same verses as in Baldrs draumar 11), the ‘real’ murderer (35) and the revenge meted out on him (35). Also, just as in Baldrs draumar, weeping over Baldr is mentioned between Váli’s revenge and the mention of Loki: that is, an extra reminder of the deed and the victim. In neither poem is it said that Loki is fettered because of Baldr’s death, yet in both poems the description of Loki is so closely connected to the preceding that the stanzas must arguably be understood together.

Fratricide is of course an important part of the Baldr myth and Ragnarök, and above all it is essential in the relationship between Loki and Óðinn. In Lokasenna, Loki reminds Óðinn that they are foster-brothers, once inseparable, and Lindow demonstrates the overriding consequences of their conflict (Lindow 1997, 131–163). What happens at Ragnarök is that the foster-brothers finally fight each other, each representing one side. As Voluspá 45 has it: Brœ›r muno beriaz. Baldrs draumar seems to epitomize precisely this: by way of Hœ›r’s and Váli’s fratricide, the brothers Óðinn and Loki are evoked in close contact, representing their respective sides and testing the balance of power one final time. We do not have to visualize them meeting each other in the underworld: they are evoked regardless of what might be (considered) the identity of the völva, since the receiver is urged to ponder all possibilities of the mythological scenario.

Reading literally, we are impelled to seek a definitive identity of the völva. But Baldrs draumar is not a didactic poem; its force is maintained by suggestion. The poem evokes an array of associations and mythological conceptions, and this constitutes its literary impact. Reading literarily would thus be interpreting the poem as part of an oral culture. It might seem paradoxical to connect literariness with orality in this way, but the central issue is the effect of the poem and its impact on the reader in a specific cultural context. The poem viewed, that is, not as a source of history or religion but as a

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21The stanza numbering follows Neckel/Kuhn. Stanza 34 is omitted here, since it exists only in Hauksbók (where it reads):

\[
\text{þá kná Vála vígbond snúa,} \\
\text{heldr vóro harðgor hópt, or þormom.}
\]

See also the separate editions of Bugge in Norrœn fornkvædi.

22Cf. Quinn 1990, 312–313; Lindow 1997, 22. Boyer views stanzas 31–35 as part of a greater section describing “the final causes of ragnarök,” which includes the stanzas up to 39 (Neckel-Kuhn’s numbers: Boyer 1983, 125–126). Since stanzas 36–39 treat places associated with Ragnarök such as Sindri and Náströnd, they differ from the preceding ones which deal with the causes or preparations of Ragnarök.
historical document.

Or, to put it differently: identifying the völva as Loki seems impossible although a great many features point in his direction. Precisely this somewhat confusing overdetermination, I would propose, serves to trigger the imagination of the receiver and suggest a great complex of mythological associations. From the apparently self-contradictory first stanzas and onwards, the anomaly is functional.

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