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Skulvádi Úlfr: historical lacunae and poetic space

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SKULVÁDI ÚLFR:

HISTORICAL LACUNÆ AND POETIC SPACE

[vol. 1]

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of

the requirements for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF CREATIVE ARTS

from

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BEVERLEY BRAUNE, BA MPhil

FACULTY OF CREATIVE ARTS

1999
Skulváði Úlfur
HISTORICAL LACUNÆ AND POETIC SPACE

VOLUME ONE

THE EPIC POEM OF THE HISTORY OF THE KINGDOM OF KERRIGARÐR
from the "Bookes of Gíld-rac Manuscrypte"

BEVERLIEY BRAUNE
# SKULVÁDI ÚLFR

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### VOLUME II

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Skulváði Úlfr is the first contemporary work in epic poetry of its scope to tackle the creative process in the mode of expression of skáldic poetry. The epic uses multi-layers of alliterative language and periphrases with illustrations ‘evidencing’ the language of sound-images on which the text is composed.

Skulváði Úlfr is a language map that narrates the ‘legend’ of ‘the real evidence’ of my exploration of the terrain of the poetic imagination and the troublesome nature of rulership over that territory. To demonstrate the proximity/distance of the terrain as a touchstone for the exploration, it is significant for me that the worlds of the epic should occupy a real or credible place. As such, we open the seven Books of Skulváði Úlfr via the hand of a sixteenth-century translator and the history of Spanish and Viking expansion across the Atlantic; the epic’s immediate landscapes occurring within the context of a fictional history placed between the mid-eleventh century and the beginning of the sixteenth century.

The work addresses fundamental questions about the nature of reading by composer-reader and observer-reader. To what extent can poetic intuitive experiences be examined? Can any examination be useful in making clear the articulation of the experiences of the
poetic imagination? In reply, *Skulváði Úlfr* offers a full-length Viking epic poem unfolding a grammar of secrets from a legend of the map of spaces of the intuitive terrain.

Historical lacunae provide spaces where unexpected realities are mapped to create their own authenticity, in much the same way that we validate those indeterminate spaces between ourselves and a work of art when we give value to our experience with the creative work in that relational space. In these spaces I chart the logic of casting each sound-image in a role, the ways each image looks back and ahead of its propositions as it reveals and creates itself. Ultimately, *Skulváði Úlfr* tries to answer a fundamental question raised by Roman Ingarden about the nature of “ideal” or “immutable objects” in a literary work, applied here to the composition of the world-as-a-poem: What is “the basis of their immutability?”
I am indebted to the Faculty of Creative Arts and the University of Wollongong for providing me with the space to contemplate-and-write, the financial support which allowed me to complete this project and the general support of the Faculty Office, Dean, Associate Deans and the University's Office of Research.

In particular, I owe an immense gratitude to Associate Professor Ron Pretty for his thoughtful advice and guidance as my supervisor. I am grateful to Dr Diana Wood-Conroy for our dialogue which developed from my presentation of aspects of the work at the University of Wollongong's Faculty of Creative Arts Postgraduate and Research Conferences in 1996, 1997 and 1998 and for the phrase "post-modernist rune." My daughter, Nova, leaves me humbled by her "Water Bird Icons" which appear on page 137.

I must thank the editors of the literary magazines and anthologies where extracts of the Poem and its Companion Reader have been published: "The Dragon's Battle with Loki's Sons," FourW, no. 8, 1997 (Charles Sturt University); "Writing Skulvādi Úlfr: Historical Lacunae and Poetic Space," Scarp, no. 30, 1997 (University of Wollongong); " Modsognir's Borg: The Siege of Garmr's Teeth," Writing Ulster, no. 5, 1998 (University of Ulster at Jordanstown); "The Genius of the Reader (or Who's sitting on the chair?)," Southerly, vol. 58, no. 2, Winter 1998 (University of Sydney); "Úllr's Words (or the Archer's Prediction):
The Book of Broken Words,” *Chain*, issue 5, Summer 1998 (University of Hawai'i); and “Reading Post-Modernist Runes in *Skulváði Úlfr*: A Journey of Puzzles,” *Sulfur*, no. 44, Spring 1999 (Eastern Michigan University). I would also like to thank Peter Bishop, Director of Varuna Writers’ Centre, who gave me the opportunity to read a lengthy extract from Book III at the 1996 Blue Mountains Festival, Katoomba.

The original creative work, opinions and analyses presented in *Skulváði Úlfr* are mine and I accept full responsibility for what is written in the following pages.

Bev Braune
Skulváðí Úlfr

The Illustrated Bookes of Gíld-rac Manuscripte

The Hystorie of The Kingdome of Kerrigardr, Home of the Coffer-keepers

The Annotated Translaytion

by

Gwen Terrane

With Argomento by Rinaldi da Giacomo

Includes map and genealogical tables

DEDICATED TO SIR THOMAS TERRANE
In Venetia, Appresso Rinaldi da Giacomo
MDXCIV
SKULVADI ÚLFÐ: THE EPIC POEM

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The Gild-rac Manuscript came into Gwen Terrane’s possession as a gift from Sir Walter Raleigh after he seized the Spanish galleon ‘El Duende’ south-west of Portugal in 1582 and took as prisoner a priest known only as ‘Almordozar.’ Almordozar claimed to be from the Spanish colony of Jamaigua of the Antilhas del Rey de Castella or New Spain, shown on the Cantino World Map (1502), the island named ‘Ximayaca’ in the Manuscript.

It was Almordozar’s plea for his life on the ransom of the Manuscript which brought the document to the English captain’s attention. What was not lost in the fray at sea during the seizure of ‘El Duende’ has been restored here in English translation by Gwen Terrane who has added to the lengthy Manuscript sub-titles and annotations. Gwen Terrane has also given the poem its title ‘Skulvadi Úlfur: The Epic Poem of The History of The Kingdom of Kerrigardr’ based on the name of the last and most formidable ruler of the Kingdom, Queen Skulvadi Úlfur, the author of the seventh Book of the Epic Poem.

The History of Kerrigardr (c. 1051-1501) describes the growth of a small settlement established by Viking explorers on Jamaigua first sighted in 1494 by Genoese, Cristoforo Colombo. A Spanish colony in 1509, subsequent to the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494), it established San Jago De La Vega as its capital city in 1523. It is believed that the battle described in the final book of the Epic Poem is that little documented war between the natives of Jamaigua and the first attempts by the Spanish to subdue the Indians and establish a foothold on the island. This conflict has been believed until now to have been confined to Hispaniola which lies north east of Jamaica or Ximayaca.

The History of Kerrigardr documents the growth of the small Viking settlement to a major Viking-Indian trading empire that encompassed the known lands of the Americas. The History tells a tumultuous story of conflict and power, visionary allies and bloody betrayals, moral courage and inspired leadership. The History is told, through the rulers, court advisors and court poets, of two ruling Houses: the Kerrigash and Ximacans and their often competing Clans. The account begins c.1050 when Earl and Court Poet, Dagazar Kerrigassson, strikes out from strife-torn Norway across the Atlantic for Vinland in North America. The journey taken by the Norwegian Earl leads him to the stormy southern Caribbees Sea, described in the Epic Poem as Muspellsheimr (Land of Five Giants).

In Norse myth, Muspellsheimr was the place of beginnings and endings. The first world to appear in the creation of the Norse Universe was Muspellsheimr in the southern hemisphere. It was said that when the beast Fenris-Wolf (parented by Loki, a malicious god, and Vanir giant, Angrboða) broke its chains, Muspell’s forces would rise with Fire Giant, Surt, and consume the known world in flames. This much we know from the Snorra Edda and from the Codex Regius. No more was known of the place called Muspellsheimr in the mythological stories until the discovery of The Gild-rac Manuscript.
Not only is Muspellsheimr mapped in the Manuscript but its relationship to ‘mythic’ 
Swartalfheimr, which Gwen Terrane’s studies show to mean Land of Dark [Giant] Elves or 
Dwarfs (Indians) of the Vanir, known as Aztlán. The mythic Hel or icy underworld is also 
revealed in the Manuscript to be a specific geographic location on the island of Ximayaca and 
perhaps extending to territories south of it into the Southern Americas. Originally called by 
Cristoforo Colombo ‘The Land of Wood and Water,’ Ximayaca, according to Gwen Terrane’s 
translation, reveals that the true meaning of the island’s name is more likely ‘Land of the Peaks 
of Caves’ or ‘Land of Cave-sea’ and that this is related to its connection with the location of 
Hel.

The works of Tacitus, Saxo Grammaticus and Snorri Sturluson offer historical answers to the 
rise of the Asiatic empire of the legendary Æsir or Áses. But it is the unpublished records of 
explorer, Juan Catalquez, that suggest that the mythology was an elaborate system used to make 
secret the extent of the Æsir empire and that of their rivals, the Vanir, into the Americas where 
the Vanir were known as Aztlán-Vanir or Aztatek. Catalquez argued that an arm of the Æsir 
stretched across the Pacific Ocean into the Americas in pursuit of the Aztlán-Vanir. However, 
the Aztlán-Vanir were subdued, after the battle of Ragnarrokr (its geographical location 
unknown) by the Karibar (Caribbeans) of the Caribbees Sea, when they extended themselves 
too far into South America.

The Vanir retracted to normally uninhabitable land and sustained themselves on mercenary 
activity across the globe in the fashion called ‘jormungandar’ or according to the practice of 
Jörmnunrekr of the Ostrogoths. Strangling competing trade routes round the globe, they became 
known according to myth – as the serpent strangling the world. According to Catalquez, the 
counter-action by the Æsir against the Aztlán-Vanir was the development of Bifrost Bridge or 
Trembling Roadway, a bridge or sea-and-land trade route. According to the Manuscript, the 
seat of Trembling Roadway was controlled from the Americas near the coast of the Caribbees 
Sea by the Mebrn, a forest-dwelling, seafaring tribe.

References to the ‘dragon’ in The Epic Poem describe both the shield symbols of the Vanir and 
their allies as well as a location not clearly defined. The straits called ‘The Dragon’s Mouth’ 
and ‘The Dragon’s Tail,’ however, have been mapped by Cristoforo Colombo as being leagues 
est of Ximayaca, off the coast of The Guianas. The most mysterious place described in The 
Epic Poem is Gild-rac and its location is expected to be made clear very soon by Sir Walter 
Raleigh’s expeditions to the Guianas.

Gwen Terrane’s translation acknowledges unpublished and published sources. Standardised 
abbreviations for her researched etymology are as follows: Obscure Norse (ON.), Goth 
(GO.), German (G.), Kerrigash (KER.), Sberaki (SH.), Arawakan (AR.). By all accounts, 
as we have considered them, The Gild-rac Manuscript is an authentic discovery, and Gwen 
Terrane’s ‘Skulvadi Úlfr: The Epic Poem of The History of The Kingdom of Kerrigardr,’ an 
historic document.

Rinaldi da Giacomo, 25 February 1594
BOOK I: DAGAZAR’S DREAMS

On an oath sworn to his dying father, Dagazar Kerrigansson leaves Norway c.1051 with twelve hundred Vikings on a journey across the Atlantic for Vinland. But Dagazar travels further than planned — southwards to the Caribbees Sea. A fateful raid in the Land of Indians in the Americas plunges the retreating Vikings and three Sheraki captives into a storm. Losing virtually all his cargo and most of his crew, Dagazar is washed ashore a largely abandoned Vanir Outpost on an island north of the southern Americas. It is ten years before the surviving two hundred Vikings complete a small settlement and form a law council, before the first child is born and before Modsognir, ‘Giant Commander of Dwarfs,’ makes contact with the strange men swept from the North.

1. DRAGON’S BREATH
OR HOW DAGAZAR WAS CAUGHT IN A BATTLE BETWEEN THE STORM GOD, THE SLY GOD AND HIS SONS — WHIRLWIND AND WATERSPOUT — AND THE DRAGON IN THE LAND OF FIRE GIANTS

The Ailing Realm

his is a tale of dread — sped by dragon’s breath —
when Asgardr’s ailing realm blew auguries that ached
with threatening scour, when such scalding tides
reared steeds beneath us — riding salty graves
of those freshly laid. This is a lay of awe
of ice and fevered flame, when Fairhair’s fire
gripped Vikingar hearts with the hunt for heathen-gold.

Storm god — Dörr, Norse God of Thunder and Lightning, son of Óðinn; easily provoked by sly Loki into duelling; historical Atilla the Hun
The Sly God, Hel & Garmr — The Sly God or Loki or Loptr [Air-traveller]. Hel, Norse mythical misty Under World guarded by the hound, Garmr, was ruled by Loki’s daughter also named Hel. Loki parented beasts (including Óðinn’s horse, Sleipnir) as well as elemental disasters.
The Dragon — ON. Nidogg (Mean-striker) of Hel. Nidogg gnaws Hel’s corpses and the roots of The Tree of Life/Óðinn’s Steed. Also ref. to the dragon symbol on the shields used by the Vanir (‘dragon’s breath’) who lived east of Asgarðr and historical enemies of the Æsir of Asgarðr. In Norse myth Æses fought the giant or ‘foreign’ Vanir over Gullveigr [The Power of Gold] or Heiðr [Shining One, Heath Dweller].

Land of Fire Giants — ON. Muspellheimr or Muspell’s Land in the Southern Hemisphere, where all things began and would end. Muspell’s is a land of thurses or hot giants who inhabit the nine regions of Muspell’s Under World (Hel).
Asgardr — central Asian home of the Æsir gods or Æsæs.
steeds — ships
Fairhair — King Haraldr Harfagri of Norway took power in the late 9th century in a self-serving attempt to unify Norway, capitalising on the divided rule of Norwegian chieftains. Fairhair’s victorious sea-battle at Hafrs Fjørðr (c.872) secured his kingdom and reputation, protecting his line from overthrow in Norway or elsewhere until 1093. Óðinn-worship gained in importance under Fairhair who considered Óðinn his patron.
Here is how mighty Porr and Loptr raised The Dragon,
struck The Raven's Chosen, stranded us at Garmr's gate.
Surt, with swords of flames, mounting us on waves of fear,
tied knots with Hel's cloak—our journey, ice-gripped.
Ragnarökkr gleaming from the gilded prize
brought us to shipwreck upon a shifting mount
where The Hound, Garmr, howls for men seeking bays.

But I move too quickly to the spike of the tale.
Let me begin again from where the story leaps.

Vast, Glittering Wastes

From slaves of ice weighing upon our weary chests,
we worked adventures for warm Wine Lands
dredged from Eirikr's dreams, driven by revenge
one hundred eighty years since Hafs Fjörðr raged—
since Fairhair beat the Danes and stole my fathers' lands,
our hard-won chiefdoms pillaged by lawless men.

J. Dagazar Kerrigasson sealed a bargain of blood
of Kerrigan, my father, to cast nets of steel
and to chain elsewhere what Haraldr's rogues plundered.
And then, all too soon, new grief set upon us:
Harðraði — Hard Counsel—
with bounds at our heels.

It took little coaxing to lead twelve hundred.
The desperate came—
the lean, the dispossessed
exiled on meagre islands swept with barest ice.
Chieftains came from Sogn, from Skåne and Saxony,
from Götland to join those in Husavík and Ærrshov
to ride west for gold and land along vast, glittering wastes.

We gathered dampened dignity to fit our arms and hearts.
Countries, promised from afar, called double-wood-staves
to the gleaming lengths of our Glaum-driven fleet.
Full-bellied knörr sailed with horses, dowry and fur;
our racing longships, masted, with love for no harbour
but that of shelved sand and shallow-drenched beaches.

Raven's Chosen — warriors chosen
by the historical King Wodan;
raven: bird of death (attribute of the mythical Óðinn).

Surt — ON. 'black; flame-dressed giant guardian of Muspellsheimr
Ragnarökkr — the battle which broke the stronghold of the Æses
over the Vanir; meaning 'the twilight of powers,' the doom of the gods, the end of the known world

Eirikr — Eric The Red

Dagazar — ON. Dagazar, 'the transformed host'; Kerrigasson 'son of the Coffer-keeper'
Harðraði — King Haraldr Harðraði of Norway (1046-1066) 'Hard Counsel' or 'Hard-ruler' Haraldr;
after 9 years in the Byzantine emperor's elite Varangian guard, he returned to take Norway and Denmark from Magnus the Good by invading Denmark in 1046

meagre islands — the Orkneys and Faröes
Sogn — region of south west Norway
Skåne — region of southern Sweden
Götland — Denmark
Husavík, Ærrshov — ports on the north coast of Iceland and in the Faröes, respectively.
double-wood-staves — warriors
Glaum-driven — spurred on by enemies
knörr — cargo ship
Though our winter broke late with the tales of Leifr, harvests were covenanted even on Karlsefni’s woes. We vaulted thirty ships under the veil of missions to Greenland’s shores. Warriors and skalds set out, ignoring every leaf of Swartalfheimr’s legends – mound-alfs in skin-boats beneath The Trembling Way.

Leifr – Leifr Erikson [975-1029]
Thorfinn Karlsefni – he failed to establish a Vinland colony in 1020
mound alfs – mound-dwelling Indians (Sheraki)
skin-boats – canoes made of animal skin stretched over wood
Swartalfheimr’s legends – stories about the Land of Dark Elves (North American Indians)
The Trembling Way – Bifrost or Rainbow Bridge, Æsir’s global land and river systems trade route often besieged by Vanir

Hogar’s drekar at the head led twenty longships. My thirty-roomed ship of war, ‘Great Serpent Thrasher,’ guided laden trade-ships filled with arms and cargo, young warriors, bondsmen, women, boys and elk. We rode with such luck, old troubles seemed like gifts. When we reached The Land of Vines Sjofn’s service drove us on.

We cleaved Loptr’s whale-hills. We rode staves for conquests long shelled in distant clouds so that when challenges came upon our cherished dreams we would not alter our goal – break our oaths to Þórr, bend the bolts that struck our hearts, not when full moon’s path beyond the journey’s start wiry howls broke our leave ashore the Land of Woods.

Loptr’s whale-hills – steep waves whipped by strong winds
Land of Woods – Markland; possibly Nova Scotia in the Americas
kaupskips – trade-ships
Skrålingeland – the ocean; mountainous waves; ON. Skråi mountain giant (Vanir)

No one complained when some, too eager for pillage, beat sea-broken oars three days before us. They were Joms Vikingar, secretly serving the king, who saw gold in the clouds – Skrålingeland gleaming. But upon us washed their tales: their best, dead or wounded, with pitted and broken helms, their breasts pitched with spears.

Joms Vikingar – brotherhood of Danish mercenaries in service to King Haraldr Harðraði

Each warrior held his own against heat and rivalry between Harðraði’s men, Danelander and Saxon clans. But with each raid we weakened with the sight of forests ruled by rock-Niðhöð’s fists. As soon as we found safe ground, grazing land and timber, we were sent again under Skrålinge bowls into angry waves.

Skrålitingeland – land of the Indians, south of Newfoundland in the Americas
rock-Niðhöð’s fists – giants’ (Vanir’s) armies
Even then, no whisper came from man nor woman of what tongues the air, of what was to make shipwreck of us here. Shifting fortunes and gales could not break our will; we were prepared for these.

But we were not to see the rise of the Vanir’s beasts wise to thrice-twisted steel swung by fyrðar and drengir and the bodies they breached with double-handed axe, to a hundred battles won by hallowed Tyr-aimed shields.

To be sure, had it not been for that barbarous art – the beat of Hardradi’s hand hard upon our souls – we would not have sailed on so far South upon the wind. We stayed a-light with stories of those, who, meeting alike such dread Skraelings before us, did not drop a shield.

But two seasons of raiding, riding wind and sea far south of Vinland – the enemy, ourselves – we were but thirteen ships sea-spread all too thinly, diminished, led to rest where a mountain lives on razed needs that rise gladly out of Muspellsheimr, where flame-haired thurses thrive in nine folds of Hel.

For as we were egged by thirst, beaten by thistled time, stalled beneath Hardradi’s yoke, stored between blood fights, we were ready for all else but the Skessa’s Rogue-wench. Our breasts and fierce glinters – both foundries fired for savage and for storm – we did not see Jotunheimr set troughs beneath us while we sailed for bays to raid the Skraeling shores, our breakers, sea crystals-shone.

The Fateful Raid in Sheraki-land

It was here the trouble came – trails boring travellers’ backs from night’s deadliest stare. Not tree nor sky stirred till under a mantle of mortbund skies with unholy cry we came upon a Skraeling camp.

Above the Screechers’ mounds Hel’s cloak hung scorched clouds. The faltering night glared with furious sentinels. We baited our prey. Our best and bravest spurred with raging blood boiling in their breasts, their bravery unhemmed by the bristling blackness that hung over our ships on the edge of the shore.
The painted Skraelinge, challenging our push,
fell with surprise at first. Our cloaked charge unfolded:
Ragnarr's boldest climbed the wild-formed Shriekers
who met our thrust with staves stamped with our image.

Our need to break breast-fjördr, brewing too long, grew ten-fold,
muddled their battle plan. Those stained morosely
with our memory yielded. Those who had yearned too long
to test their fathers' tales fell best upon our swords.

Some fought with wild gaze, with one desperate aim:
to drown Manar Mean-hearted son of Manir The Brave,
who with tales and sky-eyes had mapped the sea for us.
Others threw themselves upon our threaded steel.

But the frenzied Bear Shirts, held on ship too long
under skies chained to the sea, charged ahead of Ragnarr's mark,
bent on grinding rage than on the goal of our raid.
They broke rank, scattered thinly, breached dire warnings
reaching from the night. Under hasty swart-rebuke
Ragnarr left them to roam in Ran's thrashing wood.

It was then the first sign came on the night's brooding speed.
A piercing wolf-cry ripped the throat of a Skraelinge bride,
twisted dreams riding Nidogg—that those who could do so
None but I saw Valbhóll dim behind the blackened vines.
None saw Úllr decline to brave pitted, broiling seas.

Having studied us from an earlier raid
by the mighty hand of Eiríkr's house,
again the Skraelinge rose as we embarked, night-reared,
for a southernmost shore; our victory squandered.

With meagre reward riding in our scanty hold—
three Skraelinge women and a sack of white beads—in retreat, we set our sights for heavy-browed seas.
Undeterred by blackest sky and the reach of steep-barbed waves,
we lashed ourselves firmly to force our flight-intent.

The wilful night clawed and curdled our hopes.
New dragons shadowed upon my father's dreams.
The winding water-mouth widened with Skraelinge bands.
Ragnarr Bear Chest, stultified, made for steepest water-cloak.
Olaf Hunter of Hawks bowled to ensnared skies.

staves – spears
breast-fjördr – veins of blood
Manar 'Mean-hearted' Manirsson – navigator on the ship “Great Serpent Thrasher” and the son of Manir 'The Brave' Tryggvason of Sogn

Bear Shirts – Berserkir, specialised assault warriors sworn to Óðinn; also Bear Chests, Bear Sarks and Wolf Coats (Úlfhðnkr) warriors who went berserk attacking en masse like animals possessed and impervious to pain
Ragnarr (Bear Chest) – the fleet’s leader of berserkers

swart-rebuke – Sheraki counter-attack
Ran – ON. sea deity who drags drowning men into the ocean with a net.
thrashing wood – forests whipped by sea-borne storms

Vaihöll – Val-hall, Óðinn’s Hall of the Slain where war heroes (Eimirjar), taken by the Valkyrie (Valkyrie) Choosers of the Slain, live the idyllic life of the warrior
Úllr – ON. god of archery and skiing, invoked by warriors in single combat, son of Sif who is married to storm god Þórr

white beads – perhaps pearls
Wearing new defiance from the water's weave
we were set more sullied charge. We smelt a twisted change
that breathed dank and dark upon the dead to be.

The Dragon's Battle with Loki's Sons

Here the monster rode ridged against the roaring sky.
It ploughed as reddened giants, made splinters of our prows,
Tyr's mantle swept to shreds beneath its swirling charge.
We bared our breasts with gaps for these new secret spears
that tripped our deeds, made traitors, ripped triumph from our grasps,
stalking us from Vinland to Niflheimr, Land of Death.

We spurred heaving water-paths to senseless night's remorse.
The Dragon launched itself with loud intent, iron-boomed.
Muspell's night carved us through nether water-ribs.
Surt lanced unholy wounds between Æsir and Vanir.

It was thus it came, the cadence of world's end,
not as three careless winters calm, clean and crisp -
wearing days masked - but mounting to meet us
spare of merciful deeds, of death's wilful brevity.

Long we charmed and baited the loathsome belly
of the wretched swell, seated high and sinister
across the arched back of blue-black hooded Wod;
Ygg's steed stained with the blood of men still standing, dead.

We called for Óski's favour to fill the roaring gale
with magical Valknutr, to give us the beast's face
for thrusting our breakers. We beseeched The Red-robed God.
We held Týr's sign aloft to cease the gaping well.

But my sword rusted upon its rightful place,
dipped in the awesome tale all too soon, too deeply.
I called Fairhair's patron to stay the Eye-giver's path -
to leap Mimir's Steed-house - lie in Brudvangar's safety.
Only in my mind did the sun appear to rise,
dragged back to Valhöll no sooner than dreamed.

Niflheimr - ON. Nifhell, Misty Hel, icy home of the dead, one of
the nine regions of Hel
Blue-black hooded Wod - Óðinn in death attire; Wod or 'Óðinn' as
the legendary Asiatic king
Óski or gift-giver is one of the many names assumed by Óðinn,
god of death and poetry
Valknutr - 'knots of the slain,' warriors' blood oaths; a kind of
Norwegian patterned embroidery.

breakers - swords
The Red-robed God - Þórr

Fairhair's patron, Eye-giver - Óðinn
Mimir's Steed-house - Mimir's Home, a mythic well (also
Mimisbrunnur’s Well) said to
house the prophetic head of the Vanir, Mimir, and which waters
Jotunheimr, one of three springs
leading to the tree, Yggdrasill.
Perhaps an explanation of alliances
between Æsir and Vanir

Brudvangar or 'Paddocks of Power' or 'The Fields of Brud' - the realm of Þórr's hall of lightning, Bifröst.
Óðinn's chosen warriors went to Valhöll while other honourable men went to Brudvangar (ON. brúð -
alternate name for Þórr; also ascribed to one of his wives).
The surly-mantled Ygg drew us to the turning sky,
threw our bucking whale-mounts towards the dragon’s mouth.
And drinking the serpent’s brew I dreamed for horns of mead
with chiding Valkyjur — Herfjötur and Skogul.

Two Skrae-alfir captives, torrent-fixed, storm-held,
cast dark and brooding eyes from the Thrasher’s kicking bow,
set veils to blacken the very sun’s bride
now so far set and sunk it cut our coats in byrnie-gold.
It was so we were marched mercilessly south
upon barest skeins of scattered courage.

Though deadlier storms we welcomed from the north,
there was none so skewered, so needing to divide us,
so bent on breaking our backs with its brittle-bark skies.
It spawned roaring water-cones, rose entwined, reversed,
ripped two ships moored too far of Freyr’s guardianship.

As warnings rise to whip us, each water-laden rift,
growing caustic visions, clipped our prows, crossed our path,
without mark, without cipher. Great Wod drew back maimed
from the rancorous depths, raising no new tongue,
just one rent tablet ripped from Hel’s secret breast.

Then, with icy fist and with fevered brow,
Wod intemperately fitted each brooding fistula
against each ship’s prow. One sank sure and fast
into the widening mouth; Hogar’s war-cry put to sleep —
the son of Olaf Great Blade trampled beneath Ran’s heels.

Others, before and behind, it vomited alone
with every single heave of its hoary breast.
Upon salty mountains the dead sailed new peaks
eroding to wastelands defying westward shores.

My bold storm-racer, square sails battened fast,
held warriors steady and Skraelinge captives whole
such that I would have, without slightest remorse,
traded places with women, laid treason to my shield.
It was not from blood nor bodies swallowed,
wearin shivers of spears shafted deep and bled
 gleaming from their hides that gored our tender courage.
 It was not what bucked the swell burying our tears and hearts.
It was that grating smell of sucking Hag-norn,
of distance drawing us, woeful, rank and dread.

I wailed for each brother like a warrior bleeding
from his first bitter wound. In my furtive heart
I held a fever spread thick — frightened fire through my limbs —
till it scalded my skin with tenebrous kindling.

Then, paused on its own pride, for more lofty prey,
Nidogg gathered new strength while it eyed our strongest.
My breast mail, my corselet, grew upon it steel of ice.
My skin as lightning flecks forgot its full reflection.

In the gap I heard cries — shrieks wide of Sessyrmnir.
I would surely have turned though I knew not why
nor which the right direction nor which was the wrong,
but I would have halted for any rocky hove
than take the stage it set me in the stillness of its eye.

**Graven Signs**

\[ \text{t was the silence from the hold below that drove me from the bow to see the Skraelinge bride who did not scream for safety. Played false by her stillness, I gripped her wrist to break her peace, shake her with the captor's glance. But, from her throbbing skin, forging heat seared my palm that I could touch myself, taste the fire in her eyes.} \]

The Wyrd's Beast — The Fate-bringing Dragon

\[ \text{Then it rose - the Wyrd's Beast - winding itself to my grip. It tethered me to gasping air, locked my path on gravid heave. It doubled skywards grasped oarsmen mortified - the manic raven blown, torn from its very mast and sitting on its seat the sign of wolf enthroned.} \]

The raven - The sign of the raven flown on masts. In full sail, the 'flown raven' seemed alive. It endowed oarsmen with extraordinary valour. If the 'raven' was torn or lost mid-battle, it was a sign of defeat. For Dagazar, the 'torn raven' therefore signals a dishonourable death.

\[ \text{No sooner could I track its feast of warriors than I set myself the task to test its weaknesses. I fastened my mind to the path it sped. It and I alone rode between the flaming prows.} \]

Sessyrmnir - ON. 'Rich in Seats.' Leader of the Valkyrie, Freyja's great hall in a region of Asgard called Volksvang (Folk's Field) where heroes' wives and Odin's chosen warriors are served by faithful wives and women who died before marriage; Odin's companion (wife?) who shared the crop of the slain with him; mistress of seidr (visions); twin sister of Freyr (historical King of Sweden of the Yingling dynasty); chief female Van (Vanir [giants] also referred to as fertility gods).

Hag-norn - the Past; ON. Urðr, the eldest of the Three Fates; she constantly 'faces' the 'direction of the Past'
From Wod's second eye, cast and couched in dread,
the Dragon struck and set circles of emerald-beds
seamed with threads of lightning. It lashed me firmly
to the bite of its jagged teeth. It struck me with dragon's breath.

I held my sword high to carve the howling beast.
But it stood upon our path: its stare as diamonds cut—
mirrors of brine-scarped roads, corpse-lights of dipped steel,
its tail of frenzied weight, its breath of foulest air.

And its murderous eye—measuring the pit
of my dimming courage—swelled its ranks with pride.
It held our gaping timber sucked in its fiercest tow
that I abandoned new gods who filled our sails for Vinland.

I opened my fist to Hlyrnir. I crossed my hand with fear.
But my creased palm wept—the elk knee-deep in muddy sedge.
It was etched with graven signs. Gritted rings ground themselves
so that underneath each ring undulated leaves
to form a dreadful crown of alf-shot-drawn circlets.

My splayed finger-tips—digits of weighted glass,
of lightning silvered nails—lit with savage blood,
reversed upon their posts. The markings grew stronger
then faded into my palm, stayed the thrashing demon
as if it read the mark for some shape-twisted claim.

For each sea-moored warrior I plunged my wound-flame skyward:
'I shall ride this monster's back!' my mind beset with nails,
with what no one suspected. How should we, surrendering
to Loptr's strategies, learn from distant deeds
or from recent tricks traded too soon for ghosts?

wound-flame—sword
nails—referring to Nagflar,
mythical Ship of Dead Men's Toes
nails at anchor in Hel and awaiting
its launch at Ragnarókkr or The End of The World

Hlyrnir—ON. meaning 'twin-lit';
the 7th of 9 heavens in Norse myth

the elk—runic sign of protection
[T G. elbaz, GO. albs]; the priest-chieftain (göti's) stance when invoking the gods; the horns of the elk in sedge or eel grass; the splayed hand
alf-shot-drawn circlets—circles,
created by dark elf magic, that break the apparent continuity of time

Left—1st stone-rubbing from picture-poem found on Dagazar's burial stones; believed to record 'the göti's storm-journey
How could we few remaining resist Valhöll’s cleft strapped to my second name ‘Val-father The Strung,’
know with old maps sunk to break this spawn of wolves this spume of Dragon’s seed?

Val-father—Father of the Slain (Death-father); attribute of Odin.

spawn of wolves—blackened sky, or sunless sky; spume of the dragon’s seed—frothing seas (caused by Niðogg but usually associated with the World Serpent (Jormungandr) fathered by the Sly God, Loki); ref. to the Jormunrekr’s mercenaries

The Rule of Dragon’s Breath

Our tack stave-twisted, our tide-breaks swallowed whole,
no elm-shoe yet carved could rake frothing crest-beds.
Yet upon the tossing steed now stood one— the Skjalding—
of wolfish eye, golden skin, galdr-struck, lightning-gilt.

‘Can you point our spur to the monster’s weakest spike?
Pick the surest path to our doom!’ I shouted.

(For if I had to forfeit hard held servitude to this wilful brine I would sooner salve the beast with dishonour, cold pride, than let chaos lead my prow.)

She braced herself firmly against the sea-soaked bench.
She did not dip once with the deepest swell.
She balanced the wind, her shawl wound round her as if a bridled wand bound before its strike.

‘Where do we go now?’ I bellowed against the gale.
‘How do you welcome this strangest of winds?’

She looked up with knowing eyes as if she knew me from the days when Manir’s clan struck these selfsame shores where Swartalfheimr’s hordes hoisted giant fish.

‘He’ye-ya,’ was all she said. The wind held her still, swallowing her words, gave the very whistling breath that followed her lips a lancing sigh—death-whisper—such as I have heard released from within a sunken corpse and caves the living into lead-heavy stone.
'He'-ye-y'da,' she said again holding me up with her spell, her eyes wet with tears that washed the rain.

'First know where you are,' said Loptr's Dórr-völva, her syllables riding rough upon a foreign tongue.

'And where is this?' I cried, my words riding sail-flames.

'The place of the Single Eye,' she mouthed with silent lips.

'It is here you must tame the torment of gains.
You must work to pry the tightly fisted paw of magical berries before the juice is spent.
You must appease the beast, feed it your fattest sack.
Mark your road of mists on the rule of dragon's breath.'

I stalled doubtfully, strung upon directions.
I mauled the swirling sky for ancient secret signs when I remembered the strange rule upon my hand.
I held it to my face again expecting hidden gifts.

The woman screamed to see me so carved there, lifted eyes of terror from the spidery light, shielded her silent head in the silvery wrap that brought her still to me upon my throbbing will.

I waited with Mimir's eye to see what there was in its cut that had struck such fear in the Skjalding's heaving breast.
I looked at the mark — the palm-pressed crown — but it withheld itself, withdrew to newer form.

Now it bore half-oval horns above an open globe.
Peaks spread across the lines, light-lifted, shimmering, cut as a disfigured star disused by braver men.
No warrior lives, I thought, who would not use such signs to light a way to bays if faced with a beast as this.

But just as quickly as I glimpsed its point, the illusion was erased. Upon an errant wind rose a charged retort: cloud-born ravenous broods of writhing pillars grew from the giant, Waterspout.

Eight-legged Sleipnir mounted, they rode us mercilessly, struck south to Muspellsheimr. Now our knotted strides draped its alterations, raced ahead of dreams strained from east-drawn dunes of Baghdad's distant peaks.
They lifted us serpent-twined, masts and spearshafts split,
lightning-stripped our oars—leded threads of burnished leaves.
They moulded to warriors breasts of whitened steel
and of their mad-set eyes, Byzantine silken mares;
slaves and Northmen bridled to the howling steed.

Undeterred, I matched their speed, every ill-begotten Spout,
with the stricken amber bride straddled to this oath:
‘If we survive this, let Óðinn favour one son
made of strident vengeance to strap us home again.’
It was so I dismantled the final deadly howl
that ripped across a chasm from the mouths of Loki’s crew.

The Spouts, breaking Night’s mares, heaved Mist’s leeks and prow-skis
onto a stony whale-wreck—into the store of fire-guards.
In those first moments, as if too soon land-born,
I summoned Huginn, Muninn—Mind and Memory,
the god’s final weapon—willed by my weeping palms:

‘What news have Ygg’s Goslings? What raven-whispered lies
do you take of Skogul’s storms? Does Cargo-tyr know
that you have swept us all to the edge of the world
where the hound that grows and feeds so greedily
is that breaker of Týr—the Gordian, Garmr?’

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SKULVÁDI ÚLFR: THE EPIC POEM

Onto her back was Útgardr bolted—
Fort of Shift-shapers, the Dragon’s Net,
Modsonir’s Borg, Útgardr-loki’s hold—
where hill-ogres rode with Yimsi’s kind.

Nóatun, safe port no longer shielded—
the shipyard ceded, straddled by Jótnar.
These giants’ allies—Modsonir’s alfs—
fettered themselves to Garmr’s fields.

Here alf-gifts were of scattered grain
and of bitter sap and bound inert
to human bones. They too were hewn
of guarded hopes gnawed by Garmr’s Teeth.

So Hel greeted us with The Snarling Hound,
whale-swords gaping, that neither Lightning,
the Dragon, Loptr nor that trickster’s sons
could bar our race to Naastrand - Corpse-beach.

Rings of Cadent Flames

A venging Skádi—Njörðr’s mate—caged us
to a craggy fate, scowled at us from cliffs.
She laced us, salt-born, with shipwrecked screams.
Rings of cadent flames framed her cruel wrists.

Six days passed us stranded on that shore
bound with no end, with no bearing
on our skyward watch. On the first night
Dísir — Shield Maidens — hung in wait ahead.

While, at our backs, wayward Njörðr—
God of Dark Seas danced with Loki’s Seeds.
He charged bloated beasts to blind our march,
wound the sunken dead, bound and dressed, to Hel.

Njörðr’s dreadful garb, dragged to southern seas,
bunted dank places — dead men’s beds—
to feed black-eyed carp with Sjofn’s tangled sheets.
The steep way-in washed no way-out.

Utgarðr — Home of Giants
Dragon’s Net — Vanir stronghold
Útgardr-loki — Vanir king who lost land in Sweden. Referred to as a Vanir Overlord in Skulvádi Úlfr
Yimsi’s kind — giants, Vanir allies

Nóatun — in Norse myth this was the home of Njörðr, god of wind and sea
Jótnar — giants of Jotunheimr (Home of Giants/Vanir)

Alf-gifts — gifts created by dwarfs or dark elves, which first appear worthless but can be turned into gold, e.g. dead leaves, rotting wood, wood shavings

whale-swords — sharp rocks of the jagged cliff-face
Lightning — Bórr, God of Thunder and Lightning

Skádi — in Norse myth she is the giant at odds with her sea-loving husband Njörðr; associated with hunting
Shield Maidens — Valkyrie (Choosers of the Slain), Óðinn’s mythic female army welcoming dead warrior-heroes

Loki’s Seeds — off-spring of the giant Loki (nemesis of the gods): e.g. Whirlwind, Waterspout, Hel, Fenrir the Wolf, the Serpent

Sjofn’s tangled sheets — passion gone sour
If Sif once reigned here, her crown was of stone.
She ruled fitfully, with a fallow fist.
Þórr's wife now held a brittle rod covered with cakes of cankerous foam.

On every side grew sea-slammed prey.
Freyr's Ship, Skidbladnir, securely chained, brought no protection to sail us homeward - Freyr's own oar-claw abandoned by dwarfs.

Our few warriors, their weeping women, slaves and traders searched the sands.
No back could break the burden's labour that fired their hearts with twisting fear.

While Loki's children chaffed charred skies, sweeping for ships that they missed in haste, we angled ourselves to salvage old tricks, to mould safe port, seal the harbour's gap.

The Final Assault: Þórr and The Ship-biter

Fire-Wing, was not satisfied.
Fresh Whirlwinds drove new-born Waterspouts.
So the Dragon woke the Serpent - the Ship-biter rising from bleak horizons.

The rearing waves rode the Dragon to break the Coil. They climbed to wrench Þórr's fractured horn fixed upon his fist while they leered at him to light their lash.

Winding the Sword-coil, the Spouts swept with speed into mangled seas to feed fresh assaults.
The Fire Monster, Surt, once more aroused, thirsty for the gale, goaded them on.

The Knife-coil spun, split writhing seas, gripped Spouts and Whirls, flung them wave-heaped - its tail flaying me with grievous whips.
In reply Þórr launched new shafts of fire.

Sif - Þórr's wife; ON. goddess of fertility
Freyr's ship - Skidbladnir, able to be folded and stored in one's pocket, was repaired annually by dwarfs; Freyr's oar-claw

The Serpent, Sword-coil, Knife-coil, Ship-Biter - the legacy of Vanir mercenaries; in Norse mythology, the World Serpent or Jormungandr encircling Midgardr or Middle Earth (the equatorial latitudes)

The Fire Monster, Surt - Fire Giant, guardian of the giants in the Home of the Fire Giants.
The falling bolts seared a spreading circle, struck stars at my feet, flamed my skin –
a', armoured mirror multiplying beams
sparked by the fumes of the Dragon’s breath.

Ásabrag’s Hammer, swung too widely,
struck unholy seams to break my skull,
felled me as stone upon the brittle shore.
And on my crown Mjöllnir carved a gap.

Grains of rocky sand clung to the gash
and sealed it closed with silvered bones.
I rose the wretch. Raw defiance braved,
I claimed the yoke with: ‘Yet I shall live!’

But not my screams nor spray nor mist
could undo this fate. Instead, I unhinged
unholy Pókk – Loki’s shadow –
lifting Hel on stairs boned from her steps.

The Guardians of Naastrand

She who takes the name of the Nether World –
Hel, Daughter of Loki with monstrous face –
fed her brothers fetid skies, fixing time
between aspiric air and her guarded stare.

Pókk barred my way from the barren plain –
that thistled bramble, that briar-mounted beach.
Hel fixed her finger upon my mind,
marked there the sigil of Úr’s secret wood.

The two then drew back, took to the stair,
groaned from a face of twin-fed mouths:
‘You are thrice marked; now three times maimed.
Do not deny the Dragon’s dealing.’

When I touched the place mapped on my head,
there burnt a mark – a cryptic scar.
It crowned me, so perfectly formed,
smooth and clean, iron-brands etched.
As my feet were firm and my helm whole, I shook the fever, shut out all caution. Feigning disbelief I summoned Olaf, dared the Hawker dislocate the sign.

With eyes of coal and rigid glare he pointed to the scar as did Hel's twins.

'I am the same,' my voice replied, 'as the face you hide, the one you once wore in those cold years not caught on wreckage.'

But Olaf shouted: 'A change moulds you, wields a wyrding hold within your head. Those who laid siege upon the Sword-coil needle new lament from lands of the dead.'

Now fierce quarrels caulked my senses on that bracken beach of bitter gale. For though The Serpent was well secured – Whirlwinds, Waterspouts weakened to squalls – Muspell's sons clung to our tattered cloaks.

Kerrigarðr - Home of the Coffer Keepers. GO. kas. ON. ker 1. drinking vessel, goblet, bowl. 2. storage chest, coffer. ON. garðr garth, hearth, home.
This is the place now prised for you
from Muspell's gusts, from goring storm
that Hugi brews to best your wits.
This is Kerrigardr, your kindling plot,
where three staves stall the serpent fiend,
where twisting ropes rein the bite of hounds.'

Then he vanished pointing to Garmr's Teeth.
I trailed my eyes up the travertine cliff.
Winding snake-vines climbed its skyward crest
on Spout-sprung winds lashing Skáti's gates.

There clasping the stamp of Garmr's snarling bite
a net of ropes grew with moistened arms.
Upon each curve Garmr held them fixed
that the Dog's fangs gripped the rising vine.

I called the wrecked, crossed Hâgl's Eight -
runes for the lost on the woodland's edge,
eight signs circled in the gritty sand;
eight oaths to Hâgl at the Stumbling-block:

'The dragon-seed - hail, the breast-breaker - need,
the sole-winter - ice, the thurs' sword - thorn,
the eagle's claw - hunt, the stave of worlds - yew,
the godi's curse - elk, the bolt and bow - sun.

'This Wall of Hounds waits on Skuld's Hand.
Gather your spoils to meet this mount,
the stones now say. Make of it a shield
to brace the bolts born of Útgarðr.'

We climbed the cliff's face - cut from Garmr's mouth.
Northmen mustered mirth-starved minds,
breathed hopes anew, brought the lifeless
from the bowling bay of blistering bones.

But beyond the vines waited more dire stay
that holds me to death for these forty years.
In black-drawn air there lay ahead
the dragon's hold of Útgarðr-ðóki!

It was ghostly stone, black-guarded green,
four jet hills paused on poraceous beds
which we later named 'The Very Green'
and the dead burnt mount, 'The Dread Black Hills.'
When I looked back to the cliff we breached,  
the mists that made our upward path  
brought one vacant ship from the sea's bowels  
with a thunderous stone tied to its stern.

The spirit craft gutted with shade  
cast its hoary breath upon Garmr's Teeth  
and with a dip of its wyrded prow  
pointed the route to the place of hearths.

Gerða's Dowry (or Freyr's Eight)

Five days walking south wove us to the plot.  
But no sooner there (now sea-starved ground  
pressed through their soles) Jōms set at once  
swearing blood oaths to duel for land.

With my sword strap open at the hilt,  
my shield raised, I said: 'No man shall claim  
Loki's desert of mounted plains  
until fires are struck and the women fed.'

It took fifty men fevered restless days  
to dig wide hearths out of white-hard stone.  
That dreadful dent of distant homes  
called from Northmen's bones ways to cut new homes  
carved from death — the dragon's rupture —  
with rough-hewn tools of mortified stone.

Freyr's bride stayed in steady hiding  
clenching dried leaves in the closing wind.  
The wood was hard, wore petrified sap;  
the gritted ground grievous to mould.  
The weak gave up the soil and wood  
for shell and bracken and low pebbled mounds.

Perhaps it was hunger or endless black hills  
but when the moon had waxed thirteen times  
Gerða threw herself upon a stony hovel  
and wept for Daneland and this wasted ground.

She clutched a dowry of crystal cups,  
beads of amber, bracelets of gold,  
a brilliant comb of jewelled bone,  
a warrior's belt with bronze-nosed clasp.
Gyfudan the Saxoner spread gilded comforts
before the empty places beneath her breast
watchfully swaying her with sweet, rounded words
that she should marry a scramarsax wielder
with whom to share such worthy wreckage
than grieve her betrothed in the belly of Spouts.

Too sad-drawn to court the Saxon’s needs,
Gerða reached down for my bag of signs:
‘Throw the cross of Bórr for roads to Daneland.’

I threw eight runes from Freyr’s set.
I saw a woman weeping for a child.
Between them stood a Vanir giant
with monstrous arms and metal bosom,
with bloody eyes and polished face.

I held the vision for my own, and said:
“You dream before dawn on Freyja’s Feast
of the gnarled trunk of a dying yew.

‘Behind it, a river rages in towers.
It swirls with spite and thrashes the soul.
Your mother falls maddened at its banks.

‘You stretch your arms to break her fall.
Her silence draws you to a bulbous shoot.
But you let her sink into the black-lipped surge.

‘Go out,’ I said. ‘Gather a stone
for each of your clan that fed the waves
and choose a place to make a circle.
From then we will say it is “Gerða’s Ring,”
our sinking place, our sumbl ground.’

The tall Saxoner picked up a rock
and took Gerða’s hand, but Olaf shouted:

‘The honour is mine. I have killed many;
buried even more. Ask the woman
whom she will now have when I still wear
a sax-scored back and Saxon-dipped blade.’
But sly Gýfúdan maintained his ground,
holding the woman between him and a fight:
'No man whose kind killed my brother's kin
should hold the hand of Christian women.'

Olaf saw the glint of the jewels' eyes
and Gerða pressed close to Gýfúdan's breast,
and declined to draw the crusader's blood
on the duelling square till the time was right.

The two men set out with the grief-bound Dane
calling weary slaves to field for stones.
Behind them rose
against the hammer of wedges to beams,
of timber cut to staves and sod packed for roofs.

Between Lýr's Fjørðr and The Dísír's Land

In Muspell's Land there are no seasons
but the Wet and Dry, hot days, frost nights
and no sign of men from the empty shell
from the dragon hold or of Útgardr-ðóki.

From east to west rise The Dread Black Hills
Njóðr's black-green peaks closing our garth
from foreign lands to Útgardr's mounts
in a pit-faced arc clothed by burnt-leaf woods.

Between Sinking Lakes and Lýr's Fjórdr
a road draws you to an empty path
that joins the hills to the Dísír's lands
on the southeast climb to the Moving Wood.

Here no one travels, for the open path
will take no man to the water sheets
called Forskarlarsland - Waterfall-men's pelt -
where chasing hail hides these giants' skins.

Where trees are shadows spreads the Moving Wood,
the deep-cave realm of dispossessed troll.
No runes yet made can bend this place
that keeps us still from the rising east.

Lyð - ON. for 'heat-holding.' In Norse myth, Lyð was Menglað's hall in Jotunheimr, home of the Jótnar or giants. Menglað - mythic female necklace sought and won by Svipdag; male offspring of Groa the seeress; is similar to Freyja in significance.

Forskarlarsland - territory of waterfall men belonging to the forest-dwelling Jótnar (giants and wood trolls). The Jótnar ruled as chieftains over the order of Nature spirits in Norse myth.

troll - foreigner; anyone not considered an ally, cairn-dweller or one who lived 'in the wild' or 'close to stones'; perhaps, 'cave-dweller'
Between Loki’s Home, the Disir’s Lands, the black-green gaze and Garmr’s Teeth, stands the Moving Wood — light-storms shifting — locks us to Garmr’s Head and lurching streams.

Deep in the Black Hills steep valleys plunge to cavernous beds with murmurs of alfs in the under grounds where it is said that Modsognir hides when Olaf hunts.

Time scales the seams of steaming hills, feeds hollow pools for the Sinking Lakes. Red shadows shackle the under ground while hollow-eyed birds sweep the shifting sky.

For ten hard years we have fought the hills, two hundred Northmen — slaves and women counted — hunting wayward cries on paths with no end, and all slaves roam without rendered bonds.

In the inky dust of the Dread Black Hills some have found crystals to mend our arms, rock-shelled beetles to make new clasps, gathered fruit and beasts to fill our bellies.

With me, clan-leaders — Gyfudan, Olaf Ragnarr, Gerda of the Danes — tooled shields and boots, set traps on trails for rodents and fowl gathered from the shores of the Disir’s Wood.

Our linen vests and hard-worn cloaks threaded with grasses that shaded the lakes, wear well in the heat, while husks of ships grow in the shadows of new longhouses.

The Wolffem named He’yeya The Golden sweeps the skies for signs that none but her clan knows to have meaning save tracking the rains, her silence heavy from each day-long watch.

When she roams for herbs, for the strange gold that dusts her mouth, she returns from the hills with bird-flesh, honey and fruit for mead, bringing forests home alive on her clothes.
And when we gather to eat and drink, she shares her meat-and-ale, whispering to me: 'When Wolffem ate fresh-bloodied elk we drew the taste of the hunter's dreams.'

Gyfudan gets his Revenge on The Bear Chest

The first sunbl brought feasts and quarrels and Olaf's news of muted trolls. Beyond the east hills and Sinking Lakes where water cloaks waned with the sun the Hunter of Hawks had seen Muspell's Eyes.

'Thick as cloth,' he said, 'Near the dusk-etched ridge, move muted trolls as moulting trees, with bodies of bark painted black as soot. They fly through the air as rainbow birds, their cloaks carved gold by the dying sun.'

But Gyfudan laughed: 'The Rus' needs mead to loosen his wit. All that sky-gazing has bound his brain like a shirt of rings.'

With eyes full of trolls the Rus' stood his ground: 'If you took up your cup to hallow Ullr, you would not mock with your head in horns. I saw the horde that the Modsog hides.'

'They used Garmr's ropes and Forskarlar's gleam to tie the Grove to their wooded skins. They mean to claim the Disir's favour over our flight-brights, finders and chains.'

Ragnarr stood up, spilling his horn: 'There is no man nor mountain elf from the Moving Wood to Garmr's Teeth who would dare brave my berskers' charge!'

The moon was near full, the mead mixed a year too strong with herbs that the Wolffem picked. The Bear Chest roared, emptied his horn, struck his breast and shield to challenge the Rus'.

shirt of rings - ringshirt, corselet of metal rings sewn together and worn over linen vests

the Rus' - Olaf One-eye

Modsog - Modsognir, Vanir's Commander of Dwarfs

the Grove - the Moving Wood

flight-brights - arrows

finders - bows

chains - ring shirts

Bear Chest, Wolf Skin - beserker, Ragnarr
The one-eyed Rus', no birds slung home
but the heavy gaze of the silent horde,
pulled his short blade against Ragnarr's vest
and drew bright blood from the Bearshirt's breast.

Ragnarr sank his axe into Olaf's leg.
The two rolled red on the bone-dry stones
till the earth soaked their pride and rage.
Then they stood again to hammer their shields.

Olaf plunged his sword through the Wolf Skin's arm
that Ragnarr's howl echoed to the Wood.
But it was the Saxon who brought them down
with a blade-edged stone aimed at the Bearskin's shield.

Olaf's skull caught between rock and shield,
struck the beserker a thunderous blow
and cracked his nose against the boxed ring
and flattened both men near the sumbl flames.

The women gathered with cloths and potions
to salve the beast in the red-cut men
under the shadows of Njörðr'smarr's stare,
while the clans met to break Utgardr's horde.

boxed ring – shield; ref. to the fact that Olaf carried a circular shield

4. Skáldic Love-Songs for The Silent One
&
Úllr's Words and The Dragonping Laws

He'yeya's Enchantments

e'yeya's lem-gold lips lures me to Bragi's bed.
With soft wolverine chants as warm as winter's mead,
she claims my fired halls with Grove-haunts dipped in dew.
Where tainted tastes once lay,
I tongue her honeyed skin.

lem – KER. found nowhere else in the Books; a heiti (poetic substitution word) perhaps referring to the plant called 'mogwa' (see Book II, Part 2) from which He'yeya extracted the dust (pollen) taken by Wolflem priestesses to induce visions
The Wolffem's magic meal
makes of Rogaland
gilded ash that frees
Ægir's host of maidens.
Now dreams that breathe new death
invite a steaming wind
mixed with vermilion —
blossoms of Wolffem gold.

Frigg's dís, not fearing death,
dances with Æsbrag,
clasping Wod's lost son,
to outshine Bórr's wife's crest.
Others fall easily
upon these fevered times
while He'yeya fills me
with love sprung from my lips.

Upon my breast is braced
He'yeya's haunting briar.
No reward lifts me
from loss that rifts my need.
It is necessity
needled by thorny beds
and none can bruise my heart
with the witch on my brow.

She whispers in my ear:
'You wither with the years.
In the dragon-rock swell
swims grey-fleshed manátí.
You beat this black death-beast
against a great boulder.
You rear against the stench
yet pat it with your gaze.

'A whirling wave of tides
waits for sons of Mani
while all-around-you lies
beneath the rising surge.
You recognise the beast.
It is the one bolted
to your wall of Tyr's shields
where the dragon still hides.
'Look beyond. Leap the sand for the Nunne-hi lights.
See the waves flapping white beneath the wyrning breeze.
The ocean barks on shores that you can surely leap
if you first wash your home before you feed the beast.'

He'yeya has strung me tantalised on charged heat.
On chains of Frigg's fire, on Muspell's blood-wands flamed,
powered on changeling tides
I dreamt a potent horn beneath her gilded sheets
her bed gold-sweet straddled.

Each time she strips my flesh
I fly to the fjöðr
that cradles the Hound,
to the wind which crispens He'yeya's golden kisses,
to the ghost-sharpened ship
lifting to Nunne-hi
lifting Hronn's matted hair.

When Kvasir's sea swarms warriors' silent dread,
when rodents are hunted to sit on roasting flames,
when my horn is empty and my halls fire-lit,
Vor's law will render right riotous witch-flamed nights.

Nunne-hi – SH. fairies or little people; recorded by explorers as beings said by the Sheraki to inhabit a ridge below Yellow Hill near the Oconaluftee River in Swain County.

Hronn – daughter of a magician from Hler, Ægir; married to Ran and regarded in Norse myth as a sea goddess; ON. for 'gentle waves.' Nunne-hi lifting Hronn's matted hair meaning 'calm seas covered with seaweed being untangled by the magic of the Nunne-hi.'

Vor – ON. vor meaning 'vow,' goddess of marriage contracts.
The Book of Broken Words (or The Archer's Prediction)

The Skjalding's saddle — the Sheraki's mount —
riding my tongue, I straddled storms
for Howling Garmr — the Hound of Cliffs,
the face of cloud-sea carving Rogaland.

From Wod's war cry, from the rasp of wind
climbing Lyr's Fjordr grew Úlfr's stride;
on his feathered helm, Hel's bloody gash;
on his coat of rings, Garmr's carve of stone.

In The Archer's grip, no finder's point
but a cloak of leaves, night-reared signs —
a book of steps pressed in storm-haste —
a hail of letters, light-strung sigils.

I asked The Bowman: 'What could bring you
to a place like this, where the ground breaks
champions of Tyr, mocks victory-oaths
and seals Hel's cave with Garmr's grip?'

Tight-lipped Úlfr slipped his fingers
across the book of broken words —
the double wave of the sign-cut page;
but Garmr's growl made more sense.

The weave of notes reared against the sky.
Letters stood missing — stalking night-silk stairs.
The sigils marched upon each other,
grafting in flight one arrow from two.

Then, with stone-fixed stare, The Archer said:
'From pools of night the Wolf will ride
and, born of fire, the Varg will breathe
where Loki hides in mist-rent caverns.'

Skjalding — KER. He'yeys, 'the skraeling who inspires poetry'
Úlfr — meaning 'glory' or 'brilliance'; the Norse god
associated with archery, invoked for protection in battle
helm — helmet
Hel — system of caves beneath the island
finder's point — line of sight used by archers to 'find' their target

The Necessity of Bondage

When the tide was high on Weighted Ship's hull
and the moon struck her with white hot blades
that every man dreamed she was set to sail
full-bellied and whole, her prow for Ærrshov,
I called the clan heads: Ragnarr, Olaf, Gerða, Gyfudan, to make Úllr's words quicken our fate to the folding arms of Black Hills-cloaked Modsognir's city:

'I have seen the strike of Úllr's raised shaft drawn from the Ship's bed with a book of laws, his vest of steel-night, his point steep-lettered with words to wear Útgardr-loki's steed.'

I said: 'Let the beast that lured us here be held up to itself to break its latch on men of storm-brew and women stone-mad with letters to bring a leader from bones.

'No warrior should walk the night as I have done, dead-eyed, set on dreams, searching sky-signs with my sword strapped, chasing old gains, to chain a prize.

'So we should meet our graves mid-chase with scattered digits, having left our fingers lonely for gate-flames, pressed to futile wins, our knuckles bare of bloody crests.

'From hallowed lights bearing Úllr's Rest that lifts the rim of the Ship of Ghosts, Úllr spoke of a prince to rise from our dust, born of fire and night to break the giants' plot.

'With my brother's voice I now call this place "Kerrigardr," a name to bear the sheath and thruster's bed — the cover and rest and the coffer's hold — the crowning spell.

All clashed sweat-coils — concord claimed: 'Let it be known too as Úllr's Quiver, garth of sheathed arrows that bars Heimdall's way, Loki's burnt garden, hollow-reeded bone.'

Olaf stood up, eyes stark with tales of hawks circling the northeast hills: 'Yes, I have heard them howl through caverns — the dragon-shield bearers, troll-mongers' slaves.'
To raise their spirits, to fix the new laws,
I made the visit of the Archer agree
with Olaf's signs and sounds from stone.
Lifting my horn I hailed his tales thus:

'It was that place to which Úllr pointed
showing the tracks of alfish guides
striding brittle beds - their stone-crushed steps.'
(All shook their heads to show this must be true.)

'There he showed me the way to the lair.
There Muspell strapped me to an armoured wall
with my hands set thus above my head;
across my breast was bolted Nauðr:

'Two shafts crossed, with one shortened leg,
the sign of bondage, bane and bitter night,
the rune of need that binds warriors
to the war-bent grind of Dórr's fired wheels.'

Ragnarr was first to pledge his clan's might:
'I shall bring out the cowardly alf
(without knowing how well his words rang true)
'Cross your crashers to crown this oath!'

And all men crossed dented dragon-tamers
with Gerða's gate-flame that was once her betrothed's.
Then, raising her hand to silence the men,
she looked to the house where the Skraelings slept:
'To whom will Screechers bind their pledges?

'Now they roam free. Our thralls still know
who makes the rules, who wields the blade,
while Wolfsen walk like queens on these shores.
Bind them to one clan and if they break
the chieftain's pledge his claim is ours.'

The Saxon, gold-eyed, would not cross Gerða.
The Rus' would not risk his pledge declared.
The Bearskin sat still (his mind on revenge)
between the two men with eyes for jewels.

To the silent three and the sulking bride
I said: 'This duty will fall to me,
for they rode my ship and the gold-lipped one
pointed the way to this net of hills.

Nauðr - runic sign [†] bound up with 'need' or 'necessity' and teaches the seeker the characteristic of the thin line between inner compulsion and outward greed, the place where freedom from self-imposed constraints of desire reside. (See Kerrigan's Wall of Shields, Shield No. 3, Book VII, Part 5, p. 198)
Do you want to join your would-be husband
or save your dowry for halls of fire
when you claim the mount of Loki’s outpost?
I asked the Woman Who Would-break-pledges.

To your laws and land, she embraced the men.
To the prince of lands that Óðinn missed.
And in one voice they emptied their horns
and dipped their blades in the blazing fire.

Now I will turn, I said to the Four,
to pressing matters of council and law.
Agreed on one aim — to break Jötunar-shields —
we will assemble as the Dragonfing.

We must follow ten rules, ten codes,
or harvest dust and hallow seed.
Each of us worships as he chooses —
each so fury-drawn, so storm-god carved.

Keep the circle’s edge — brace your steed-walls.
No man take to waves without a full boat.
No warrior hold arms from those of his blood
to break the circle or bend the steed-wall.
Fashion new weapons from the blackest rock
and drink blood feasts to draw Freyr’s wagon.

Let the warrior who lifts the horn
from Modsognir’s mouth wear the goði’s helm.
Each man’s claim his own until he marries,
then his claim doubles, his enemy’s, halved.

Every able limb will take up the task
according to need-gifts — time-keepers, map-makers,
scouts and hunters, yard-weavers, builders,
welders, farmers, bond-keepers, cooks,
potion-dises, skalds, rune-makers, forgers —
that no feller’s-break shake Modsognir’s hand.
5. **The Giant Commander of Dwarfs**

_The Svart of Útgardr_

In the tenth year of storm-racked Vidblain, when the poison rode Ymir's blood—

Garmr's skin red with the whetstone's grind—

I wed the Wolffem, Golden He'eya.

Fiery Eardan, first to be born,
walked with Wolffem sight in Northern eyes.
He loved the sound of his own feet
but had little sense of where to travel.

High Modsognirsborg kept him mesmerised
and though he hunted its foothills and caves
would come home once more with no new paths found
to take us clear of Útgardr's hold.

Clashing war-nets betrayed his weakness
with iron and stave— with metal and wood.
He took to hunting in his kinsmen's beds,
bringing children to double his land.

His brother, Mord, took to the sea,
dreaming his days from Vikingar tales.
Yearning for sights sunk in his blood,
he too carved circles on sand than on shirts.

Finar was bravest. He would marry
the giant's daughters: first Novaini
Reader of Sands, then Kettl and San.
(But I will soon come to tell you of how all this happened when the storm settled.)

Their sister brought joy, bright and brief—
Perpild The Weaver, maker of threads and nets.
She could string a bow as no man could
but hated the dive of screaming hawks.

She wed the Bear, forty years older,
his rage and madness turning with milk;
but berserker's blood still boiled in his veins
with feuds with the Rus' and the sax wielder.

Svart — giant or one seen as a Vanir ally
storm-racked Vidblain — storm-season; Vidblain — ON. meaning 'the night heavens'; literally 'wide-dark'
poison rode Ymir's blood — storms blew over the ocean
Garmr's skin — the surface of the earth
the whetstone's grind — lightning & thunder
carved circles on sand than on shirts — drew signs in the sand [in dreams] rather than on (ring)shirts [wound his opponents in duel]
the giant's daughters — Modsognir's daughters

the Bear — Ragnarr Bearchest
In the seething dusk of summer-dragged flames, the Vår and Rus’ clashed over old payments, for the Dragonbing had not yet laid laws to cover the price of their old wounds.

Ragnarr marked the square to face the Rus’— the enraged Hawkman biting his shield; the frothing Bear Sark butting rocky mounds— trading insults over balls and wives.

Gyfudan stepped in to divide and gain from any cause, to pitch the Rus’ out of the ring that he had wound for himself and sons to Gerða’s box.

But the Saxoner who was taught to fight could not match the Rus’ made for fights from birth. Obeying the mark of the duelling square he left the Rus’ to level his man.

In one clean sweep the Bear swung high, sharp-cleaved Olaf’s chin, shaved skin from his nose. The Rus’ would not yield, nor would be stand still. He hacked the sword from Ragnarr’s hold, brought his axe down across the Bear’s legs pinning the Vår to a rock of blood.

Ragnarr blood-dressed in his rival’s dues stood tall to cheers of his clan, cups raised, and they emptied horns on his blood-caked face. Then, a silence hung as stiff as death.

Ragnarr’s clan would stand to draw blood, one by one. But no sooner the slim quiet fell that Eardan pointed to Útgardr’s Peak: Hel’s winged trolls rising from Modsognir’s Borg.

At first it seemed that through the mist the sky brewed tricks between us and the Borg grafting thick veils from sea-swallowed dead on giant-troll wings from Modsognir’s hills.

Upon their breasts the dragon’s signs: fifteen men with spears spurred by liquid light circling the Svart armed with Óðinn’s blood from the black-green shades of the Dread Black Hills.
He’yeya whispered, ‘Petals for wolf-gods,’
to close the gap of black-shadowed alfs.
Only Modsognir moved in the mist
to take her offering in his open palms.

He looked skyward, lifting a shrill cry
that brought the clans to clasp their axes.
But he raised his hands, turned to He’yeya
and spoke at length in a trilling tongue.

When he finished, He’yeya said:
‘He says, “I am called Ceibano-casik.
I have watched you on this windy plain.
For twenty seasons I drank your fires.

“I will not fight men who would cut their throats
and not save their strength for the hawk hunts
or open their doors to the hura-can
or sling coney herds or trap the Woods.

“We write on our skins (he touched his breast)
signs of Iguayaca who gorges Xima-yaca
so that Sanquatec (he pointed skyward)
denies roasted eggs for hot milk springs.

“Below our feet lie thick-leaved trees.
They weave giant reeds stronger than webs
and run with colours that will mark the grain
of the blackest rock of Xima’s Ridge.

“Enormous gardens grow ten men tall,
with giant pods of fruit-warm gems –
some wither, night-cloaked; others peak with hope
in the same pod, on the same branch.”

He held a fist to Waterfall Hill
and curved his arm to carve the shape
of the black-rock ridge that none could say
where the man ended or the mountain began.

Then the Commander called ‘Ceibano-casik’
walked to Ragnarr, sighed at the sight
of his leg wounds, turned as if to go,
when he pulled a bag from his waist band.
He'eya said: 'He wants Ragnarr
to boil the closed bag with a fist of mud
and wrap his wound and when he is fit
to bring his enemies to Útgardr's Peak.'

Set on payment, Ragnarr challenged
the Hawk Hunter to brave the den
of Loki's outpost or fight to the death
(which neither preferred to bags of gems).

Before the Dry Season Ragnarr's wounds healed.
Then the Saxon, Var and bull-nosed Rus'
took Groa and Gram, Battle-boar and Dome
to meet the bowels of Modsognir's Borg.

Hægld The Young

In the years that followed, battles eased to feasts.
Trade with Ceibano grew from watchful stares
to bargaining goods for rendering dues --
our days now filled with fecund dreams.

While the dragon slept we traded skillfully
with the Modsog's signs and his medicines
which Einar so mastered that he would not risk
his secrets for ways to take us from the hills.

From Garmr's streams, from crystal waters
Úlír's bidding brought urgent calls.
I sought new beds, sworn to bridle
the ghostly claim clamped to my loins.

But I could not fill the thought with form.
So, fed by fate, I bedded Gerða
on her wedding night while her drunken groom,
Gyfudan the Saxoner, dreamed of more gold.

It was from that night that Hægld came
but taught that Gyfudan was his bedded father.
The fickle Saxon -- no father to sons --
set the boy a challenge to Forskarlar's Veil.

Groa and Gram -- ON. substitution words for sword, literally 'grower' and 'angry'
Battle-boar and Dome -- ON. substitution words for 'shield'

the dragon slept -- old disputes were left unchallenged by the sword
It was so, two moons of his fifteenth year, that Wolfdem found Hæglid with Lýr-bound glare, wrapped by twisted trees of the Sinking Lakes, alf-struck by ropes strung by Garmr’s Teeth.

For this, trade-laws, councils and maps – tasks that fix walls, that do not touch the heart. Now on sumbl nights I bait dragons with toasts to Dórr and to sons, dead.

NOTE: The last three pages of Dagazar’s ms. have defied restoration and have been accepted as permanently lost. There is no further record in the Books, in his hand or another’s, to indicate that Dagazar ever went to the hills of Modsognirsborg except to be buried there.
These tales are set during the reign of Hauskuld One Arm (r. 1180). The stories are told in King Hauskuld’s presence at a Disablóð or Blood Sacrifice Feast to the dises, female spirits of the woods on behalf of those loyal to Freyja and Vanir belief systems surrounding her. The Disablóð is a major post-harvest feast to celebrate the keeping away of bad luck and ghosts from the past.

At first, feigning reluctance to entertain with a story, Heyeoahkah uses the occasion to resurrect the history of her Sheraki heritage and to praise the heroic deeds of Dagazar’s successor, Viglid The Mad Poet Prince. She tells of two Viking raids in Sheraki country – the first led by Manir; the second, by Dagazar – and of attempts by overlords of the Áztlan Vanir (nomadic Mexico tribes) to make in-roads into Sherákí and Kerrigash lands. With rhetorical prowess seasoned with her culinary gifts, Heyeoahkah uses her wizardly story-telling skills at reviewing history to play games with belly-aching warriors not so much for their entertainment as for hers.

1. **THE DISABLÓÐ FEAST OR THE BANQUET FOR FREYJA’S MAIDENS**

Freyja’s nights gather Disablóð feasts.
Brides wear boar-charms.
Girls paint their eyes - cloak in skin-capes.
Weary warriors challenge shadows between Sanquatec and Maperolu.

Our circle closes the cold Black Hills - its forests of monstrous green,
claim Óðinn’s prize of black day light.
Late into night the Disir’s Feast will lead Freyr’s double - Bride of Screaming Chariots.

We eat the flesh of beast and bird.
When horns of mead - three full years set - brace appetites with Xima fruit,
the bitter-sweet springs quickly to our lips.

Sanquatec – AR. Ximacan sun god
Maperolu – AR. Ximacan elfen people who in myth rule the rotted undergrowth; similar to those referred to in Norse myth as alfar (‘dwarfs’ with powers to convert old or lost materials to alf-gifts of worth) and in Sheraki tales as Geow-lud-mo-sis-eg
Óðinn’s prize – blindness; referring to Óðinn’s loss of an eye in his bargain with one of the Vanir, Mimir, to gain the hidden wisdom of language; he received poetic insight in the exchange

Freyr’s double – Freyr’s twin sister (their father - Njóðr) and Óðinn’s Bride, Freyja. Freyja’s sacred animals are the cat and swallow. She was leader of the Valkyrie (Choosers of the Slain).
Our harvests spread no better feast,
none so ready to break with quarrels,
none filled with tastes to test our tongues
on nolli and ahuacatl
from the dream-lands of Nápros.

Olaf's clan lies from feeding well
on Njörðr's poisonous nectars.
What sweetens tongues of some with hope
digs holes for other appetites,'
says Lodgar eyeing his plate.

Winter buried the Saxon's kin.
Now, Haskal drinks too much mead.
Did they not share one steaming plate,
his guts burning, hers soothed?
'says another of the Var's clan.

Prickly-green sweet, purple-cloaked cream
is Saguahi Fleetfoot's favourite.
Our bellies sag with tomatl milk
- it is so I hope we die, together,'
mocks my brother, Thogran.

'Such a death, Love,' Saguahi says,
'should make of us a pretty, muddy pair.
A boiled-meat death, gnawed tasteless, bland,
would bury us with belly-aches
not worth the pain they brought.'

What is the prize of prickly death,
starving us of glory,
while Xima's House grows fat and strong,
while Kerrigardr's Houses hang lean?
argues Lodgar's brother.

Their berries snake sand-rock bed-hills
on vines as thick as guamo rope,
but hide with rain to spring like swords
when dry dust should fold them,'
says my husband, Ulgod.
‘My wife, Friya, loves guamo seeds
but the wisdom of her cousin Cazabi-san
trains her harvest to feed our bed.
So my wife keeps her feet dry,’
counters King Hauskuldu One Arm.

‘Does the fruit know its eater’s tongue
and chooses whom to fit with life?
A man who drinks and eats quickly
invites swords to his gut,’
says Mordlon (with a mouthful of mead).

‘Sleeping on swords – this will sink us,
suck our breath from us.
Hot rains drain us. Our byrnies weep
in this heavy-burdened alfish heat,’
moans Olgar Broadback clasping his hilt.

‘We need the tales of Eirikr’s sails
sipping Hronn’s lips.
He’yeya’s Child, tempt us with tales
to jog fresh juices to our tongues,’
Úlgod taunts Broadback and me.

I should warn you, my tongue is seasoned
as my spoons are spiced (I say) –
my pleasures bent to keep you pleased.
Three days cooking –
and still you are empty?

You know the edge of cliffs you climb,
as you know all too well
how stiff metres stick madding glue.
I might serve up a surprise
(I warn the restless ring).

Such lustful feasts should fill your hearts,
should cling to your tongues.
You know how well my tales wind dreams
with Dagr The Strung in my blood.
(I prime them for nightmares.)
Úlgod thrashed ghosts on Þórr’s Feast night, fought our bed like a bear, braced and threw me from battle sheets, yet I brought a new mouth to feed (to warn each man that I am fertile).

Xiima’s daughters sing better songs with shell-laced nets on their breasts, with aqua braids and amber rings for your ready eyes and loins. My only reward is hot stew.

Which edge of Gram will you now grip? My words are sharper than sea-blast. They will fix you like roasted fare, well-oiled and seared to the heart. (I want to have such fun with the men).

I shall weave you (to worry them) not from one tale but two (I say). And yet, be warned, they work as one – as the skald’s staves hold two lines with one sound.

I shall cook for you old storm-tale brews of gold-lipped Wolffem, of the last of the Mani-men, of a Poet Prince who went to meet Útgardr-lóki and his Underlord when thurs traded with warring troll.

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2. OF WOLFFEM BORN

Novaini and The Wind-wolf

When wood-trolls stoked Hel’s frost and ash, pyres blown on Wolffem tones howled to make right harried deeds of night. Then, The Great Wind’s magic reigned.
For this was a time when gales dressed beasts
to brave flames of fear.
Women ruled the day and at night won hearts
of wind-gods, storm-bred, bold.

It was like this. With her heart fixed,
The Wind reared wolves upon Novaini,
a mourning priestess, pried from deepest sleep
to place amulets on her husband’s grave.

She stumbled blindly, searching for a path
to take her from her tent.
Tär, meddlesome guide, gave her lost routes;
took her instead to a room of gilded wood.

Tär tricked the priestess on a twisting trail
to another grave that she guarded,
then set her down to sing burial rhymes
until red skin-doors sank the grey horizon.

There a gale rose in a thunderous voice:
‘I am The Hallowing Wind.
You have not grieved with grace nor fear.
You did not truly love your dead while he lived.’

Then The Wind swept her down a second path
where She kept many guises.
The Goddess of Gales with gall in her stride
sped Novaini into secret valleys.

There rose a white stone, a strange wyrding hoop
floating from a fearsome height.
Soon, a longhouse sailed from breaks in the sky,
from clouds that caught the rains.

When the house was close, the priestess entered.
It had high, wholesome beams;
its hearth, bare and damp, austere and dank,
set deep within its wooden floors.

There a fetid pond lapped its faded boards
with fungus, floating, thick.
It was then she heard the shrillest cry of death:
a wolf fiend struck the hooded night.
Upon its heels, beasts, roaring, beating shields, 
ploughed through the night, razing trees 
in their hellish path with howls and screams of 
'Mani, Mani, Ma-an-ir!'

She turned to run, but heavy with sleep, 
her eyes would not tell what was true. 
The wolfskins stalked her as she staggered home 
praying to The Riotous Wind as she ran.

The hungry beasts broke the camp's walls, 
razed every sleeping tent, 
ate every Skraeling son, struck the very moon 
from the silent skies.

For many long nights the village mourned, 
wailing at deaths and weeping at births; 
for the Manir beasts attacked each woman 
and the women bore and birthed their children.

Only females came, called themselves 'Wolffem' 
(for The Hallowing Wind had a hand in this). Wolffem did not leave their mothers or nurses except to look for the moon.

Their land grew bleak. Streams dried to trickles. 
The wetlands could fill no fruit sweet. Fevered drizzles came drinking the trees' sap. 
Good game took to the hills.

The Last of The Mani-men (or Dagazar's Fate in the Wolffem's Land)

One night, two Wolffem, woken by a dream, readied for the rise of the moon. They knew by crescents — by the new moon's climb on that calm winter's night.

When the moon-sign came they knew its meaning. 
The Wolffem called The Hallowing Wind to open their hearts and close their eyes, so that they could hear fear.
That ominous night no owl left its branch.
Tár’s Staff came as called.
She cast a silence across the east bank
from which the first Mani came.

Quickly, The Wind conjured a trick
to mar the plans of the Mani-men.
She lifted an owl from its sturdy perch
in the blinding centre of a blue flame.

She set the bird so on one Wolffem’s breast
entreat her to stay very still.
Two Mani, nearby — Údor and Halfdane —
had followed the women into the forest.

They saw the bird on the woman’s breast.
Údor said to Halfdane:
‘Spear her in the heart.’ But Halfdane paused,
the mist too fast and thick.

Halfdane was afraid: bit his lip and said:
‘The feathered one suckles the female.’
Both Mani trembled — their eyes telling true
what could not be so.

Údor, baffled, said: ‘The bird? The Skrjeling?
Which is alive and which is dead?’
Soon neither Údor nor Halfdane could say
if the bird or the Wolffem breathed.

They could not aim their witch-tailed spears —
not knowing which creature would take flight.
Treading too tightly on the tricky task,
they began to wonder which they preferred dead.

Because Halfdane’s spear quivered the most,
he pretended to consider the deed:
‘Does the Screecher’s chest beat the owl’s alive?
Does the bird open the air to her breast?’

And while he wavered weighing this, then that,
The Gale flew down upon them —
sword and spear wrenched from each man’s grasp —
striking the Mani dead as stones.
The Wind took all night to waft calm again
(for it takes much rage to wreak havoc).
Then she told the Wolffem to bury the owl
next to the grave of Novaini’s husband.

She said: ‘Keep to your lodge for seven nights,
say “Lupigash” seven times and no more.’
On the eighth night they stepped from the lodge
with the seal of ‘Lupigash’ on their lips.

The Great Gale rose, shook the tallest oaks,
greeting Wolffem with gifts of knowledge –
bags of golden dust folded in mogwa-seeds –
and ways to track the huracan.

But still no men then lived in the land
struck by The Wind’s wrath.
Soon Wolffem grew weary of their sisters
and became lax in collecting the seeds.

One gathering-night, a Wolffem priestess –
He’yeya The Silent –
went out to search for the gilded seeds,
her pouch, ten days empty.

The fate-walk hidden, she filled her pouch
while new Mani rode the waves:
their ships borne on seas from yawning skies
with which The Wind had dressed herself.

The Silent One gathered the first grain of gold
when The Wind-wolf struck.
The Gale snarled men into knotted woods,
cut others from their ships.

And with her finger, The Wind stirred the seas
driving sea-caught Mani south.
All but one she saved to sow Wolffem seed,
to breed new tales and give them bellyaches.

Lupigash – name later taken by all Wolffem high priestesses

He’yeya The Silent – high priestess taken captive by Dagazar and whom he later married (See Book I, Part 1)

saved – meaning ‘selected’; the ‘selected’ one being Dagazar
The Deal with Náðros

Asterful Viglid, The Mad Poet Prince first came to rule over Kerrigarðr, when Náðros The Bear had made a deal with Sweet-tongued Giants, their oaths tied with jocuma-tree ropes.

These Sweet-tongued thurses led by Útgarðr-loki embarked to expand their hold of lands beyond Blackboot Land, stretching from Nagu’tsi Land across the sea to Kerrigarðr.

Náðros was pleased to rid himself of giants and of troll-beast etins – the troll-and-thurs born – who rivalled his rule. The giants promised to break the trolls with Viglid’s armies from the east.

But Viglid’s rule grew cramped with knots – with giving giants arms and land to roam.

It kept Útgarðr-loki out of Náðros’ hair but heaped trouble on Viglid’s Council – bare coffers and noisy meetings.

So, as no warrior nor poet can rest while the lash is held above his head, Viglid went out on the feast of Wod to oppose Útgarðr-loki in open battle and take on the trolls alone.
The Mysterious Slaying of an Etin-beast

With sword and shield, with sax and spear, Viglid set out alone at dusk for the thurs-lord's caves — Útgardr's dens. It took him several days and nights to find their hiding place.

But in that gloom that shapes dark-and-light, weary Viglid fell asleep. When he jumped awake, the head of a beast carved deftly from its hideous hide sat before him with open eyes.

When the sun rose over the bare hills, Lila Wolffem, trailing the Prince, found him gaze-fixed to the red-stained skull and the cooled bloody pool spreading the cave's floor.

The head stood, awake, on its trunk-shaped neck, staring across the cave, abruptly stopped near a rough wall between two posts that held the moving floor of worms.

Lila gripped her sword, breathed in dank air. Cool icicles crowned her helmet; her firm, strong arms, formidably posed upon mail guarded hips.

It was Lila Wolffem, wielding fire, who had made Viglid victorious. It was Lila's blood-wands that brought Viglid's slash, that bent trolls, that bowed heads to the Poet's boot.

Lila's brows furrowed: another beast felled and not by her master's wand. When they returned to a restless Garth, Viglid strode straight to his Gathering Hall:
Lila, quickly, bring my finest pieces.
No slayer of beasts will steal my glory!
I will have no talk of monsters here.
My mighty crown will not be stained.
It must be made again!

And the Prince stepped from his splendid hall
as masters do.
He was deemed to wear a sword of heat
blazoned with the seal
‘Viglið Victorious.’

Hogrüm The Hunter (or The Sweet-tongued Giant)

Prince Viglid fought all summer long
to win and hold Underlord Hogrum,
a sweet-tongued liar with jagua-stem arms,
while in his heart
he yearned the Loki’s blood.

Lila kept faithfully to her Prince of Skalds.
They shared the same shrewd eye.
But Lila knew that his noble thoughts
belonged not to her
but to his books.

Each night the Prince wrote poems pulled from dreams,
while Lila stoked fires
to make mighty weapons, steel-waved and grand,
to sit in Viglid’s grip
for which she sighed.

As the legend goes, the lonely Prince
fought giants in fearsome dreams,
for he was the son of ill-fated Dagr.
At season’s end, he rose early,
his temper different.

He summoned Lila, Most Trusted Forger:
‘Hogrüm is thorough.
We must find his tracks. He too carves blades,
boastful of points made in-council
for coins from our coffers.

pieces [from the armoury] — weapons
made again — referring to the imminent ceremony of re-crowning the ruler of Kerrigardr after a period of 7 years
The Water Giant wilfully taunts me  
with his knowledge of these lands,  
keeps me his slave. If I serve him  
I am nothing that I am —  
a thurs-bound bondsman.

He keeps secret ways — the tracks to the Veil,  
hidden paths to Forskarlarsland —  
that no Kerrigash has dared to cross  
or they hold their knowledge to hinder me,  
to strike giants from my grasp.'

The following day Dagr's Son sent Lila  
to the northern plains.  
The two would meet on the far side  
of Útgardr's Mount, near the cave  
where he woke to the head-bare beast.

He first broke the ridge of the jagged mount  
that crowned the way to the caves —  
the princely master cornering the hills  
with greater skill and strength  
to arrive before his Swords-mistress.

The blight of fresh blood broke the wet air.  
Its stench climbed the skies.  
One more had escaped Viglid's jade-hilt blade.  
Now another odour filled the hills — Hogrum.  
The Sweet-tongued Giant was already there.

The Water Giant's breath and wide-set body  
stank of rotting river-weeds  
from which he hung fish trinkets, coney-skin  
or woolly elk and ripened fruit  
for bending the wind to hide him.

So Hogrum sought out and saved Kerrigardr  
from trolls and rival thurses  
who had won from him half his land and goods  
until Viglid unhinged  
beast-troll battle plans.
The weight of a Wod-struck moon
the Prince had spilt their blood
and earned the honour — dubious as that was —
from Loki's Underlord,
Hogrum the Hunter.

Now Hogrum was stooped over the torn skull
of a traitor from Loki's House;
his finely-made nose close to the felling place,
his red matted hair
hiding his strangely beautiful face.

He said: 'The skilled slayer has left us no sign
to make law here.
Your noble Council — the DragonFang Four —
will not be very pleased
if they cannot fix the slayer's strike.'

'How this etin-beast was so well carved
is an ugly puzzle.
I can find nothing to say how it came
under the warrior's stroke.'
Viglid stared with eyes of stone.
So the giant said:

'The smell of blood still boldly rides
upon a blade of stealth and speed.
But not on yours, Mighty Viglid'
(forgetting he had seen Viglid's forward thrust
on a line of archers with ready bows.)

Hogrum knew too well that one of his kind
was safer with sweet face
as well as sweet tongue if he stood alone
before the victory-starved Prince
or without answers to appease him.

This poor diplomacy increased the curves
on the Poet's brow:
'No. It was not I who worried my sword
with this stench-ridden troll
come to haunt hard-won triumphs.'
The ruler known as 'Dagr's Mad Skald'
hung his weary head
but did not hold his eye from Hogrum's gaze
and vowed in silence for victory
over the one who pierced his pride.

The sweet-tongued thurs said: 'I will search and watch
with a willing servant, a wily dwarf.
I will comb the caves and lay careful plans.
I shall study the stains
and bones of the beast as I go.'

The beast's remains bundled easily
into a large netted bag,
Hogrum sniffed heavily and waved his hand.
Viglid took the eastern path
shouting back as he went:
'This will not break my Banquet of Swords!'

As Hogrum walked away he had sensed Lila—
smelt her on the air,
knew her scent was close for all his trinkets.
He thought of her shivering shields.
His thick-red lips spread upwards.

He knew that Lila loved blood and battle
only second to swords raised to strike.
But she had withered his prideful need
to impress her with gory tales
at the last Banquet of Swords.

So, when her shadow stretched across the Mount,
he wove quick paths through the mist,
with the beast's torso tied across his back—
the blood-dried head buried under his arm
and heavy with his haste.

Lila sharp-eyed the cave's markings,
her mind busy with ways
to a worthy kill and to better ores
to fire her Prince's strike,
to bring his bed closer.
When she came again to Viglid's Halls,
the Sword-mistress' entry was welcomed
by the Prince’s roar and pounding boots:
‘Where is that giant-lover,
that Wyrding Lupigash!’

His madness mounted when no reply came:
‘Where is the jotunn-eater, the Bride of Steel
who breaks my law that “none shall cut down
another of Loki’s foes
before my blood-wand weeps!”’

In Viglid’s mind the beast’s head twisted
upon the Wyrd One’s iron.
First fixed by his rage, then moved by his will,
his Eyra-rúna — his would-be lover — stepped forward and said:

The Wyrd One works to brave The Rites.
She wishes to honour you, my Prince.
Comfort and peace shield themselves from her.
She has fought her share of beasts
and faced them most honourably.

If you hold her from rightful claim
to bow before your boots,
it is bound to dull her breaker’s rasp
and you will send her to the hills —
drive her to hamrammr.

A monster slain does every man good.’
(Viglid wanted to be convinced.)
‘Have they not brought pain while they live?
What harm could one cause
with his head lopped off?’
Hogrum’s Plan to Unseat Útgardr-loki and Náðros

Two days later Hogrum laid plans, though he had found nothing new, promising the help of his clan and dwarfs and that he had a scheme ‘even Útgardr-loki unwittingly applauded’ –

‘It is a plan to bring Náðros’ guard to an ambush after feasts,’ Sweet-tongue said, ‘to draw the horde by lure of payments. When they empty Náðros’ barrels, Loki’s guard will be without helms.

‘The bad-tempered alf who brings me secrets spoke of agreements made between the Lupigash and rogue giants.’ Hogrum spoke feverishly so that the Prince would not ask questions.

Viglid knew at once of whom he spoke – the Wyrd One, the Lupigash. It had to be she, weaving her way to his crown and Rite of Swords, being a foreigner – without fealty.

The Sweet-tongued Thurs’ bribe

Loki, seeing his gain, launched a mighty charge against the waiting Kerrigash, to cross the doubled Underlord. Their war-nets blazed across flamed watch-posts. Viglid’s warriors laid them waste. Yet the Prince was not satisfied: the Wyrd One cleaved more heads than he.

While he nursed his pride, a wounded guard, axe raised, cornered Lila, the light from a torch leaving a gap for her to break him or be bound to Sessyrmir.
Hogrum, too, saw this — the space of death’s stare — and took his chance to overturn Lila’s mastery over Water Giants, the Mad Poet Prince and the Northern-plains Lupigash.

Just as the giant was set to cleave the guard from his feet, he said to Lila — pinned against a wall, not aware that Viglid, nearby, could have saved her too:

‘Bring the Lupigash, as your life’s payment, to share my bed again for saving her skin one summer’s night from Utgardr-loki’s wine-breath and his pack of guards.’

‘I should brave Hel and hordes of beasts, lift my back for etin-trolls than pledge forfeiture for your pleasure I should first sleep with death! I know who you are.

‘It is you who bribed those bred of trolls to break the back of Kerrigardr, sweetening our Garth with slithering lies, swinging us upon your back like rotting elk.’

But Hogrum replied, his sword held ready, Loki’s guard watching his grip: ‘It was the dwarf who played the two — the troll-beasts’ trade routes against Naðfos’ land deals.

‘Look at the seal on my belt pouch, a gift of the Wyrd One, as thanks for the night when I got Loki’s due. It bears the marks of none but a troll’s.’

(The Loki-guard missed his chance to level the dis and giant, standing his ground to able return-blows.) But Lila thought of Viglid (not death) battling without her flames, and said:
Fell the Poet Prince without shedding blood
and spill the guard’s.
Then set a war-piece in Viglid’s limp hand
that he thinks Loki’s Chosen
was felled by his stroke.’

Then I have my wish – the Lupigash lips
and you live another day,’ Hogrum said.

Viglid only saw Lila’s eye on the pouch
and took her frown
to mean a giant’s bribe refused.

Viglid swung his sword and skilfully struck
through the rear-plates of the giant’s vest.
The Loki-guard fled. Hogrum fell as stone –
the Prince’s thruster
bedded in his back.

The Overlord’s Claw

When Útgardr-loki was brought the news
that his prosperous Underlord
was killed by Viglid, he called his men
to arm him with irons
and he set out to stalk the Kerrigash.

No child could play in Skáði’s light.
Marching in metal cloaks,
Loki’s feet were heard hammering clouds.
You could not fail to see his flaming hair
from the tops of trees and staring from streams.

Adults had to walk with wary steps.
Loki could hear any sound
save your breathing or your pounding hearts.
If he found your hiding place,
you could not run to spare your life.

Yet threat was more real than true danger
if you came across the Overlord.
His vision was poor and, heavily armed,
he moved slowly and noisily.
But the terror tore at Kerrigash hearts.

Loki’s Chosen – Útgardr-loki’s
(personal) guard

Skáði’s light – KER. meaning ‘the
light [i.e. the protection of lights,
meaning ‘arrows’] of mountain
giants who had agreed to live
peacefully with Kerrigash’
The Mad Poet Prince had to face the worst.
He had one more chance

to wrench the giant from the rasping hills.
With piercer, cleaver and protector
he went again to face the Overlord.

Blades plundered the air, blazed as fire-spears.
The clashing brought down cavern-walls.
Crystal zemir watched with woeful eyes,
for, mid-battle (the duel long and wearisome)
Viglid drew his sword, unsteady.

Now, the Wyrd One had watched Viglid
as he had dressed for battle.
In full armour she had followed him
along the slippery hills
between Garmr’s Teeth and Útgardr.

When she caught up with Dagr’s Prince
he was already in grave danger.
Loki had tricked him in a steep trepan
by creeping as night-mist
into every corner of the hill.

Viglid was trapped in a narrow gap
by Loki’s guile.
His fright-flung axe fallen down a gap,
the weary Prince knew
that the giant was all around him.

Then Loki figured one enormous claw
a hook-nail barbed finger.
It snared Viglid’s mail-coat in its sharp claw-tip.
Dagr’s son was forced to flee
his ring-vest or lose his ribs.

As he freed himself from the giant’s grasp,
the Lupigash appeared in a lick of light—
his mail-skin oiled, her sword beast-stained.
With a single swoop she fell on Loki
burying a fatal blow in his breast.
Viglid did not look at the Wyrd One’s eyes
but grasped the piece
that lugged his defeat, picked up his torn coat
with cold and burdened mind,
with empty stare at his stalking fate.

The Victor’s Burden

Again at the Garth Viglid wore a face
to part with his crown.
Grand festivities greeted the bowed Prince.
All took his sighs for the victor’s weight –
the burden of braving death:

‘Live long stout Seiðskratti
steel-wielder of the gorge;
long live giant slinger
who saved us from the borg.
Live long supple Hero.
Now we sip gilded mead.
Sing Viglid’s victory –
his Skrymir-clenched deed.’

Great bands of skalds and skilled musicians
wrote clever songs
to praise the One Who Fought and Won
and they begged the Poet
to hallow their meagre efforts:

‘Live long stout Seiðskratti
steel-wielder of the gorge;
long live giant slinger
who saved us from the borg.
Live long supple Hero.
Now we sip gilded mead.
Sing Viglid’s victory –
his Skrymir-clenched deed.’

Seið[r]skratti — Sword Wizard;
gifted swordsman attended by favourable magic spells
Dagr's Wyrd-struck son could not be moved.
He nodded as a doll—
kept his true face—while they praised
the 'Prince of the Mount of Giants,'
'Great Seiðskratti — Sword Wizard':

'Live long stout Seiðskratti
steel-wielder of the gorge;
long live giant slinger
who saved us from the borg.
Live long supple Hero.
Now we sip gilded mead.
Sing Viglid's victory—
his Skrymir-clenched deed.'

The tastes of feasting could not rouse him
from the sight of Lupigash-blades.
He could meet no eye nor share a greeting.
He wrote with fevers
into sleepless nights.

He had to be carried on a gilded chair
to his Banquet of Swords.
Only the Wyrd One knew what ailed the Prince.
For the cheering crowds,
it was the Rite for the Loki-slayer's Night:

'Live long stout Seiðskratti
steel-wielder of the gorge;
long live giant slinger
who saved us from the borg.
Live long supple Hero.
Now we sip gilded mead.
Sing Viglid's victory—
his Skrymir-clenched deed.'

Lila's Jewelled Hilt's

As the years went by, the re-crowned Prince,
armed with Lila's newest weave,
would take to cliffs to greet wind-giants
like his jarlskald father,
Dagazar The Strung.
At other times, he would lock his doors
to write lays to Ægir.
This was how he lived for a long time
until the Wyrd One
lost her patience.

She challenged him to duel or die –
to a fight to the death.
Lila wove new swords – for each, a weapon
with jewelled hilts,
with blades blunt as wet jocuma-ropes.

On the west fringes of Forskarlars Veil
the sparks from their armour
shot flames in the sky as the duel raged.
Their weapons rode each other
till the sun rusted and fired again.

If you cast your eyes during Wet or Dry
towards the sun-set Ridge
I can show you the blazing shadows
of Kerrigardr's Poet Prince
and the leathered Lupigash
to prove that this is true.

Ridge – Xima's Ridge
leathered – dressed in leather-covered armour
Aspiring swordsmith Óðýla Anzusdóttir is sent by King Logram The Red (r.1405-1420) on a mission to rescue her cousin Frieda from hills ruled by rebel Kerrigash led by Radnir The Black. Her undertaking has far-reaching effects for the ruling Houses of Kerrigardr and Ximaca and, in particular, for Logram’s successor, his son Kerrigan. Ancient rivals from the days of Nápros intercept her journey and try to make her their go-between with a gift for her and a message for Kerrigardr. While Logram prepares for intrigues to allow him quick battles and a long peaceful reign, Óðýla’s encounter with Nápros’ notorious, aging Underlord, Hræsvelg, and her mentorship by Ximacan Chief Cebanex serve to fire her ambitions and rapidly lever Logram’s son to power.

1. HRÆSVELG AND HRÖGRMÓAT
OR THE CORPSE-EATER AND DAGAZAR’S SWORD

The Legacy of The Disablóð

Logram the Red, Son of the Rock, reigned for many years, hunting glory and his father’s fame. But Logram had few enemies on whom to field his falcon-perches.

His rule was dull. Deals was his trade with Grand Chief Cebanex; his boredom eased by forging blades for mock-duels to prove his mettle – for copies of fire to fashion his spirit.

Logram Red-beard risked little to win the return of Radnir’s outliers. He spurned blood-oaths for the test of steel upon men he could have moved with his gift for words.

Caught between oaths and need for fire Red-beard hoped to best outlaws and draw reward to his name, ‘The Red’ – from the spell of Loki’s howe carve his name above ‘The Rock.’

Radnir’s outliers – warriors banded in an outcast clan led by Radnir The Black, a descendant of Olaf the Rus’ (see Book I) Loki’s howe – KER. the caves of Útgarðsborg; a kenning for the hills where Radnir’s warriors stayed in hiding carve his name above ‘The Rock’ – add his name above that of his father Kerrigan the Rock, i.e. be placed in higher standing than his father
Quarrels grew thick between Red and Black over slow ship-building and mannþetr-laws.

Radnir swore with blood on Úllr's destroyers to join the ranks of rivals — the Ciguayo Clan.

For two long years Logram's ships had failed to cleave the waves of Manati Bay.
None could set a boat to navigate the crests where only turtles broke the spells of Ran's wretched skirts.

All that figured from the fretful swell were Karibs on the forest's edge, riding the wings of wind-drawn Hraesvelg, set on a course for Kerrigarðr, talons shadowing Logram's rule.

Defying The Thing and the mighty dread of laws in stone,
The Black and Axe Arm and Þórr Wolfen Hair took to Útgardr on stories that north-east islands led to open seas.

Þórrsson could not break Radnir's mail-ring. This brought a heavier burden still:
Axe Arm seduced Cazabi The Weak, eldest daughter of Cebanex — split the Red's agreements with the Grand Casik.

With a devious plan to wield new treachery,
Axe Arm had abandoned his wife and taken to bed Ciguayo's bride in order to climb higher than the one who would stand above Cebanex.

Black and Axe swore on knots to cast their steel for the Dwarf Commander's attack, for it was said in Dagazar's books that Loki's sons would aid Skraelings to topple those of Northmen.
They readied themselves for red-plained battles
between Útgardr’s cloaked hills
and Logram’s Garth. Red-beard’s fever
worked smiths, cutters and weavers
to lift his name to Þórr.

But Logram’s longing for Radnir’s launch
of warriors in open southern fields
was a hope in vain — his blood-fires chilled.
Meantime, skirmishes with western trolls
kept Cebanex’s warriors supple.

When the time came for Logram to forge
his aims with that of the Wyrd,
he found the means, or the means found him,
to bolster alliances with Skraelings
and deepen rifts with outlawed men.

On the Wet Moons Eve Red-beard travelled west
to launch new plans against The Black
secured by the mantle called Útgardr’s Mount,
on a wind of claims upon Cebanex
for bargains of blood.

Cebanex

Cebanex ailed under time’s weight,
too many wives and foes of his own.
Xima’s men suffered from Karib trolls —
black Screechers in skin-boats,
strapped with steel-braced hearts.

As well, there were signs that rivals had plans
which favoured Ciguayo.
The two chiefs had clashed at the Wet Moons Feast
on what to do with trolls
and Bay-men plotting in the woods.

Cebanex marvelled at Logram’s strength —
his mighty shields and fine speeches.
To draw such a man would rid him of trolls
in exchange for luring Radnir
from the north-western hills.
The Red King's spirit, spurred on by the Chief
who had mastered the art
of bold rulership with two-sided wars,
rejoiced in alliances
that gave him firm ground to fight.

The Red King - Logram
two-sided wars - battles on two fronts

The King and the Chief drank cassava wine
and agreed to besiege Utgardr's hills.

Death-dressed warriors under night-cloaked skies
stormed the peak of the Giants' Mount
with beserkers promised booty and land.

Not open north-charge nor cloaked south-assault
brought Radnir breasted with a pike.

For twenty days they tested The Black
driving him deeper
into Nafros' barren hills.

The Black's men clung to their craggy hold,
leaving Logram's plan
faltered on the edge of banners flown
to celebrate the enemy's fall,
left the King waiting, as before.

Vagrant Verdanði, spinning many threads,
spread nets about us,
watched us fed well on bitter wine.
She set us dancing to areitos
and kept Logram hidden from mighty deeds.

Verdanði - The Present; Norn or Fate representing present time
arietos - a circular dance practised by the Ximacans after a harvest

The Ring-maker's Task

The Red could not rest on battles not fought
while The Black was kept safe
by mountain forts, and he summoned me
on the coldest night in Kerrigarð
when Hel howled loudest for Loki's wounds:

You are my finest with pike and skeggox.
No one knows these hills
better than you, Ófyla Ring-maker.
Your name circles weddings feasts,
but you will neither marry, mend nor sew.

Ring-maker - jeweller and smith
I call you now to use your gift
with metal and fire
to bind our futures to the Giants' Hills.
You must make a mountain journey
west of Naastrand and Weighted Rock.

Your kinswoman, Frieda the Bold,
wed Ciguayo with a child's eye.
Before the next moon she will give birth
while Ciguayo takes other brides
to counter Axe Arm's exploits.

You can go safely to Ciguayo's camp
without fear of quarrels,
the outliers' code not finding in you
the threat of duels marked —
their kind honoured by men's blood.

You are the best at braving those hills.
Should you come upon outsiders,
Axe Arm's loyalty to your brother's death
will spare your breast
of marks made for men.

Besides, I shall see that you fold your grip
to duty if not worthy fighters.
You grow weary of warriors here.
Duels no longer test your spirit
and no one wants to fight you.

Kingdoms poised on battle need children for Skuld,
need tempers that race before us.
Bring Frieda home. You share with her
the blood of He'yeya and Dagazar.
Map your journey well.'

Logram's challenge charted Hel's mask -
the plains of old Modsognirsborg.
But those who say 'men's brazen words
break women's spirit,' do not know
our twin-faced ally, Silence.

duels marked — square of ground
(the area roughly covered by a
spread cloak) marking the area on
which a duel is to be fought.

Skuld - The Future; debts to be paid for reconciliation with the Past

Hel's mask - two-faced; in Norse myth one half of Hel's face was decayed and grotesque, the other half robust and beautiful

my weave - my sword (referring to the twisting patterns used in sword-smithing)
I yearned for tasks that would take me where tales were born, as those of Kerrigan, heir and son of Logram. Here, sewing would mend itself. Afar, duels waited to taste my weave.

Beyond the Garth, Heimdall still challenged the prince – the Great Bridge to Forskarlar’s Veil. There the giant, Þjazi, was said to throw from to The Edge of The World tired scouts who questioned his bulk.

I would have such wonders to win as my own – Þjazi sweeping men skyward, their blood sent flying, their spirits set free – but not this service set me to fiddle with fragile deeds.

The Corpse-eater’s Challenge

I journey took me five mornings north of King Logram’s longhouses when a strange beacon brighter than the sun beyond the break of my path pulled men from ghost-shifted seas.

The odd light rested near level ground a few paces from Dagazar’s grave, for Dagazar swore with his sating breath to rest where his fears rose: beneath Útgarðr’s belly.

The heat of the sun sat hard on my face, sent me into a wyrding sleep that drew Náþros raised on a great wing-shadow that gripped the hill, the earth turned black.

Heimdall – in Norse myth the son of nine mothers, watchman of the Æsir who would sound his horn Gjall if the giants advanced on Asgard.
The Great Bridge – Three Staves Path
The Edge of The World – A band of uncharted territory stretching along the southern borders of Muspell’s island (Ximayaca) and spreading southward
Þjazi – Öbyla refers to the shadow or apparition of the giant, Þjazi, throwing death-walkers or the walking dead from The Moving Wood, indicating that no Kerrigash has yet survived a return journey from the Moving Wood; in Norse myth Þjazi is the giant who stole Idunn and the golden apples that gave the Æsir deities immortality.

Dagazar’s grave – the burial place of Dagazar Kerrigansson, Earl of Rogaland, buried in the foothills of Útgarðr, Home of Giants (Áztlán Vanir)
Náþros – it is unlikely that this is Náþros The Bear mentioned in Heyeoahkah’s Tales (Book II, p. 46) which place Náþros’ during Prince Viglid’s reign. The ref. here may indicate, rather, that Náþros’ clans still held outposts on the island.
It formed a huge bird of monstrous flight,
eagle-made, talons set to strike:
Hraesvelg, Corpse-eater, Hel-freed to the skies,
shape-shifting giant
drawn from the dragon mists.

‘This is your desire!’ he declared, forthright,
alighting on Dagazar’s grave.
‘But if I give you this gilt-worn gift,
how will you use it?
How will it shift your journey?
(Will you cover it with wishful claims,
decorate it with dis-ease
that rises with storms on a journey’s tail
to paint pleasure with regret?)

‘Perhaps your heart seeks the sinewed horses
of your ancient brothers
or a laden knörr or wind-blessed sails,
or suns that never set
over Garmr’s bowl?

‘I have taken pride in testing the ground,
to make each bone brilliant-white.
Each burial gift is well preserved.
Look closely. See how they lift
with shade and shallow light?’

My hand, stone-heavy, froze to my shield,
my blade-and-tongue silenced by grave-rings.
Hraesvelg’s voice rose again, rasping through the void
of The Dread Black Hills –
of night-caved ground:

‘You leave me no choice. You must meet the charge
of four forged for challenge.
Choose your weapon well as you may not choose
how to fight or to die –
how to chart the woodland’s edge.

‘Now I will take you to what lies in wait
beneath the burning earth.
You shall see what lives, warms and feeds the bones
of Dagazar’s dreadful dreams –
of adventure’s fare.’

Hraesvelg – ON, meaning ‘eater of corpses’, regarded as a giant shape-shifter taking the form of an eagle (associated with wind storms) that travels to and from the Hel caves, indicating, perhaps, Hraesvelg’s modus operandi of attacking under the cover of bad or unpredictable weather

ancient brothers – Vikings or perhaps, more specifically, Swedish Vikings or Varangians rather than Norwegians because of the reference to ‘horses’

blade-and-tongue – sword; wit
grave-rings – solemnity [of being at the ring of grave stones]

the woodland’s edge – recorded in the manuscript in conjunction with the unique sign drykkr [‘the unknowable’?] (See Book I, Part 3 ‘Gerða’s Dowry (or Freyr’s Eight)’)
had hoped to face fierce Radnir The Black
gone mad on the Mount,
biting at his shield, or Ciguayo’s sons
sharpening their axes on seal’s tooth —
any clay-borne beast of the Wood.

Better death’s guises than meet Dagr’s breath.
I braced my war-light and wounnder
when shadows, sprung windward, shrank back to the sun
and carved a cave before my eyes —
a hollowed darkness in-drawn.

The cave’s mouth folded more fields of shade
than those raised by The Eagle’s rasp.
Twelve steps plunged into bluffs of night —
an abyss born on Hraesvelg’s back,
on the Corpse-eater’s Hel-blown coat.

The steps spread a path — a way deep into nothing —
then rose to lights
twisting left of my gaze, while, to the wall ahead,
the path’s shrinking width
blunted my view on either side.

At the far right end a landing seated
four battle-staves to chairs —
fierce men with helms and plate-braced chests,
two short and stout, one medium-built;
the fourth stood tall.

They were richly armed with splendid weapons
blood-stained from pillage.
In their grips, double-beards; on their belts, toothed-swords.
Hraesvelg’s sign saddled their bosses —
the dragon’s mark.

Yet their dress told me they wore battle well:
their knee-boots tied high
with golden-spun leather layered with linen edged with new skin,
wool and ribbons;
Their byrnie plates moulded to their chests, 
polished cave-black;  
their bare arms painted;  their wrists and necks 
hung with rolled gold 
or bronze laid upon silver.

These were not Vikings — Dagr's bay-seekers. 
Upon the tall one's war-shelterer  
straddled a sign that struck dread terror  
through my heart and mind. 
Hel's hole grew blacker than before.

Stamped on the shield, the Stair-maker's bird -  
blood-eagle dragon;  
for the fallen warrior who dropped to this shield 
his ribs would spread from his chest, 
his lungs beat as red wings till he paled.

I paused at the sight of the dread sling-boar  
when a fifth destroyer caught my eye -  
his stinger raised, helm-point held,  
signalling a sixth  
from the walls of the cave.

The sixth battle-stave thrust into my hand 
a lee-edge and buckler -  
a disc two hands wide and fixed with no grip  
to hold at bay Dragwandil  
or flying corpse-flame.

Now the fifth man lunged with his spear.  
But the disc, losing it weight,  
would not let me learn the line of its swing. 
Nābros' brother held my stand  
with the warrior's stare.

Courting the dark, his thrusts hooped the air.  
The disc clung to my palm. 
I blocked his strike, dislodged his spear.  
I drew my war-net. 
He shifted clean as shadow.
I kept him at bay by slipping on walls.
   But he struck a soft-horned charge,
   took my shadow ground. Though I was firm-set,
   the platform slid from my soles.
   My corselet slammed stone.

The first four men rose from their seats to finish me spreadeagled
on the cave-cold floor. The first reached behind, smooth-gripped his sax,
his breath heavy on the lengthening blade.

His three companions now lifted their shields to tell me they had won,
for the sax-wielder would stake his claim for the Eagle’s Trophy —
my breast already his.

Gram was heavy but the disc was light,
my grip, its glove.
I found my feet, swung the Eagle’s Gift, to catch a beam from a gap at the mouth of the cave.

But the thick-set man, sharp-eyed and quick,
struck my ring-shirt,
cleaved its weld-rings with the blow of ten men.
I plunged into deeper blackness, to Hraesvelg’s face opening a rock.

Hræsvélgr’s Gifts

Take this back with you,’ shouted Hraesvelg.
   ‘Tell your clan, “Nᶠʳᵒˢ-ᵏⁱⁿ scorns warring alfish slaves slaying their brothers on the graves of his honoured and wives and children.”’

Bruised from his war-games, I shouted back:
   ‘Don’t you count as the living do?
   Why do you count “four” when I count “six”?
Or is this the Aztlan way —
to shift the rules of play?’
'You need no answers. You have them,' he said, 'The world is as wide as it is deep. You fight well for a dwarf. Now you are ready to touch the fighting piece that was once Dagr The Seer's.'

'No fool would face such Hel-armed men weaponed by metal-shapers who forge the vanes for Nagl-far - full-sailed Ship of Nails - with the moon in her fist.'

Hræstevg then took me to where we first met and pointed to Dagazar's grave. The Corpse-Eater's work was very well done - the bones of The Strung white-dry from Úrðr's hand.

In the opened grave, lying beside his bones, was Dagr's battle-dress - by his hollow frame, his jewelled weapons, his tattered purple cloak and tarnished helmet.

In his flesh-bare fist, Týr's dragon-tamer - dread byrnie-biter - its crossguard lace-dressed, layered with horn, its pommel fixed with gems. On the blade rode the name 'Hrōgrmóat.'

Lying with the blaze a skeggox of dust, a broadaxe, spear, dagger and shield - all free of their hafts like the boned dead. But Hrōgrmóat, the Tamer, sealed its grip to mine:

Its twin-edge sharp with years of waiting; its deep-grooved belly for valleys of tears; its twin-winged pommel, saddles for wild boars that flanked Týr-dragon's seat;

Dagr The Seer - Dagazar 'The Strung,' Goði (Priest-ruler) in Kerrigarðr c 1051-1090. Náþros' reverence for Dagazar seems a political ploy. His war-games are both to test Óþýla's skills as a warrior and to draw her to Dagazar's grave. Perhaps Náþros intended to use Óþýla to raise an army to rid the area around his old mountain fort of the Viking outliers, but this remains unclear.

Úrðr's hand - time passing

Týr's dragon-tamer - Dagazar's sword famed for its power in battling storms; see Book I, part 1, p. 12. tamer; byrnie-biter; blaze; pale-maker - sword Hrōgrmóat - ON, hrōgr or hōgr 'natural sanctuary,' associated with small stone altars for the disar blót or disablóð; KER. móat (meaning unknown) (See Book VII, Part 1 - ref. the Móat River) skeggox - bearded axe
On the bearded axe, the words ‘Skraeling-Slayer,’
droopy-chinned;
the split-ash spear wearing Muspell’s storms.
But it was Hrögmót that ruled
the stave-well of dreams.

The dagger still clung to its clayed master
from his buckled baldric,
the belt double-sewn with silver studs.
As much as they raised the Godi’s spells,
it was the glaive that stayed with me.

His wood-weary shield, an earth-tamed circle
weathered without its leather coat,
its boss red-stained with blood once flowing
in the veins of He Who Was Taught To See Nunne-hi.
But the pale-maker’s skin still breathed.

Not the darkest fear of winged Hvesvelg
could break the fix of my spirit;
my hand folded again upon Hrögmót’s flesh
brought to breath by the Eagle of Mists.

Sax, spear and shield – dim; the axe – sham companion.

Hrögmót held the bow-string-Var.

To wield the weapon of Mighty Dagr
was to breathe the heat of one’s own pyre.

Here I fell as bedsheets of Frigg and Oðinn
on their wedding night –
the fire of Hrögmót sweeping from the ashes
the unexpected wish.

So I set my path for Ximaca House,
for Hrögmót of the Skraeling-slayer
strapping my heart to my feet.
2. The Treasures of Cebanex

Kataxha Tkatsi

Kataxha Tkatsi - Shining lake of the Sun. Related to: Ximacan/AR.

kataxha 'shining water,' kataxi 'brilliant,' 'shining,' kata 'blazing,' katahrni 'star,' tkatsi 'the sun,' ON.

Pjazi 'female giant'

n the jagua peak of the Dread Black Hills
rose Kataxha Tkatsi —
Shining Lake of the Sun —
home of Xima's casik, Cebanex Grand Chief.

From Skári's winding trail through the narrow pass —
spread the summit-home's final route.
Here the black-green guarded
forests of shrill-scream beasts that Cebanex commanded.

Three steps led to the seat of his richly decked longhouse,
a dwelling dressed for Viking kings
than for hiding Hel's hosts —
its steed-walls of latticed logs daubed with colour-shifting paint.

The entrance to his lodge was very small and plain —
a deception meant for the unwelcomed.
Inside, low steep-curved high-backed chairs
saved guests from presuming to raise themselves above a chief.

When to compliment my host I asked Cebanex-casik
how it was that he had made
the gilded plates on his walls,
he slowly sipped his wine, lifted his eyes and said:

'Take note of what you may earn from your enemies and friends.
If you cannot break their spirit
then you must bargain for what they will yield.'

I did not know what this meant until I saw the strange troll,
a black-eyed warrior held captive there,
brought that night from the foothills,
the Chief proudly displaying the foul-mouthed seafaring troll.

Ignoring his captive's shouts, Cebanex told stories
of how he crushed troll plots,
of how he could break the armies
of lesser warriors (without calling us the same).
poised in his splendid cloak of feathers dyed in ochre,
he showed me his enemies' spears,
their cutting edge of iron
though they were roughly hewn — by troll-hands, not alfen skill.

I asked:
'Where does your captive find such deep-struck ore?'
(for Logram's armoury
was thin from his dipping often
among the broken blades of his store of glaives).

He replied:
'Far below the ground run not only rivers
that make Ximacans live a hundred years.
In the deepest streams
azure waters hide our cache that Karibs steal to bead their spears.

'From the crystal rocks we make jewelled plates
that hang here for guests to see
and not for death-beasts
who would sooner eat our hearts and steal our warriors' limbs.'

I said:
'Will you take me, Cebanex, to this marvellous place
where crystals cry for moulding,
for planes and gouges to sail ships'
(my heart as set on swords as on tools to break waves).

Cebanex did not speak but spirited me quickly
to a valley hidden by the Peak
on which his longhouses stood.
Rising below the trees were a narrow house and hut.

The Grand Hall of Gleaming Tables

Cebanex led the way through a wide, sunny field
where no grass grew beneath our feet.
When we entered the large house, a heavy silence stretching
across its beams and rotting ceiling,
be paused to take off his great feathered coat.
It was then that I saw why he was still called
‘Giant Commander of Dark Elves’—
his bare arms of polished oak, his eyes never paled by fear,
his stride never short on the battlefield,
one who knew his enemy as he knew Tkatsi’s Lake.

We walked together to a winding hallway
emptied of songs for many years.
On shelves along its walls sat broken, tarnished ware—
from days when umbls broke the night
with sounds of dance and song and smells of honeyed flesh.

Beyond this place grew worms that slid among white bowls
and pots of pitted earthenware.
A once grand room rose with the chill of graves,
with echoes of sharpened edges.
Yet it was a regal hove. Carved floors marked our steps.

A ceiling-high darkwood door opened on the gilded room
smelling of tobago that Cebanex smoked;
the room three times as high as Logram’s Swording Hall,
its red-polished stone floors glittering,
cut neatly into squares so as to fit each other.

He led me through passages furnished with gleaming tables
and storage chests bulging with gems.
‘I love this place, Cebanex, more than my own needs,’
I said—my heart full of what I saw—and asked if I could return,
revisit at his pleasure.

‘It is my wish,’ he said. ‘This place now waits for your hand
so that you will visit again and again
and to melt metals and mould ornaments
that will please Logram The Red.’
(Though he too saw me with bands, I still loved the man).

At dusk we returned to his summit home of lakes
where he summoned guards to take me
to Ciguayo’s cliff-camp. There I waited all night
with Hrögrmóat loose on my belt
to test it on the first man who challenged my mission.
3. The Birth of Skulvádi Úlfur

Frieda of Manati

Frieda was sent to meet the courier from Logram’s camp at a place arranged by the castle’s clan, stealing from me beds to rest the glaive that the Eagle brought.

Freyja’s dis was weighed not by a sweat blaze but by the beads that rose from her brow laden with the strain of the child she carried. At nightfall we camped in ‘Katsi’s shadow.

As Tkatsi climbed the clouds once more Cebanex arrived with beds rolled, for Frieda’s rest would keep us there for two more days, her burden heavier as shadows shortened.

Xima’s Chief brought food and said: ‘Let her rest here while I show you the cave below the ground where four sacred beings live with Deminan and walk the stars and skies from Xima-yaca to the Karib Lands.

‘Orphaned at birth, these sacred beings wandered the winds, calling on powers from ancient shaman even wiser than they.

‘The spirits’ minds, like folded seeds in guamo fruit, grew to the size of giant gourds to give the shaman sky-letters.

‘This is what they wrote: “From gourd-fruit oceans and fish; from turtle, islands; from our children, toads and snakes;
"From snakes and toads, rain and water; from clay and stars, all men on two legs. From the manatee, all women on two legs;

"From the jobo tree, prayer statues to honour the spirits' fruiting."

You will find these things at the heart of this cave to protect Frieda of Manati.'

A Door to the Foundry

With the Chief's caverns and Frieda's burden, I came again to Logram's Halls, sure to make my name on the Chief's esteem of the Manati-dis, to win from Logram my ways to steel. Manati-dis - Frieda

If I could show him that sword smithing would bind his goals to the Chief's table - where I am trusted with maps to gem-caves - he would grant me the title of Mistress.

But despite my tales to seduce the dreams that he sought in duels, I found no favour with the Red-beard King.

He worried his court with Frieda The Bold and Radnir's wild band.

He complained of risks to the unborn child - Frieda's long journey home through the ragged plains where Radnir roamed.

So Logram drove me to spend my days mending ringlet coats.

How could he know the smell of flame-brights when their fire-heads were drawn from the blaze, or the glaive's red tongue before the cooling strike. Men dreamed trailing-heat. Women needed flames.
My bond with the Chief broke that with Logram—
Ximacan caverns
opening my plans with cartloads of ore
brought from the deep
while Logram slept and dreamt of peace.

When the heat rose from the opal skies
by season's end,
I had set a foundry far of Logram's Halls
where the voice of my anvil could grind and sing from the polished stone
that cloaked me from his eyes.

I would sit and bait the twisting gleam
to fold upon its form,
Hörr guarding me, guiding my hand
with the heating sense
so that forest sights sunk from my door.

On the harvest-eve Cebanex brought us news
of scouting trolls—
teeth on their necks and bone-scarred breasts.
These he could not fight,
not with medicines nor the God of Gourds,
and so summoned the aid of The Red.

Yet with all this need to call warriors to arms,
still King Logram ignored my wish
to join his forces to field our strength.
Instead of keys to swording
he gave me wounds to mend.

Logramsson-hardræði

My heart now set on seeking out
Logram's son, Kerrigan,
I would win the boy of twenty years.
(It was clear that Red-beard's crown
would yet lure him to an early death.)

Young Kerrigan yearned for that crown,
for a place to practise
what his father fingered with caution.
Already they called the prince
'Logramsson-hardræði; 'Logram's iron hand.'
Prince Kerrigan could pit man 'gainst man,
plot and piece each man's need
into aims for both and yield to none,
that not a man could say
whose fist knotted first at his brother's face.

I went to the Prince on Valpurgsnight Feast
when his heart was full of mead.
We drank and sang warrior's songs
of Atli-tyr and Óðinn's charge.
He spoke of his love for his blood-wand raised:

"Our kingdom is caught in the lazy stride
of my father's boot," he said.
Kerrigash men have become dwarfs
hunting riches and dises
where caves yield gems cold to the strike.

"What use is long life and not Valhöll's breath
to draw us from this death.
My clan multiplies in years and youth,
but our number shrinks with each birth while Xima House grows."

"If we are to grow with more years," I said,
'nourished by the wells
that flow from Úrðar, it is Mimir's gift
and should not be scorned.'
(I could not show weak tongue nor heart
by agreeing too quickly with the Prince.)

"We are meant to raise mighty strikers," I said.
'Surely this is a gift from the gods.
It signals new ways to plunder once more
as in Dagazar's days.
Radnir lies in wait for a proper fight.
I have seen the size of his force.'

My words struck home. Kerrigan whirled
with metal-struck sight.
He promised there and then to set me to anvils
by the bond of his word
to the task of toiling as Mistress of Swords.

Valpurgsnight - ON. feast welcoming the end of another year
mead - here meaning 'poetry and songs'
Atli-tyr - Þórr or Atilla the Hun
Óðinn's charge - Óðinn's military assault technique
blood-wand - sword
It was so I found my making place,
and spared of weddings,
mending broken shirts and forging bride-rings.
Now I set to dented blades—
re-fashioned, re-made, re-newed with my stamp.

My mighty slicers could score as no other
with backhand wields—
stiffened as they were, strengthened by twists
of two hundred turnings,
with thrice-patterned weave for the blade's fabric.

Even its cooling fired me the more.
As the last flaming followed—
fire that stamped me to its searing edge—
I hammered bronzed grooves
where I etched my sign 'Oðal, Steel-renderer.'

The Lagoon where No Moon Rises

It was on the eve of Disablod night,
while I polished Hrögmóat
to show the Prince the Eagle's prize,
that Frieda called me
from my anvil's warmth with news of xiwuta.

With heaving breath she held me close,
these words to my ear:
'Beyond the Veil of Waterfall Men,
grow black thorn-leaves
at the l'gúna's edge where no moon rises.'

'This is the plant that He'yeya picked
to birth her children.
You must brave beasts and bring it to me
before three days break
or Kerrigan's thunder will not leave these walls.'

With Hrögmóat held high to meet its strike,
no troll nor black outlier
could stall my quest. We hacked our path
through vipers and vicious seeds
that streamed from trees high as Muspell's sky.
But my swift return could not hold the tail of Tkatsi's third rise
like a dragon-wind held on the sky's lip.
When I turned for the low mounds,
shadows stood waiting over Frieda's house.

Kerrigan's cape—a sheet of stone— greeting me at Frieda's door.
No one could breach the mouth of her hearth
before the thorn-black leaf was brought whole, then crushed, and placed on her groin.

She lay in silence while the sun rose high.
I said to her:
'Surely this task is not made for me—to see you torn by an unseen arm that is soft with blood.'

But still, Frieda would make no sound.
I said:
'The thrust of iron cuts a clean wound. There is no secret pain that wears its own face, then cries to be fed.'

But the Bold One met my eyes with masks to hide her pain.
Then, her navel filled with thorn-leaf glue, she bore down with a single scream to bring the secret pain plunging into day.

The child was whole, with womanly shape, with flaming hair that masked her face, with He'yeya's mark on her well-formed lips.
She branded me with her red-clay blood.

'You must cut the cord,' The Bold One whispered, 'with your warrior's line, with the sword you hide from Logram The Red. Gods chide the chosen who wait for wind-blast but not stand with storms.

At once transfixed above the thorn's pool of birthing blood, my trembling hand was tricked by the gleam of the silver-red cord. But Hrögrmót's blade found its rightful place.
The beat-shone blade scored the birthing cord,
sealed the severing
with snakes that writhed twisting my name.

Long-beard and worm-borer
defied Dagr’s dust for Bold-döttir’s life.

The Pool’s Hooded Wolf

It seemed little time that the child grew
with the warrior’s tastes –
with eyes that saw as seasoned wolves
with flaming manes –
that she was called ‘Skulvádi Úlfr.’

What joy she brought to Logram’s son –
tables spread for two full moons.
When he stood to rule as Kerrigash King,
they say it was as one
not brought up for crowns, but born to them.

Skulvádi Úlfr hardly left his side.
When she trailed scouts
to the Moving Wood to hide from chores,
he sank into sadness.
None could get audience with the waiting king.

And yet it was then that his heart was strong
and all would witness
his fever of feats that filled praises
in the pens of skalds.
So they would honour Kerrigardr’s rise
from the dust of Muspell’s graves.

Skulvádi Úlfr – KER. meaning literally ‘The Wolf of Future’s Pool.’ Skulvádi ulfr ‘the bond breaking wolf,’ the wolf who (disturbs) breaks the wading pool. Skuld- ‘debt, bond of the future,’ - vāðr ‘pool,’ Úlfr ‘the warrior wolf’ together meaning ‘the wolf born of future’s pool.’ Skukladúlfr, Skuklau-lúlr ‘hooded wolf;’ also refers to those born with a veil over the face that allows you to see into the future. ON. skupa ‘woman’s hood’ hiding her face; birth veil over the face, skulda ‘bond,’ Skuld ‘Norn or Fate’ representing the Future. Skuldr (G. schuld, ursache), vāðr (ðō) ‘to move; wave-goat or ship; skuldings (G. verwander) “wanderer”; vāðr (G. wastelle vor klippen, bátið, hochmut; gefahr, unglück) ‘destruction, damage’; valdr ‘sovereign; vald ‘power, authority’; íða ‘eddy, whirlpool’; safra (ðō) ‘to roam, hover about’; saftra ‘wading’; vāðr ‘measuring line’ hence Skulvār (See Book VII, and Book VI Part 3, detail of Hrimnir’s Signs, p. 153) ‘the wanderer of the measuring line’
BOOK IV: THE LAMENT OF KERRIGAN
IRON HAND
THE LAYS OF HELGA OF THE SAXONER'S CLAN

These lays (c.1425) written by the young poet, Helga, reveal insights of wisdom beyond her years. She maps the rise to fame of Logram's son, Kerrigan, and his complex relationship with Skulváði Úlf with whom he falls in love. During the first half of his reign, Kerrigan deepens alliances with Ximaca House, headed by Chief Cebanex, and gains a son in the process. In meeting Skulváði's demands on his heart, Kerrigan breaks the last remnants of division between Ximayaca and Kerrigarðr, and opens the kingdom to grand expansion. But despite his famed rule and the gift of a kingdom under one ruler, it will be in the name of Skulváði Wolf that his successful claims and the quality of his kingship are to be remembered.

1. THE WAYWARD WOLF

The Eleventh Law

King Kerrigan called a gathering
of the Kerrigash clans
when hunting season was over once more;
wild pigs, turtle, winged and ground fowl
hanging upon hooks to dry
from the ceiling of his great stores.

It was not long after Red Logram,
was put to the pyre —
was set to flame near Blöðrók Ridge,
in view of longship 'Great Serpent Thrasher'
bound to Weighted Rock
and to the end of Dagr's tales.

Left – City of Kerrigarðr showing city walls, with longhouses (leftmost), meeting hall (top right), foundry (bottom right). Perhaps Kerrigan gathered the clans in the open area west of the foundry. It is likely that circular building at the centre of the foundry area was a keep or fortified tower.
Upon Logram’s death came the end at last
to uncertain days for Kerrigarðr.
Kerrigan’s voice roared to raise the clans at dawn:

In Viglid’s short reign ruled by strange beasts,
he forbade wandering to The Wood.
But many still say that he found the path
or that the wand-twister, Opyla, did.
The Mad Poet Prince, Viglid, night-walker,
sealed these secrets in battle
near The Wood that vaults his tale.

My father, Logram, would not find the way,
preferring to preserve Kerrigarðr
with safe enemies in Utgardr.
But, my grandfather, Kerrigan The Rock,
stalks my thoughts with signs
be made upon the Stone.
Dragonping Stone stands for all to see
with the rising and setting sun
upon Four-caverns Peak.

Rock-signs steer a path. I have studied them.
There are three ways
beyond The Wood that seeks the Caribbees Sea:
several days’ journey to Forskarlar’s Veil
and through the Moving Wood –
not upon Ximayaca, Dagazar’s citadel
of the Modsog who we now know
to be Cebanex and his fathers’ clan.

To The Rock’s ten laws I now list one more:
All who seek Valholl I call you to claim
your proper places there.
Let each warrior lift these directions
from the signs standing in stone.

I deem that all men may double their claims
if they are free to test their fate.
Brace yourselves well to these bold paths
and bring back gold that the brazen alf
still denies himself upon his weapon.
Sessyrmnir-seekers now signal your claim
to your places at Freyja's side.
Let each woman win rightful seat
beside Freyr's Bride and find the secret
that the giant's den,
Utgardr, carefully guards.

The clan of Olaf may claim the North.
Freyja's sons will lead you.
The Clan of Ragnarr, you claim the South.
And I shall travel with the Saxon's Clan
to take the east.
Those of Dagazar, you search the West.
The young will tend to Kerrigardr's youth,
guard the harvest,
remain behind, await our return.

It was with these words that the son welded
what his fathers fired in his heart,
and seeking to find its weakest join
bent the breaker to warriors' breasts
with the grip of his rule by iron fist,
that he was called 'Kerrigan Iron Hand.'

The Son of The Red sent men and women
forward into foreign lands,
to defy the mists of Utgardr
that Xima's men kid with hill-caves
burying the Loki beneath its belly
and filling his carcass with gold.

But there was one, Frieda's wild daughter,
the unbridled Skulvadi Úlfr
whom Kerrigan sought
to stay at home though she was of age
to join the scouts.

Sessyrmnir - in Norse myth, the hall of Freyja or Freyr's Bride where the wives of male warriors greet their husbands victorious in battle

breaker - sword

Loki - Útgarðr-loki (See Book II, Part 2); KER. expression: burying the Loki - possibly a legend arising out of a re-telling of the Norse creation myth of the birth of humans from the corpse of the giant Ymir and stories of Cebanex's treasures (See Book III, Part 2)
A Sea of Trouble

Wild-natured and strong, Skulváði was shrewd—
her tongue as spry as her fighting wrist.
Though she had seen only sixteen years
and bold as his best warrior,
he wished to keep her woven to himself
or else to the safety of his garth.

Skulváði Úlfr held Kerrigan’s will
upon a steady state.
The Wolf could stroke his most hidden wish
with her meekest presence.
She mounted his will with a wild claim,
challenged the cherished goals
that lay heavy on Kerrigan’s heart.

Desire brought him bound to her sight,
gilding his rule with shimmering light.
And all who came before Dragonping
to solve quarrels and duels
knew there was justice if he had just smiled
upon the sight of Skulváði’s face.

Yet this craving brought Iron Hand
a cruel fever of chains,
for Skulváði lived
as his own breath bound as his double
never falling far from his body.

And here he sailed on surging waves—
into the sea of his troubles—
for The Wolf loved wandering the Grove,
following the shadows with Ópýla
to caverns awash with metal crystals
and woods that whistled magic.

Skulváði The Wolf would disappear
in any weather—were it fine or foul—
without explanation,
to return without warning
with gifts of meat, flowers and grain,
news of places too strange to describe,
arriving with dawn or dusk
to melt his steel-braced heart.
Three Rings

One night in Spring, Skulvádi came home
with new wildness in her eyes.
The Son of Logram summoned her promptly.
The fires climbed high in his hearth.
Yet when she came, his rooms warmed
with her stealthy entry.
From the red-haired girl glided cinnamon
and mint and sweet blossoms.

Kerrigan could hold his tongue no longer
at the sight and smell of her.
He made up his mind to make his heart known –
to reveal his need.

He declared:
‘When you first fled without your heart
I shut it here beneath my shield.
Your tempting name as the pungent night
leapt the fields that followed you,
Skulvádi, You Who Steal My Wits.

‘And what should heal as much as harm,
I held within my fist,
so that you made me renowned as ruler,
as “Logramsson Crusher.”

‘Now three rings within erstwhile straining wide,
to link the world that ringshirts hold,
ride upon gusts that rush too wildly
defiant of their own devices.

‘Desire, clothed in Taurean cape,
is bridled to its master fast.
The tail, a rudder – the first ring – leaps,
pitches itself: the child of Past.

‘The second ring – the saddle bristling –
pries the Present
hiding as it must, the rider fixed
to Future’s fiery breath.

The Son of Logram – one of the
heitir or substitution names for Kerrigan Iron Hand; among his
many names, also ‘Iron-grip,’
‘Logramsson Crusher’
'And, Oh, sweating on the seething mane –
your fabled fastening grip –
lies the final ring. Do I dare race
ahead of this speeding steed?

'Bullish, steady, course set, goal unknown,
three rings wound as one,
each a mirror, each the other –
spirals threaded fast upon themselves.

'It sails its rider where time has spoken:
All already done –
all already said.'

To this Skulváði replied:
'Yet I must ask, as is the way
of any rider, disinclined,
sped on a mount holding Future’s mane:
What entreaties I encounter here
seaming the weave of your vest!
Do I nurture them as a needy lover?

(Kerrigan’s heart leapt: ‘...a lover,’ he sighed.)

'Must I not feign all fire for love
not knowing what to risk in return?
How should I spurn it, now, scored as I am
by deeds of such dark madness?'

The King did not know that Skulváði spoke
of The Wood’s heart as well as of her own
and took her sorrow as claims to his breast.
Taking her pained words
as a pause to declare his own, he said:

'I lived in waiting, my spirit web-thin,
a net for dancing mogwa seeds.
With each new wind I welcomed storms
so that what makes a man of me
gave me Hunrakan’s eyes for Tkatsi.

'So learning the dip and lurch of steep waves –
of weary kingship –
I steadied my crown in smoothest granite.
But in becoming brilliant stone
I better knew the rest of soft ground.

The Wood’s heart - the unexplored territories of the Moving Wood
gave me Hunrakan’s eyes for Tkatsi – from KER. saying: ‘to be left watching for stormy weather when it is sunny’
‘Often sailing so, I hoped for oars
to hand me some magic
that I might seek you and win your grace
to dine with me on kingly duty,
to share in secret pleasure’s wealth.

‘As it took blood from my fathers’ hands
to balance duty with desire,
I know we were bound — brought together —
my task: to be tested upon the ground
where you hunt the wild plains like a man.’

The flames and Skulváði were one in his mind.
She paced his halls like the restless blaze —
as Summer’s beast in winter.
He saw her stalking wild boar with the sword
that Ofjýla bequeathed her —
Hrögrmót held high in his honour —
The Black Hills seduced by her prowling scents.

Kerrigan’s lament on love’s loneliness
only made Skulváði Wolf
picture her mother sitting alone —
snuggling her single child
who survived the wars with Ciguayo’s men,
who preferred the graves of giants’ trails.

But Frieda’s daughter faced the fires,
to hide another face:
her second mother’s, Ofjýla’s, as she waved
from The Moving Wood,
cool and sentinel, on a death-paced journey
from which she never returned.

Kerrigan had missed this silent musing
for The Wolf looked away in her grief.
He saw, with clarity — the Present, clear —
how to lure Skulváði’s love
of distance, danger and paths to nowhere
to the embers that lit his breast.

Hrögrmót — sword that belonged
to the first ruler of Kerrígarðr,
Dagazr The Strung (See Book III,
Part 1, ‘The Corpse-eater’s Challenge,’ p. 65ff)
More than anything Kerrigan wanted
to make love as real as granite's dust
so that no spark should die
in the gaps of need in cooling light.
But he could not yet think
how to rid himself of what held her
so far from him.

(Lies that are nestled make beloved beds
upon which one needs
to lie the more and make a comfort
of threadbare cloaks.)

Skulváði turned from the rising flames.
'Here, take my clasp,' she said.

But Logram's son could not welcome
the hand of crossed circles.
It was too small—
a smile, not a laugh; a spark, not a torch—
for what he wished to be made to blaze
on his way to her heart.

So when Skuld's child stepped towards his door
firelight licking the hardwood beams,
The Wolf's skin gilded by the deepening flames,
it struck the Iron-hand King
how he could hold her:

'Will you come with me, Skulváði Wolf,
on the menacing path to the Moving Wood.
Let us learn together
of what has kept the Ximacan dressed
without mail,
without fires at night.'

Instantly, his words captured the Flame-haired.
At once she swirled on her heels,
alight with tales, ready to share
what she had seen
at the Disir's Howe.

At this, Kerrigan praised his quick wit
and straightway made plans
to invent a path that would invite
him and The Wolf alone
into the Moving Wood.
2. The Path of Three Staves

The Treacherous Trough

chieftains gathered to leave their bed-mates in the cool dawn of Kerrigardr, Iron-grip proclaimed a change of plan to all assembled — an imposing band for which Dagazar would have leapt Valhöll if he were promised safe return to the halls of mead.

'I shall ride the winds by Vindblain's route' said the King, 'to spare my warriors the points where thorns are wedged. I shall clear my way to the open paths. You need not know more.'

Vindblain - ON. meaning literally 'wind-dark'

Kerrigash swords, raised, rode a three-fold beat upon their polished shields for their King spoke with steel steadied by Wolf-gold: 'Young Helga will lead the Saxoner's east.' (This was how he gave me the way to tell you of the east-journey he took and, as well, I already had the King's trust.)

Kerrigan had proved that he put full store in the youngest of them. He would, with joy, send women as men to Dórr's hall of Bilskirnir.

Dórr's hall of Bilskirnir - The legendary Storm God's Gleaming Hall

The Wolf and Steel-fist set out for The Wood. Seven days ahead it waited to bring Kerrigan closer to Skulvádi so that, as the days passed, when she stopped to say 'Take this way or that' Kerrigan did not hesitate to step with the wave of her hand.

'I shall show you a river,' she said, 'where a water-beast still challenges my striking wand, will not satisfy my eager spear.'
'It takes my arrow like a frozen twig.
And yet this beast
lets me dive freely to the lair's heart
where I hold my breath
as long as I like.

'It does not stir the will of the pool,
a most treacherous trough,
but watches me from wide rock-faces
and giant leaves that guard
the waves of its water-hove.

'At noon egrets fan its blue-black face
as if trailing a way I should follow.
It is the strangling roots of the giant lilies
bracing its grey rock-hide
that I most wish to map.

'It is from this pool that stands quite still,
mocking all rule of the hunt,
where my birth was made upon thorn-leaf spikes —
lancets of wavelets,
the beast's Giervimul.'

Kerrigan said: 'I would collect thorns,
gather such spear-bound cores
with my bare hands and hugged to my breast,
spread myself on beds of pikes
in your honour so that my blood
would copy Hronn's crests.'

'And I,' she said, 'float that water-beast,
set its hide to stretch
for a fine cloak that flies the wind
in your honour, Kerrigan,
Logramsson Crusher.'

The Wolf had rituals in which he revelled
gladly drinking her stories
of the woods and vales not for what they taught
of places he promised to find
for his warriors of Kerrigarðr
but because they came from The Wolf's bold lips.

Giervimul — ON. meaning literally 'spear-swarming'

my blood would copy Hronn's crests — my blood would flow in gentle waves
She would stop and say: ‘Fold this diamond leaf
into squares and plant it here,
where wild flowers bloom, with its fingered stem
pointing to the ground.
This will store and seal safe journeys back
when the season is renewed.’

Or she would say: ‘When you hear the song
of the kamtspiro bird—
it’s two sharp notes—when dawn is near,
be ready for rain
for the kamtspiro sings for haxi
when it needs the rains to mate.’

The landscape drifted changing its hands,
shifting the line of its palms
before Kerrigan’s eyes and sure stride.
Húginn’s whispers, that did not seem
to have purpose at the time,
slid between the two, capturing records
of the countryside like kisses.

They walked to the place that named Muspell’s land—
Xima’s Ridge.
The paths hunted them with timbred phrases.
The heart of The Wood
carved sigils of red and green and brown
between Skulváði and the trees,
of which Kerrigan was jealous.

The evening air that cooled day’s end
seeped the sounds of the Veil
upon imminent fall of night’s riding frost.
At night they slept to katahiri’s song—
‘the star of good luck’—
as Skulváði named it.

And Logramsson drank the scents of the dis
sleeping so near to him.
So all went well for King Kerrigan
on the first few days and nights.
The Steepest Place Where All Hills Stop

On the seventh day Kerrigan hoped that the river beast, though three days behind them, would leap from the ground and give him reason to grasp The Wolf’s waist so that she would say ‘Kerrigan saved my life.’

He thought of how she would ply his heart to shower festivals of secrets he had not dared dream while his fires soared between his bed and her walls. As if reading his mind, Skulvádi said on the tail of his thought:

‘Now, be ready for ribbons of light – the Path of Three Staves. It will come with tails from the dragon’s den to ride your dreams, to give you no rest.’

Taking little heed of cautioning words he followed, finding himself in the silences between her soles. And when she paused to point him once more over the changing road, he saw only the path in her eyes.

Settling blossoms nestled on her face – the pollinous tips magnified. When he bent close to hear her whispers, he could see in her eyes pools of his own reflection.

The Wolf said softly at one such moment: ‘Tkatsi – the sun – must be setting when we enter the valley of the Waterfall Men. We must travel slowly, for the crashing Veil leads to the steepest place where all hills stop.’

Waterfall Men or Forskarlar – ‘giant’ inhabitants of the world protected by the tiered sheets of waterfalls called ‘Forskarlar’s Veil’ south of Xima’s Ridge
But what Kerrigan suddenly came upon was not so easily seen.
The mountain path grew ribbon-thin.
Ahead leapt a ravine that cut the path in two.

'How shall we cross this broken road?' he asked The Wolf.

'When the sun sets to sink The Wood
Three Staves will lift themselves across the gap, as Oplyla said.
I have been here before. It is mightier than the eye or sword.
You must look for it as M'pik'le'hotu — with the breast-fire of Dörr.'

Kerrigan looked back at the path behind and then he gazed ahead at the gap that stood between him and his heart.
He thought of Kerrigardr and the safety of his kingly seat.

Then Skulvadi said: 'There they rise now,
The Staves that lift the Path.
They will hold us up perhaps to World's Edge.
I should go that far,' her eyes to the sky.
'Oh, Great Iron Hand you must see this with me!'

Skulvadi's soles paused above the first stave and came to rest gently upon strips of light — upon alfen showers.
Her steps danced and lifted her to the other side.

The King's hands tightened to white-knuckled fists.
He looked down the Hel-dipped slopes and froze upon his faltering pace.
But it was the look from The Wolf's eyes that sent him truly down the cliff.
'You need not do this, not now,' she said. 'It is a whim of mine to toy with death. It is not my time and so I play the child with it. Kings step their best on hardened ground.'

Then she floated back to Kerrigan's side the same way she left as light as air, her shield still strapped to her back.

'When we are again in your Garth of Garths, think of the stories you will want to tell of Kamtspiro's bells,' sang Flame-haired's voice.

But he could not face Skulvadi's gaze, could not bear to see the mirror of his cringe, of his wilting frame. He had travelled with The Wolf too far, too soon.

Below – Illustration showing Skulvadi placing her right foot on The Path of Three Staves. The illustration appears to show how the Path is set in motion when you step onto its staves. Notes accompanying Skulvadi's Verse-maps (See Book V) suggest that the Path may not have been as mysterious as Helga describes it in this lay. 'Crossing the Path' may have meant setting in motion a mechanical device constructed in earlier times by the Forskarlar or, more likely, by the Moehrn (See Book VII)

3. THE BITE OF THE WOLF

Gifts To Stiffen The Pain

When King Kerrigan and Skulvadi Úlfr came again to Kerrigarðr, Iron Hand was met not with merriment but with news that his law had taken half his warriors.

Those who came back were lain on hammocks in Cebanex's camp. They were torn by vines or dying from wounds lodged by Gourd-God Silencers from gaps in great cotton trees.

Amidst angry shouts and pounding boots Skulváði shielded her voice so that only Kerrigan would bear her.

Gourd-God Silencers – Karibs, 'troll' enemies who could not be fought 'with medicines' nor by the 'God of Gourds [Deminan]' (See Book III, Part 3, p. 77)
'Another king would wring his hands
or punish those who crossed his rule.
You must give them gifts to stiffen the pain
to break the tide of wound-counting.'

So Kerrigan called for a great feast
for widows and orphans
of Kerrigash House and Ximaca House
and gave huge stores of grain
to Xima-priests who healed his warriors.

He granted the priests, who would share their herbs
with the gods of Kerrigarðr,
twice as much as others
and he wrote the names of the missing or dead
upon the spaces on the face
of the Dragonping Stone.

It was so the Garth warmed once more
upon the palm of the Iron-hand King,
for there was wood and metal to weave
new ships and longhouses.
Between Xima’s Lake and the Coffer Home
grew a camp large enough
to take long stays of those
from Viking and Ximacan Houses.

Soon what belonged to the Grand Chief
and what was Kerrigan’s
was not built on quarrels but on common coinage –
their forces banded to beat the Karibs.

At last Kerrigan breathed with ease again,
with the gentle ebb and flow
of lonely nights and long-Dry days,
with decisions over the building of ships.

His temper, strengthened by Skulváði’s eyes,
wore again to restlessness
if she shunned his brow when they sat to drink
before she packed for trails
to The Path of Three Staves.
Once he waited half the Wet season,
writing and re-writing fine speeches
to test the truth or true falsehood
of his comfort with fear.

But The Wolf left and came home again
(before he completed his lines)
with herbs over which she chanted to Frieda
who was dying from an illness
that no one could cure.

When Frieda died Skulváði filled sacks
and went away as if never to return.
From the second day of her setting out,
Kerrigash started to tremble,
for Kerrigan's fist began to rust
upon the clench of kingship.

All who crossed him with any question,
would lose half their tools of trade.
One wretch was ordered to the duelling cloak
until either he or the King
lost blood on the cloak or the fight should stop
or one of them would die.

One husband was told to take a new wife
for he complained too much
about his wife's tastes in the hearth or bed,
so that Kerrigan could spend his time
on poems to Flame-haired's stride.

Then Skulváði returned, renewed her store,
mended her weapons, stayed a full moon
and Kerrigan reigned compassionate once more.

This went on for years - Skulváði's wandering,
Kerrigan's waiting -
so that Kerrigash were known to cry
not 'Let us appeal to Iron Hand's might'
but instead 'Let us go
when the iron hand is held by the wolf's bite.'

iron hand is held by the wolf's bite
- play on the Norse myth of the warrior god Týr whose hand was bitten off by the wolf, Fenrir, as he restrained Fenrir in order to save the homeland of the Æsir (Asgårðr) from premature destruction; the myth encapsulates the battle between Æsir and Vanir.
Kerrigan's Pledge & A Son and A Bride

Skulvádi Wolf doubled the Kerrigash clans
out of wandering,
in being late for the Disablóð.
That was how she made Muspell's Plains one
and, as well, a son for Kerrigan.

The King went to Xima to see Cebanex
for words on how to bring The Wolf home
(the Casik too bedridden to travel).
The ample walls of the Chief's house
were daubed in deathly blue,
in forms of flightless birds.

When Logramsson arrived, Cebanex said:
'I am glad you came before they grew wings,'
pointing to the blue birds.
'With night's patience, like nesting puthana
Ciguayo waits for me to walk clouds.
My second son, Hitsko, does not know
how to make magic against Ciguayo's fangs;
my first, Gotpec, has no taste for politics.

'You must take Hitsko under your guardianship.
Teach him how to make canoes
as big as your ships that he will win favour,
for his name means 'The Strong.'
There will be a time of much blood and pain
following on my death.'

Kerrigan said:
'You have my pledge upon this sword
to hold our Houses as one.
I shall do as you say and adopt your son
when the flightless birds rise.

'But a pain brings me to your sickbed today:
(not much unlike yours for Ciguayo)
love that holds itself far from its hearth.
I have come here on such a mission
that too requires ways to make
the young loyal to their elders.'
'Do you know, Great Chief, where the Flame-haired,
the Daughter of Wolfsm-heart
and Vikingar-steel travels?
Do you know, Great Chief, if she is betrothed
to one of her father's clan?
Does she lie dead in a dismal swamp
or does she live to torment me?'

Cebanex replied:
'Many questions quiver on your tongue.
I can answer but one.
Yes, she lives and moves like sticks of wind.
She walks with the moon. She walks with no man.
She is as the ancient ones,
my ancestors from the north.

'She knows this land with Ximacan eyes;
still, one too young to yet command it.
But she will make it to her mould
She was born to be a queen.'

Kerrigan said:
'You quicken from me no more questions.
She has been born to be my bride.
I know this now; I have no doubt
that a man ever lies well on his deathbed.'

But Cebanex went on:
'Then you also know that the time has come
for you to be told
of this strange place where your kingdom lies.
It does not rest on an endless land
such as from which sky-gods came.

'Here caverns of gold spread to gilded peaks.
Here the world is folded.
Here the sea engulfs the sky.
From here you may sail in one direction:
from the land beyond the waterfall
far from the lands of Xima's Ridge.

'The two who should be one House of Fighters
are as different from each other
as yatsunnu is from hihawakle –
as night dew is from swamp mire.
Ciguayo or Hitsko –
one will take my place.'
In my dancing days my father reigned over all Houses.
Now we are many and move divided
on how to battle Karibs
and your exiled clan, The Black.

The Black is well fixed and will not be shifted from the place you call “Utgardr’s Borg.”
They do not make ships but they are shaping blood promises to one called “Jaguara.”

You must keep watch on your wayward kin and bring them home.
Now go, quickly. My wives will take me to the mountains to meet Deminan’s kin.
When the time is right, I alone call death.

Kerrigan Iron Grip could not have left the dying Chief a happier man!
On returning home he would straightway raise preparations for a great feast for his marriage proposal to the Flame-haired, to Skulvádi Úlfur.

4. The Betrothal

The Great Feverish Mirror

Iron Hand’s grand hall, gloriously decked, glowed with Þórr’s colours of fire.
It was stocked with food and drink for feasting and for looking at.
His fire-locked Wolf found in nearby hills had three days to prepare for the betrothal feast.

Kerrigan raised his eyes across the rich spread:
freshly hunted fowl, great steaming lobsters sprinkled with herbs that Skulvádi favoured.
The Gathering of Swords was brought forward – doubling festivities.
Kerrigan’s heart heaved, hunting wolfish forms.
But Skulvádi was nowhere to be seen.
The great hall blazed with Kerrigash brilliance with warriors tall and dark, short and fair. Men and women of supple limb sat in full corselets facing the grand circle of fire to Modi and Magni, sons of Ægir.

Women with eyes of amethyst, granite and of jade — Freyja's favoured — free-locked or braided shone in firelights. Helmets and swords spears, axes and shields formed a great feverish mirror.

Kerrigan sat proudly upon his high seat.
Below him the circle grew as rings of light living with the beams that struck and matched each other.
Upon Kerrigan's eye the wet reflections would not bring Skuldvíði.

Ninety carved chairs formed an ebon arc for the most esteemed and eldest from Ximacan and Vikingar who still swore to death by Dragonping Law. To his left and right stretched a deep line of seasoned warriors sipping honeyed ale and strong black brews.

Clatter of helmets and clanking of shields lifted upon Kerrigan's loneliness. Bondsmen came and went spreading tables wide layering them with meat and drink. With each new dish shouted Woden's best: 'Long Live, King Kerrigan Iron Hand,' their hilts pounding the steaming boards. Woden — Óðinn

Kerrigan searched the lines for his bride, then suddenly leapt from his great chair - impatience with waiting for the wayward queen whittling at his wits. He shouted: 'Who shall bear the sword of swords! Who shall take the crowning to its crest!'

'I shall,' echoed mellow from the walls of the deep hall leading to the circle. It was the voice of The Wolf.
Kerrigan froze as Flame-haired closed the distance between him and her.

Skulváði walked nude save for woven plates of steel and gold moulded to her breasts and to the curves of her belly and legs.

Her skin glistened—silken jewelled skeins within which rode her stride into flying firelights.

Upon her lips she bore golden glints of He'yeya's Wolffem mark; along her arms, tattooed Ximacan boar.

A great dagger-roar leapt from the tables and awoke Kerrigan to the room:

'Who is it that speaks?' for Kerrigan still dreamt that The Wolf stood before him.

He called out to hear the crimson voice raised from gold-lips and skin-coat of train-rings, to relive the dream before it drifted.

'It is I,' she said, 'Skulváði The Wolf. I have been told that bold Steel-fist deems my presence at this sacred Gathering of Swords.

'I offer myself. I offer no more. I serve none other than Kerrigan The Crusher.

For Sword-wizards' sons and a hundred names for Dagr's Sand-storm God let me bear the crown to crest your reign.'

Above - tattoos worn by Skulváði (from the ms.): (left) on her back, believed by Sir Walter Raleigh to be a map of The Moving Wood; (right) on her breast, significance of these 'rings' unknown.
skulváði stepped forward and lifted the crown from its seat at the circle’s centre. Its place was marked with rings of metal upon a shallow table hewn and shaved from the largest tree at Xima’s Ridge.

Skulváði made the names — words of steel-magic — spoke them forthrightly, but only as one who lived her life outside the claim of others.

Kerrigan looked deep into Flame-haired’s eyes as the crown found its proper crest, knowing that the time was right. ‘Now,’ he thought, ‘now is the time to set her beside me and before all others.’ The Wolf stood fixed with arms outstretched as she had placed the crown on her King.

Kerrigan wielded the Swording words:
‘By Ægir and Ællir, Lófn and Saga, Sokkvabekk, Where We See All. With garths of fire, with hearts of steel, who rules this land? Who say you rules here?’

The hall resounded with a powerful shout:
‘Kerrigan, son of Logram The Red, of Kerrigan The Rock of Móðron Bare Head of Kaulera Quick Feet of Kullvar The Tall of Yoh’lota The Spear of Ngrad The Bear of Harvatl Black Sod, of Hauskuld One Arm of Úgnol The Shallow of Viglid Poet Prince of Einar The Brave and of Dagazar The Strung!’

Löfn – ON. goddess of passion
Saga – or History (ON.) drinks with Óðinn in her hall Sokkvabekk
son of... – indicates inheritance of rulership rather than strictly indicating family lines, though the latter is true in some cases
Bold battler-and-roarers and shining gate-flames
beat a thunder through the valleys
of Kerrigardr under one King.

It is said, the echoes reached the Halls of Íksland
and rumbled through all Rogaland.

It is from that night that the saying came:
‘Follow the man whose court can shake
Eirikr’s summer home.’

When all had sipped from sumptuous horns
he raised his helm-crown to halt the merriment:
‘Now for the most joyous event
for which we are here. Now, I wish to ask
upon my honour as King
that the singular Skulváði Úlfðr
kneel before me as my betrothed.’

He placed his left hand upon Skulváði’s head
that she might bow before him
and prostrate herself on his protector.

But Skulváði resisted his reach,
raised her eyes to his and said:
‘I have no wish to be at your feet
as beautifully as they are bound
in such fine leather fittings.’

Kerrigan lost his voice, at first, then he swore:
‘Send her from my sight!’

The hall was hushed. The King had been held
from an open wish at the Gathering of Swords!

Warriors trembled, bondsmen tripped
with stacks of drinking cups
and a silence spread sweeping Kerrigardr
as none had heard before.

The Wolf herself, silenced by the power
that her words conjured,
stood light-frozen before Kerrigardr’s best –
He who had gagged Surt of the Vanir,
Muspell’s fire-locked guard.

(A warrior’s grip was worn no where
as well as upon Kerrigan
burning to grasp the prize.)

battle-and-roarers - shields
gate-flames - swords
Íksland - Iceland
Eirikr’s summer home - Greenland
(Brattalid c. 980s)

fire-locked - with hair made of fire,
referring to Kerrigan’s reign
achieved over the historical
descendants of the Aztlan Vanir
[Xima Houses]
She bowed her head to his shield and said:
‘I am not worth your vilest scorn,
Great Kerrigan.
I beg the sharp edge of your finest sword.
Give me steps to make this right.’

But Kerrigan knew he could not return from this cliff.
Its shallow edges were bound in shale.
No path of light would lift him now to solid, safe ground.

He could not claim nor could he caress the clasp of curls within his grasp.
And how sweetly did their perfume sift his grief and grip him with dizzy madness.

He waved his hand to waken the hall from sadness to celebration:
‘The helm is crested. Huldra sings for all. She feasts with all who eat well.
Till the solstices retreat, then we return a-new.’

Such mead poured, such feasting took place that it could not be compared to another.
It would never be said again that this Kingdom dined as it did on the summer’s night that Skulvádi Wolf spurned the might of the Steel-grip King.

**Bloody Victories**

The years that followed were a fever of claims: Jaguara’s power plagued Hitisko’s House but while Skulvádi wandered the Alf could not match the hardened heart of Logramsson Crusher.

Kerrigan Bold-grip launched ruthless charges upon Radnir and Jaguara’s clans. With Hitisko as guide, Iron Hand’s foes were betrayed before they began.

Huldra – ON. forest goddess, and protector of domesticated animals, gifted with a beautiful singing voice
The decades brought bloody victories and, to Iron Hand, his finest hours. Kerrigan's kingdom spread to seas west that cloaked his fathers from rich fare.

For when Skulvādi returned to The Wood, the Son of The Red gathered his strength, rested the wounded and planned more punishment.

It would take wars far beyond Nāfros' Lands, split spear-lands heaped and whitening years before Kerrigan mastered the art that he held beneath his Flame-riven galdr-coat.

As secret paths opened on silent havens for Skulvādi Úlf, the more Kerrigan raged and bared his breast, for a man may risk his heart for hidden gold upon Corpse Beach and, perhaps, because it is buried there.

spear-lands — shields whitening years — advancing years [towards old age] Flame-riven — riven by the Flame-haired Skulvādi Úlf galdr-coat — heart; place where wishes are guarded Corpse Beach — ON, Naastrand
BOOK V: KERRIGAN THE FEARLESS

The year is 1450. After many years as King, Kerrigan Iron Hand turns first to Dragonbing runestone for answers to the illusiveness of his total rule over Muspell's Lands, then to his court adviser Iva Sand Reader of the Ivaldi priestess clan. With a cryptic message from the runestone and Iva's revelation of Skulvádi's secret maps of places where 'treasures...hide the ground,' Kerrigan discovers a way to the under-grounds of Hel—an extensive cave-system beneath the surface of the island. He returns from the journey with experiences which increase his fame and fortune and finally bring him a bride.

Part 1 and the first lay of Part 2 appear to have been written by Kerrigan himself; the second lay of Part 2, by Iva. The rest of Part 2 does not reveal its author or authors except for 'How The Fearless came to Crown The Wolf' which bears the name of the author of Book IV, Helga. Part 3 is a lay about the historical travels around 1030-50 of a Swedish adventurer named Nadlan, a story that may have been told by Iva at Kerrigan's 5-day wedding feast as a warning about the direction of his rule.

1. BEYOND THE MOVING WOOD

Death-dressed Answers (or The Sígils of The Stone)

fa king stalled on strident kingdoms,
victory wearied and burdened with crowns,
what do you say Dragonbing Stone?
Why do your sigils stand exalted before my pall?

Eager for duels — swinging sword and shield
against old battles within my breast —
I see bórr’s trolls evade my might.
Hel’s domain ripens with secret seas.

Your letters blaze ‘Glory’ for your kind in stone.
For me you raise caves rife with hollows
on this windy crest of The Dread Black Hills.
You bargain with air and dead men.

You have no word for a man whose blood
has etched your face. Is your silence
a spiteful pact made with my fathers,
Logram the Red and Kerrigan The Rock?
I forged your face with a hand as firm
as The Rock’s girdle — steel-clenched for storms.
Now confidence that carved heroes’ names
falls weak-knuckled on shaded questions.

Hitsko holds trolls west. Arrows trip my goal
to break Radnir’s shield and Jagara’s magic.
You stand guarding mouths of high-browed caves
holding me to this keep of ghosts.

While the Stealthy Maid of The Moving Wood
lies with monsters lapping black lakes,
jealousy wracks me for your crest of stone
where you crown those buried for my seat.

Here a king feigns rule over phantoms —
for the warrior as a young man,
standing too brightly in his own light,
failed to see the fall of his paler self.

The vanquished grows in earth’s safety —
princes of worm-beds. I am fixed here
to bellow at you for death-dressed answers.
No battle readies but that of my flesh.

Take my pike thus! Shake at your roots!
Promise to fall and crush me whole
in hidden Wells of Óðinn’s steed.
How you dent steel but not silence.

The sweep of my cloak would do well now
with the clasp of gold that The Wayward Wolf
once boldly offered. It flies about me
weeping in the blasts of this mount.

What listless comfort lies in twisted rings
that brace my corselet. They weave my mail
to burning flesh — a vest of weeds,
Hæglid’s web-cloak.

Let me dance then in the Sinking Lakes.
Take me at once to Sokkvabekk
where Óðinn, Saga make magic horns
from golden goblets.

The Rock’s girdle — Dagazar’s wrecked ship ‘Serpent Thrasher’
that appears to hold up a rock (Weighted Rock) in Njörðr’s Bay
(or Garmr’s Bay) as much as held up by it.

Prince Hitsko — second son of the
late Chief Cebanex and adopted by
Kerrigan Iron Hand
Jagara — rival of Iron Hand’s
Ximacan allies
Radnir — Radnir The Black,
berserker and leader of a breakaway Viking clan
this keep — meaning ‘like a keep,’ a
tall single circular or square stone structure with a single entry with
battlements on the top and arrow slits along its length or on all sides

The Stealthy Maid — The Wayward Wolf, Skulváði Úlfr; signifying a
stalkling Valkyrie (Chooser of The Slain)

worm-beds — graves

Óðinn’s steed — Yggdrasill

Hæglid’s web-cloak — death; ref. the ‘cloak’ or net of weeds which
wrapped the corpse of Dagazar’s third son, Hæglid, dragged from
The Sinking Lakes on the edge Kerrigarðr’s eastern boundary
Then let me give you this, one more line to brood on:
if you cannot cast a mighty death,
then grant my wish to touch the heart
of the beast that hides Skulváði Úlfr.

Ah, did you shiver, just now, with gifts
for Logram’s son who lacking wisdom
finds more questions being so inclined,
so bent towards perplexity?

Now eight circles — as runes thrown in haste —
rise from your face as I spoke her name.
Yet still, blank spaces hide the cut of signs
wind-sailed on the name, ‘The Wolf.’

Where I struck your bow — where I have hacked
my blazing glaive to break the blood
that holds you up silent to my will,
more letters open from the Dragon’s mouth.

bow – face, forward-facing edge as on a ship
glaive – spear

letters open...Dragon’s mouth – runes written outside the image of
a dragon or serpent common on runestones found in Scandinavia.
Words were written within the outline of these images and, often
when the inscriber ran out of space within the image outline, any
remaining space on the stone was utilised.

Left – this set of circles copied by Almordozar from Dragonþing rune
stone is believed to hold a cipher to the map of the cave-systems of Hel
but has not yet been unravelled (See Book VII)
From the face of Dragonjing Stone I read:

‘Below – the Blunted Sword.
Beneath – The Shifting Vale.
Guarding the Garth of Chills,
Gild-rac awaits a king.
Find The Wolf where she falls,
fixed upon the third stave.
Ride upon The Wolf’s rule –
Rings of The Moving Wood’

And no sooner this than spaces trip
to hide some letters, hinder the meaning.
Is this measure meant to stretch my wits
and contain The Stone’s silence?

Are its missing weals healed before I chance
to lick the wounds? Give me some tune
to ring a pattern that follows the steps
between this ‘Gild-rac’ and The Maid.

If I knew Gild-rac – not granted voice
even by The Wolf of Wayward Paths –
The Stone would share its hidden guise.
Does Gild-rac move east or west, on feet or paws?

Not The Stone’s gaps nor its hollow marks
break the code’s seal. It brandishes points
to cut me from rule for it is quite clear
that the Sword stands apart from The Vale.

The Wood does not rest upon Dagazar’s grave
within which the sword, Hrögnmót, once lay.
Twenty days from Útgardr – Dagazar’s bed –
The Moving Vale rises beyond Xima’s Ridge.

Do these words rest with Úrðr’s bent fingers –
Dagazar’s dragon dragged from Niflhel,
or to Gerða’s stones guarding Njörðr’s dead?
None spoke of Gild-rac; not prince nor beast.

The Blunted Sword – Hrögnmót, Dagazar’s sword buried with him and, many years later, retrieved by Oðýla who gave it to Skulváði: Garth of Chills – Hel
Gild-rac (also recorded in the ms as Gild-rek) – ON. meaning ‘to drive by wind and waves to a place to prove one’s courage’, ‘lake of recompense.’ ON. gild: ‘offerings for compensation,’ ‘payment due,’ also Gefa hardan hing ‘to prove one’s courage’; rac or rak, from the older form teka, means ‘to break’ or reka, ‘to drive’; nákonk ‘I wandered’
staves – alliterating sounds in skaldic verse; stafir meaning ‘props’ normally used in dróttkvætt (court metre - stanzas with 12 staves, with 3 staves in each quarter stanza of 6 syllables per line); also refers to the Path of Three Staves which Kerrigan could not cross with Skulváði because of his lack of faith and courage
The Maid – Skulváði Úlf; also meaning ‘daughter of the Dís, Freyja’
on feet or paws – human or not human; ‘paws’ rel. ‘animal spirit’

points – arrows; Tyr’s sign, ↑
the Sword stands apart from The Vale – the sword, ‘Hrögnmót,’ was discovered in Dagazar’s grave which lies northwest of the City of Kerrigarðr while the Vale or Moving Wood is east of the city.
Úrðr’s bent fingers – the deceptive passage of time; memories of a difficult Past
Niflhel – a region of cold mists in Hel
Gerða’s stones – burial mound constructed in c.1053 by Danelander, Gerða
prince nor beast – ally nor enemy
Do they signal Skuld’s thinning sheet –
fine and secret as your soundless face?
Heyeakakh’s Tales do not hold a path
that moves beyond The Wood.

Or do you mean to lead me this way:
to The Dís of Dreams, to Khisa’neru –
Herb-magic Weaver, Hrögnmóat’s Wielder,
She Who Whips my Heart from Lifting Staves?

She is wise with youth. She was skilled yet shrewd
when she made my tongue a prudent spear,
when I was mute before thorny men.
She ripened my rule with wandering.

Deep Hood’s Wolf commands the runes – Týr, Ödal –
the sword and the grove – on which some story
surely whispers here hidden in these signs.
But this ‘Gild-rac’ folds a story law.

The more I read its rigid face,
the more The Stone measures my grasp
upon shadow lines layered with masks.
Where I lift a veil, I find heavier cloaks.

The Stone speaks again, staining my reading
with more questions. Kwa’pak’leru – demon
of leaping grass – grafts The Stone’s face
with Xim’le’re – Greyleg-bound.

To dismantle ‘Gild-rac,’ ‘Xim’le’re’ and the place
where The Wolf hides, I shall call the Sand Reader,
and I shall say: ‘Find Skulváði Wolf
or lose your sight among your grains.’

I know her reply – when I demand
answers from her urn of secret pebbles:
‘Your voice stiffens cold twigs and stones
How should I stir from the earth?’

But when I bare my teeth and threaten to break
her seeing stones, she is bound to say
(to preserve her trade) ‘Skulváði is near.
She will please you beyond your wish.’

Skuld’s thinning sheet – the increasingly illusive Future
Heyeakakh’s Tales – reference to the battle between Viglid The Mad
Poet Prince and The Wyrd One
(See Book III)

Wolf of Wayward Paths, Dís of
Dreams, Khisaneru, Herb-magic
Weaver, Hrögnmóat’s Wielder –
heiti vidkenningar for ‘Skulváði
Úlftr.’ ON. dis ‘woman’ in a general
sense; also as a heiti sankenningar
meaning ‘death-maiden’; Ximacan/
AR. khisa’neru ‘weaver of herb
magic’

Deep Hood’s Wolf – Skulváði The
Insatiable One, i.e., ‘like one of
Óðinn’s wolves; Deep Hood’s
[Óðinn’s] Wolves, Geri and Freki,
both words meaning ‘the greedy
one’ (a heiti sankenningar)
Týr and Ödal – the runes Týr (↑
the letter ‘T’) and Ödal (X the
letter ‘O’); the deity Týr was said
to hold swords sacred. Ödal
represents the sacred grove which
is the heart of each traveller’s goal.
a stony law – a rigid maxim, rule or
precept; literally, words written ‘in
stone’

Kwa’pak’leru – KER. ‘demon who
carries away the dying’; sometimes
represented by the image of
grasshoppers or ‘leaping grass’
from the head of a shaman to a
window above the shaman’s head;
recorded in the margins of the ms.
as a series of signs resembling
sowelu:  5555555555

Xim’le’re – [ Auction/Kerrigash/
Ximacan script meaning ‘whirl­
pool’; may be related to sign of
Týr or Tiw, written in pre-runic
times as a vertical upward-facing
double-headed arrow (↑); signifies
a double-edged sword, or a state of
indecision

Sand Reader – Íva, descendant of
the line of Novaini, belonging to
the Ívaldi shamans of Swart­
alfheimr (See Book II, Part 2).
When I came home from Dragonping Crest — from the ridge of spells — the Reader of Sands, Frowe of Ívaldi, Mistress of Sands waiting at my door, whispered from the dark:

'I hear the steps of Kerrigarðr's best, a great fighter of men who comes too swiftly upon the future — into the hands of Skuld.

'Let me read the dust that keeps you to the ground — the bread that keeps your feet hungry. You need a message that rides on your back — that spurs you from the past.'

'I will give you leave to Freyr's shores to endless sandy beds,' I said, 'if you salve these lines of their sly words: "Below — the Blunted Sword, Beneath — The Shifting Vale. Guarding the Garth of Chills Gild-rac awaits a king. Find The Wolf where she falls fixed upon the third stave. Ride upon The Wolf's rule — Rings of the Moving Wood."'

To this, the Sand Reader said:

'Replies slip on paths left by the Wolf — pressed by the pause of Skuld. My answers lie on music shadow dipping on blades of grass.'

I demanded:

'Before I reach down and break you bowl, stamp lies from your lip, I grant you one chance to rescue your grains — to make your words plain."

But the priestess maintained:

'Keep your weak ear to the shifting stage — to the floor of the message. Of The Wolf they say staves forever lift where her feet meet the ground.'
I pressed her again:

'Is this a tale for those born maimed,
for the deaf and limping?
You compound this chill with icy writ
that you say is scribed on floorboards.'

And so she agreed:

'Then invite me in to warm our ill will—
freeze our disagreement.
I shall give you the simplest rule—
spare you the role of simpleton.'

I gave the witch her due:

'Come in and teach me how to step lightly,
how to ride the rule of the grain.
My warriors duel while no one dies—
no new blood upon our hands.'

So Iva advised:

'The grains flow freely while your blood freezes—
while you let Skulváði roam.
She spared your house while you speared The Rock—
while you stalked The Stone.'

When I pressed her for more:

'Then you know the way that she travels now—
the place where she prowls.
Do you also know the knowledge I seek
that guides the way to Gild-rac,'

the priestess replied:

'Look under her bed for a book of letters—
charts that fold a map of spells.
If you can follow its winding paths
your blood-wand will weep once more,
your cloak will need no clasp.

'You must be quick. The sands quiver,
between the false and true.
What you find in her room will make you supreme,
make you unmatched as King
make you “Kerrigan The Fearless.”

spared your house – implying that Skulváði was in fact in Kerrigarðr as Kerrigan had hoped, but that she did not visit his house

blood-wand – sword (‘your blood-wand will weep once more’ = your sword will drip with your enemies’ blood; ‘you will be victorious’
Should Kerrigardr find shaded paths
beyond the Modsog's curse —
the world where toads slide for spirit babies,
where torrents come from snakes
and Waterfall Men whine;

Where godmen fall from stars of clay,
and Freyr's brides from manati —
The Steel-fisted King will climb again,
the dreaded bûrâcan in tow;
his steed, Dagazar's serpent.

In two seasons The Council meets —
ship-builders with heavy hearts.
How best to win them but fitted with clues —
with Bifrost to your breast,
with Gild-rac girded.'

the Modsog's curse - reference to
the days of Viglid's reign and
battles with etin-beasts

where men fall ... manati —
Kerrigash cosmology shows the
influence of Old Norse and
Ximacan cosmology (See Book III,
Part 3, pp. 75-76 for Cebanex's
reply to Opyla on Ximacan
cosmology)
The Council - Dragonping or The
Dragon Assembly meets for 2
weeks' at the end of the summer
solstice

Bifrost - in Norse myth
Trembling Roadway or the
Rainbow Bridge made of flames lies
between Asgardr and Jotunheimr
and stretching to Míðgarðr; the
"bridge" or Æsir global route (See
Book VII)
't with Bifrost upon your breast' —
with tenuous paths ahead or fear of
the future conquered

Left - the Dragonping rune stone;
from Almordozer's letters

2. THE JOURNEY OF PUZZLES

The Heart of The Book

Skulvâdi's sheets sang sweet brilliance
pulling Heidr's law to pad her pillows.
My death cushioned by The Wolf's glamour
preferred such darkness, its perfect pleasure.

Heidr's law - immortality or indestructibility; Heidr or
Gullveigr (Gold or Seduction) was
the giant (Vanir) whom could not
be destroyed by the Æsir
The Wolf's glamour - Skulvâdi's
seductiveness; also a ref. to Wolf-
fem magic associated with Wolf-
fem use of hallucinogenic golden pollen
And yet I betrayed this sinking blame
upon her book which shone with gold
circling its covers, pressed open-lipped,
marked with blossoms where she stopped to rest.

Its turned pages tuned with beaten gold
were bound with sap. From the secret hand
that clenched its covers and dust-dyed leaves
trailed a hold of runes to the heart of the book.

Within its pages, it spoke of ways
in shapes and maps hidden from the clans –
another scheme The Maid denied me
with her wolfish guile to haunt my game.

With Huldra's gift I gained new art –
gilded deceits, new devices
to ride The Wolf's trail; her careful pages
so ringed with the oils of her sleep and rise.

But I dared not let the lie ride me.
I meant to use it on our Council,
Flame-haired's pressing scents held to my breast,
fitted with secrets — 'with Gild-rac girted.'

Hitsko's wedding still held Kerrigash,
riding their minds in high spirits.
Any strange call that I issued now
would swing on feasts, sail on sumbl laws.

With Skulvadi's book horns would pass again,
brimming mead would flow, bridling victories –
all Kerrigardr eager to claim
the joy of weddings with feasts for war.

The book would track my path to the east,
to forests and sea, to hail the power
that called The Wolf closer to mounts
and beasts promising a path to Gild-rac.

At summer's end, the book sealed
to my careful plan, I called The Council
to our meeting place. The Four assembled:
Hitsko, Thorsteinn, Hagmag, Kopall.

a hold of runes — a treasure of scripts (runic markings)

Huldra's gift — a song from the forest goddess, protector of domesticated animals, gifted with a beautiful singing voice; i.e. Kerrigan treats the discovery of Skulvadi's Book as the gift of a new method from the forest goddess to find Skulvadi

sumbl laws — a law that a feast which antecedes another, held within the same season, extends the antecedent celebration into the second, so creating one long celebration

Above — sketch of the marked pages of Skulvadi's book found among Kerrigan's poems; the illustration shows that her book was either incomplete or that Kerrigan did not complete his transcription of some pages. It may also show that Kerrigash wrote from the lower half to the top half of the page. Or, maybe the transcription was complete, and that the book was left with deliberate empty spaces to be filled later, indicating gaps in the records of Skulvadi's unfinished journeys.
I said to them, their swords unsheathed:
'I shall make the Flight — The Way of The Hawk —
as one warrior is wont each season
after the Feast beyond the Floods.

'It is the place of the ruling Prince
to choose the fittest when the moment comes.
Now that battles wait beyond our garth,
as thrice-crowned ruler it is my right.

'I shall take paths for the Hawk's Way
and shall return with victor's proof
and with a branch of the Wood's tree
that laps the bay of the eastern seas.

'Trolls now threaten to test our mould,
break the magic of The Moving Wood.
Modlog brings news of fire gaps
where Huldra's doors closed The Grove to men.'

But Hitsko asked: 'What if Fire-men
should trick your steps, ambush your trail,
strike you with magic, strand you in The Wood.
Could you alone fight such fabulous tricks?

'That is the place of which Ancients dreamed —
the Disir's Wood that defends itself.
And yet for this we must preserve it.
We must take your word it is under threat.'

Hagrmag agreed:
'To risk the kingdom for a cold place,
on which you can fix no fair value
till you come to it, may not be worth
dying for, alone. Take me with you.'

So I consoled the Four:
'But I shall not die, Hagrmag The Brave.
I have maps, signs that make us victors
before my journey lifts my heavy cloak.
Rejoice even now, before I leave you.'

The Way of The Hawk — a hunting ritual conducted each season by the best Kerrigash warrior who became the head hawkers until the next hunting season unless a ruler, crested or crowned at The Gathering of Swords at least 3 times takes up the option over any other warrior to conduct the ritual Feast beyond the Floods — The Wet Moons Feast celebrated at the beginning of each wet or rainy season (around October each year, the beginning of the hurricane season)
victor's proof — the item of 'proof' is not stated explicitly in the ms; it may have been an item from the ritual journey related to hawks' nests

Modlog — Modlog Hepnota 'The Fire Starter' (the first Kerrigash to see the tribe called 'Yotxpa'ka'), youngest son of Kopatl; KER./AR. hepnota 'to fan a fire'
Huldra's doors — trees

Ancients — Ximacan ancestors before the arrival of the Vikings on Ximayaca
the Disir's Wood — The Moving Wood
Thorsteinn countered:
‘If we knew the worth of the eastern wood we would know now how many bodies to sacrifice there. I say a displóð would surely save you making the journey.

‘The Way of The Hawk must be taken but I will not stand on ceremony if it is to mean blood on our hands. There are better ways to gain your honour.’

Kopatl replied:
‘You cannot count the future like bones We must see the Vale as a fruitless vine – as we do our dreams until the Lakes dry to reveal berries buried by our traps.’

I put it to the men:
‘What is your law to be then? To the eastern wood? To greater honour? Or to the safety of lazy garths guarded by foes who should wither under new-found might?’

They all replied with swords high against the faces of their fighters: ‘A sacrifice to the Land-disir! The Steel-fisted King to the Moving Wood!’

After council broke to drink some more, I called the Priestess to the outer halls for she had stirred my courage anew with her clever jibes and her trickery.

I cornered the Sand Reader for clear answers:
‘This path I must take – is it the place where I shall forge my great fortune? Is there any good that follows me from empty spaces spent on mistakes?’

Iva calmly replied:
‘You cloud the way with smoke and hollows where you should ride the double rule.’

You cloud the way...double rule – ‘You miss the clarity of the road ahead of you by pursuing doubts when you should simply follow the space between the sides of the road, follow the ready-made path,’ or ‘follow the destiny already cut out for you’
I asked:
‘Is that the rule that augurs success?’

But she said:
‘You play the fool in seeing the frame
and not what lies hiding in-between.’

Losing my patience I warned:
‘You multiply my misery
to your own means. You still leave me
hanging on the tails of many questions.’

And still the Sand Reader said:
‘I say it thus that you shun delay,
that you fly with Tár to find what I hide.
Others are waiting for their own torture
but you may ask me one last question.

Again I pressed her bowl of grains:
‘Will anything grow from the cave-deep gaps
that the Great Stone holds from my eyes?
Will clouds that rise in the wake of The Wolf
mark my endeavours with blackened skies?’

And again she offered only this:
‘I can render only one reply —
I can read the grain of just one answer,
though your hasty words hurry upon two.
All that is left to be said is this:

‘If you sleep too long the night will steal
the vast-waiting view of more fertile plains.
Aim for the narrow and the darkest road.
They say that Gungnir never missed its mark.’

others are waiting — ref. to those who are waiting for a visit from Iva to read their future

Great Stone — Dragonping rune-tone

Gungnir — spear that would always find its mark and return to the hand of the thrower, made for Óðinn by two dwarfs or Indians, Sons of Ívaldi (warriors of Iva’s clan) when they lived in Swartalfheimr or Skraelingeland; ‘They say that Gungnir never missed its mark’ are words of encouragement to Kerrigan that he will find his goal
Íva’s Lay of The Verse-maps of Skulváði Úlfr

Ron-fist suffered several sleepless nights trying to read The Wolf’s cryptic maps. Skulváði’s markings would avail no message. He could arm himself with no acumen.

The Wolf’s verses wove no meaning that the Íva Clan could see in the sand. But those of The Stone encrypted with staves we could measure, weaving the verse:

‘Below – the Blunted Sword.
Beneath – The Shifting Vale.
Guarding the Garth of Chills,
Gild-rac awaits a king.
Find The Wolf where she falls,
fixed upon the third stave.
Ride upon The Wolf’s rule –
Rings of The Moving Wood.’

The first of each pair of lines of the verse carried a sound echoed in the second. With this rhyme rode the hidden word in the second line, sleeping in the code.

If Kerrigan heard the Stone’s music he would have read the secret words: ‘Beneath Gild-rac fixed rings’ – the signs of Muspell, his hove known only to the Wolfem clan.

It was written a long time ago of how Muspell’s Sons hid in Hel’s chill, in wait for those who, fearing Skuld, must face a beast on Three Staves Path.

Fixing the sigils with eager eyes, and not his heart, the King could not hear the beat of the verse, looking for meanings between the letters that lined The Stone.

But The Wolf’s Maps mystified the Dises (even with the gift coursing our veins) for Skulváði Wolf wrote the Grove’s secrets in strict harmony with the Wolfem way.

rhyme – the alliterative syllable
hove – burial place or home beneath the ground
Hel’s chill – Niflhel, the coldest region of the Underworld
the Wolfem way – according to the tradition of the Wolfem shaman clan
Kerrigan read the verses of maps one to twelve:

'Follow the woman who breaks your journey;
Listen for her songs.
Learn from her sayings.
No path will follow wherever she goes,
as Tkatsi trails the Modsog's caves.

'A fire will grow from an empty grate
burning halls cold with light,
upbraiding the timid with flight,
Take the cautious way around its corners.
The many-roomed house has four ways.

'Before you enter abandon the dead
on linen and on wood
freshly woven, freshly hewn.
Take the upper floor where your mistress waits.
Leave no step at the entrance.

'Descend at the lake that dips at sunset.
Mind how you take the depth.
Mind how you bed your soles.
The door is crooked as is a shadow seeming to be like itself.

'On its upper decks is a wooden chest.
Uncover the find beyond the covered floors.
Catch a single ray to set alight what is bolted within the coffer.

'A house with walls of silver and wood,
a roof of timber and grass,
the wind for its windows.
Its doors are broken. No light breaks your view.
It is an open house.

'You will see the dark that stands in two.
It is the ceiling of this place.
Beneath, no floor matches your feet.
Treasures below will hide the ground.
Nothing shines that has no shadow.

Below – from the ms, image accompanying Verse-map one

Below – from the ms, image accompanying Verse-maps two and three
If you are offered a cloak sewn by elves,
follow the rule on your knees –
bend where you kneel.
This will take you to boulders of silk,
and corselets and carved hilts.

If you meet the one from the white room
do not lock the door
with the golden key.
The door will open from the inside
with smooth narrow walls.

The building guards what it hides well.
Take the Frowe’s wagon
to the cliff of cloaks.
Whatever you think do not descend
before the seventh mount meets the second.

Where a sound lifts the past swiftly greets
the future folded
under the wrap of charms.
The map carves the route – the journey’s spell
to Gild-rac – journey’s gap.

Freyja’s ninth level is this hidden place.
Those who seek it
will find the song
to Skraelingeland and the caves of Hel.
Here Bifrost’s road fits the two.’

Above – KER, untranslatable sign. Detail from a torn page of Kerrigan’s ms., described as an ‘accompanying strophe or other explanation’ to the twelfth Verse-map; perhaps a runic letter related to Xim’le’re [††]
With his best cloak, skeggox and sword, with shield and bow and hawk's staff, the fearless king set out from his garth to bind his fate to a book and a stone.

Kerrigan came first to an arched bridge where a stony path fell to honed steps on the one side and on the other side to a wide bed of level-packed earth.

Both path and bed led to a river below. On the bridge's landing he met a woman dipping into a bag of nuts and dried fruit. She wore two long braids and carried a horn.

Kerrigan asked her if she had seen Skulvådi The Wolf, wandering Olrun — She Who knew Ale Runes — Who walked with Disir, She Who could Cast Lupigash Spells.

She raised her horn, blew hard into it but made no sound save a soft whisper, then put the horn down and hailed him closer:

'I am tracking tales to trace the way that the old ones followed to the sea. What is your method? How is your way planned? Is your shield a guide? Or is it your cloak?

'Yet for all my care she may well be at home on the mount on the other side protected by folds that wrap The Pit — Hel's level place — to view the past.'

She gave Kerrigan no time to ask questions. From her sleeve she pulled a poultice of leaves, and grass and mud from the river's bank. She rubbed her cheek, then spoke again:
'I can soothe well any simple wound
but I need her now to fix this tooth.'
And she showed him one tooth filled with gold
and one with a gap that troubled her.

She closed her eyes as if to see
the right way to go. Then smiling she said:
'The priestess saved me from the blue lagoon.
She can raise and sink islands in the east.'

But before the King could say a word,
she sliced forest-breaks—slipped between the leaves
of spike-fruit trees, the crumbs of her meal
trailing behind her like kamtspiro eggs.

**Hel's Level Place**

\[ Kerrigan's hawk-days yielded no catch— neither ways to the sea nor to Skulvádi Wolf. Losing his way he came to the path where a ladder stepped to the coffer's hold. \]

While the Kerrigash planned his welcome home,
Kerrigan stumbled between Hel's worlds.
Above, through the ground, he could see the Stone,
where The Rock carved the first law-letter.

Beyond The Rock, as if in the clouds,
was a red shield upon which Dagazar
wrestled a dragon. Ahead, the mists drew
a house like his decked for a wedding.

While, behind him, the entrance closed.
The path grew so black, he raised his skeggox
for shadows lurking—the ladder eaten
by the Frowe's mists fretting icy walls.

Beyond his house, hallowed for a bride,
stood a white chamber chained to circles.
From the skin of its walls it wrapped Ragnarr's sons
into smaller chambers each to fit one man.

hawk-days — travelling in circles
ladder — ladder leading below ground to Hel; also describes a letter of Ximcan script which resembles pre-runic Hagl (N) (See image related to the fifth Verse-map, p. 124)
The Rock — Kerrigan The Rock, Kerrigan Iron Hand's grandfather

the entrance — the way into Hel's worlds via the ladder into the Under-ground
Frowe — followers of Freyja; here referring also to the Wolffem dises
Ragnarr — 'Bear Chest,' leader of berserkir who died on the storm journey after the raid in Swart-alfheimr 1051
With others rose more to board Naglfar.  
This company, only half dead,  
their faces wizened, their lips shrunken,  
passed Kerrigan as they might a ghost.  

When the ship sailed their flesh returned,  
their cloaks filled with wind like Skidbladnir’s sails.  
One raised a shield marked with fydlar and horn.  
Another grinned: ‘To Lindisfarne.’  

Kerrigan’s sword sweated with the chill.  
His shield’s weight doubled, sliced weals on his arm.  
But heedless to pain he hurried forward  
to view the bride, when a voice said:  

‘Take any path. It is all the same.  
I am Rônur, First Guardian  
of the Gild-rac. This is not the place  
where I should be found,’ and showed him a way out.  

The above stanza is the only surviving ref. to a ‘Guardian of the Gild-rac’ with no indication of how many was this Guardian the first. The subsequent leaves of the ms indicate that a large section was torn from it at this point. Rônr may be the singular to the plural form Rônur, indicating that this Guardian was a member of the group Rônur for which he or she spoke, meaning, perhaps, ‘I am of Rônur and of this group I am the first.’

Naglfar – ON. mythic ship made of dead men’s toenails, waiting on the shores of Hel for those not slain heroically and taken to either Valhall or Brudvangar

fydlar and horn – the only mention of musical instruments similar to those used by the Anglo-Saxons

‘To Lindisfarne’ – a most curious ref. since the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells us from the Winchester Ms, Canterbury Ms and Peterborough Ms that in 787 Danish (or Northmen’s) ships were “the first” to launch attacks against the English and in 793 “flashes of lightning” and “fiery dragons” were followed soon after by the sacking of the Christian monastery on Lindisfarne Island by Northmen from Hordaland, West Norway.

Above – An inscription on the reverse side of the ms of this lay, ‘Hel’s Level Place,’ and appears to be related to Skulvádi’s Verse-map number five. With this image-inscription were the words: ‘Directions to the secret ladder into the belly of Modsognirsborg and the golden key leading to the shining white rooms of the Great Temple of Circled Bones. Beyond this rise the mountains where Golden Mane lies buried.’ The detail below the main image appears to have been pasted into the whole picture later, showing how to descend the “secret ladder.”
How The Fearless came to Crown The Wolf
(or Helga’s Lay of Kerrigan’s Wedding)

When Iron Hand came home again,
news of his travels spread so far and wide
that The Black’s Clan believed his new magic
had a part in the death of their herd of pigs.

The King was not sure what his journey meant.
But when he swung tales of Yggdrasill’s secrets,
of Hel’s buried place and meeting the dead,
everyone trembled; none tried to cross him.

No Kerrigash cared that he had not brought
a branch of the tree from the eastern sea.
He walked unbeaten, brought hawks and old friends –
strengthened their forces to claim Muspell’s Island.

The Black sent messages to say they would join
Kerrigarðr’s forces – Radnir’s alliance
with Muspell’s trolls broken when he lost
half his land and sons to Karib chieftains.

For fifty days old foes, now friends,
waged a great war – laid waste Karib’s gains –
from Garmr’s Teeth to Blóðrock Ridge,
and nourished the soil of Kerrigan’s fame.

Then The Fearless steered his heated men east –
keeping his army from the Wood’s heart,
keeping clear of ghosts in the Dísir’s Howe –
not to stain his name with his Stave-bung past.

Beyond the east new isles were sighted
that stood as mounts drowned in damp mists.
To seal lasting peace, Kerrigan agreed
to marry Sikalu, Radnir’s youngest niece.

Not a festive bride (for all that feasting),
Sikalu wrote songs warning Iron Hand:
‘The strange medicines of Siswyo Kamtsi
will break our peace by Flame-haired’s hand.’

Yggdrasill – here meaning ‘Óðinn’
Siswyo – Ximacan priestess of The Lupigash clan exiled when Jaguara took his loyalty from Ximaca House to the self-exiled Clan of The Black. KER./AR. Kamtsi – ‘The Demon’; name given to Siswyo by her rivals
Kerrigan paid little heed to this
until the fifth day, the final feast-day,
when his hunting hawks died without warning—
fell from their perches, their beaks stained red.

They say that it was the work of The Clan
who was better held — kept at a distance —
as old enemies than boldly welcomed
as friends turned quickly on their Karib allies.

They say Radnir's sons burned jealously
for Kerrigan's wealth. For their father's death
in squalor and pain, they poisoned the seeds
of Kerrigan’s flock as he dined on boars' hearts.

Some say that the king poisoned his own grain
so that he could keep Skulvádi near
to solve his problems while he sealed ambitions
on his wedding nights in Sikalu's bed.

While others say that Kerrigan's pride
had grown so great, he made a gruel
killing half his flock to bait the witch
to help him chain Gild-rac's magic;

And when he travelled he would not tremble
with Hitsko's words worrying his ear.
When he took up shield, cloak and sax
he would not shie from the Ship of Nails.

His breast heaving with the sights of Hel,
he would so come to crown The Wolf.
In chasing mastery over magic realms
he would raise an heir riding The Wyrd.

The Clan – the Clan of Radnir The Black

Hitsko's words – Hitsko's warning
that The Moving Wood harboured
fire starters, magicians who could
ambush Kerrigan on his journey
there
Ship of Nails – ON. Naglfar, seen
by Kerrigan on his journey to Hel's
Level Place

an heir riding The Wyrd – a
successor determined by the Fates
To the story goes: Glámis, the bride of Olaf Great Blade, had a daughter called Nadlan The Rus’ who sailed east to Byzantion.

Nadlan journeyed and travelled some more. And, because she craved adventure, went as far as The Land of Seljuks to trade in silk and silver.

Because she was brave, bold and the tallest of any Viking maid—
with jet black hair and silver lashes—she was welcomed wherever she went.

Or this was so till roving Hús-bands, saw her south of Fatimid.
There she was taken to Togrul’s men, but bought her freedom with gems.

It was fleeing the Ghuzz that she found Gladsheimr—
for it seemed to her Óðinn’s plains.
The sun glided off dew-jewelled trees and people there wore little clothes.

Being fond of jewels Nadlan would join them in this place of pleasures waiting.
She had gone in fact to Ginnungagap and could lie around as long as she liked.

On the outer shores of Ymir’s Pool, shining with singing stones,
she lay for weeks—wounds from Hús-barbs bristling beneath her ringshirt.

She was found by chance by strange dwarfs, subjects of a powerful queen.
The Whizzer-stormer welcomed their faces the shade of night itself.

Olaf Great Blade — father of Olaf Hunter of Hawks (See Book I, Part 1)
Byzantion — Byzantium
Land of Seljuks — possibly beyond Central Asia to the original homelands of the Turkoman tribe, the Ghuzz or to the Seljuk Sultanate, first of the nomad Turkish empires which grew from the Central Asian clan called the Ghuzz who were converted from Buddhism to Islam in the 10th century. Between 1040 and 1055 their leader Togrul Beg was protector of the caliph of Baghdad

Hús-bands — an unknown nomadic tribe around the east of the Caspian Sea or, more likely, a generic word for the Daylami mercenaries who used short arrows known as husban or javalduz

Fatimid — the Muslim Fatimid Caliphate; followers of the line of Fatima, daughter of Mohammed, the rival succeeding line of Mohammed

Gladsheimr — ON. ‘place of joy,’ a sanctuary of the Æsir; perhaps an actual sanctuary for the historical King Wodan
Óðinn’s plains — in Norse myth, the plains of Æsgardr where the chief gods and goddesses assembled for councils and the site of Gladsheimr

Ginnungagap or Ymir’s Pool — ON. ‘seeming emptiness’; possibly Africa, or unknown southern lands beyond Africa and China.

Hús-barbs — the points of the husban short arrow

Whizzer-stormer — arrow-stormer, archer, Nadlan
Their leader, Alf Queen — let us call her that — ordered Gardril, her medicine woman, to tend the wounds of Silver Brows (the name they gave to Nadlan.)

The Black Queen had seen such ravaged women on her northern shores.
Lately they surfaced in great numbers, but none like Nadlan.

She ordered the Archer robed in bright red, in the finest beaten and woven reeds boiled in richest dyes from red parched earth and from crimson berries.

Nadlan’s Rus’-black locks and fine white-haired face glowed under Gardril’s touch.
When the Alf Queen looked at Nadlan now she saw the sea as she did in her dreams.

To the Alfar Dis Silver Brows made deserts into cool oceans of green as she told stories, strange and sonorous, of Arran and Atli’s desolate cities.

Alf Queen ate and drank to tales of the Hús. ‘They are poor bowmen.’
‘They make good targets,’ smiled the Turkoman-feller ‘and their shields love the torch.’

She taught Silver Brows the secret ways of desert hunting, well-fishing and of signs to mark the highland rocks. No bond could break the two.

The Gusir’s Terror taught the Queen star-maps and iron smelting.
They charted caves and hidden islands where fruit and minerals flourished.

While hunting for gems in the Radak Dunes, leagues from the Queendom, a Hús-band trader crossed their journey with a wicked scheme.

the Alfar Dis — the Black Queen
Arran — the Empire of Arran on the Caspian Sea
Atli — Attila The Hun
...torch — the greatest dishonour on the battlefield for the Seljuk was to have their shields seized and burnt

Gusir’s Terror — Nadlan
He was a midget with hands to his knees,
of a foul and fiendish manner,
with rapier toes, and amulet eyes—
one who gained ore for service.

‘Water for ware,’ be called to them.
‘These dunes are known
for their precious stones. I starve without them
and you are a long way from home.

‘Give me your takings and I will give you
water of the mineral springs
from Gardabon Lakes. You are too far south
to make the trip in one day.

‘You would not wish to travel wearied,
burdened by dust and thirst,
when you could give me your rubies and gold
for this crystal spring.’

‘We do not trade with those who treat
their women like animals.
Stoop lower with shame when you face me,’
said the Alf Queen.

‘Surely you deserve every respect,’
said the midget.
‘And for your bag of brilliant stones,
I would stoop lower if I could.’

‘You neither provide diversion nor distaste.
You have broken our rest
in the worst heat,’ said the Alf Queen.
‘You bore us with your begging.’

‘You will not last too many more days.
I hear that wind-storms wait
behind the Laak Dune and your bag is full,’
the ore-slave needled.

‘Leave us to ourselves,’ said the Soot-Elves Queen.
‘We ride and die together.
You have not cared for Alf-trade till now.
You will not have our bag!’
Because they refused to return his offer
of water for ore,
he now made demands to divide the two,
challenging one, then the other.

He saw how much the Rus' loved the Alf
and set out to test them,
to break their bond, for news of the pair
had reached the Seljuk chiefs.

Nadlan spoke up for her lip-stream-diver,
to spare her the trouble of treachery –
this trader's malice: 'Bring me your chief's heart
and take my life for my Queen.'

But the midget hated haughty women
and cast a curse on them:
'While either lives, neither loves another.'
Still, the Queen was pleased.

This was a safe curse as they made no claim
to find another to fill their dreams.
The Queen had found all there was to love
in the feller of the finder-and-Gusir's-work.

As the months went by it was found out
that Nadlan was to have a child
for the man-beast of the Hus-band tribe
who left her on Ginnungagap's shores.

The Desert Rus' so loved her loyal mistress
that she killed herself after the birth
according to Rus'-code – not to break a bond
by sharing its joys with a third.

The child grew up bold and strong.
The dwarfs named him Silver's Son.
The lonesome Alf Queen could not love him –
er heart frozen by Nadlan's death.

Under the guise of proving the man,
she sent him against the Ribat's clan –
to doubtful wars, his death assured.
But Hel's Boat won battle after battle.

lip-stream-diver – the Alf Queen,
the one who had stirred the mead
[poetry] of her heart, 'intoxicated her breast'
feller of the finder-and-Gusir's-work – Nadlan, she who could
defeat the Ghuzz's assaults

the Ribat's clan – Men of the Ribat,
Almoravids, a branch of migrating
Ghuzz tribes first settled in the
Sahara Desert in the late 11th
century
Hel's Boat – Silver's Son; like the
unsinkable death-ship made of
dead men's nails [Nagalfar]
As his fame grew, the Alf-Queen's faded.
Before long she died a lonely death.
Soon, the legend of Silver's Son spread to Harðraði's camps.

Loveless and unloved Silver's Son led wars
that drove ore-mongers
from the Radak Dunes before he rode north
through the edge of Ginnungagap.

He followed wars as far as Navarre,
and, later, as a trader
in Port Adulis on the Red Sea,
made his fortune in slaves.

Yet some say of him that Silver's Son
lost all he gained;
that a single stone stands in Balerica
to the Son of Togrul Beg's flight-bright Slayer.

Harðraði – Norwegian king
Haraldr Harðraði r.1046-1066

He followed wars – perhaps the Christian crusades or wars between the caliphates in North Africa
Navarre – kingdom in Northern Spain, 11th-12th centuries; The Kingdom of Navarre was one of the kingdoms not only fighting the Moors but themselves during the advance of Muslim Spain in the 11th century. It is not clear whether Silver's Son fought on the side of the Moors or the Christian crusaders.

Balerica – The Balearic Islands, in the Mediterranean Sea, east of Spain
Togrul Beg's flight-bright Slayer – Nadlan
The account of Skulvádi’s rise to power and of aging King Kerrigan’s loss of his hold over the Kerrigash begins with a duel between the King and Forskarlar giants, events which bring to Kerrigarór, Siswyō, a powerful medicine woman and Pocheta or trader. Siswyō’s presence heightens challenges from Águdrol and brings the disfavour of Kerrigan’s advisor, Íva, leader of the Ívaldi priestess clan. Driven by Siswyō’s potent spells and the weight of the burden of lost opportunities to cross The Path of Three Staves, Kerrigan travels alone to forbidden lands. In search of power more resilient than coercion by the sword, he encounters Modorr of Grimmdókk and discovers the hidden meanings of Siswyō’s magic, but at a heavy price.

1. THE WATERBIRD

The Forskarlars’ Last Stand: Prologue

Now I shall tell you tales of Gild-rac’s Ways that lined the caverns to Giddy Móat—days of Hilditonn, before Húldrác came, when The World’s Edge was at its narrowest.

When I was born — brought from thorn-pools — they named me The Wolf of Future’s Well.
When I hunted Þjazi’s Halls they called me Varg of Wayward Trails.

When I reaped mogwá from The Moving Wood, they said ‘Skulwádr, She Who Defeats the Lift of Staves, Braver than the King’; They called me ‘The One Who Wove Stave Pools.’

When King Kerrigan fell with his sword upon troll hordes they spoke of me as: ‘The One Who Rules the Shining Coin — Great Seiðstaftr of Kerrigan’s treasures.’

Now I take a name by which all greet me: ‘Skulpladálftr’ — The Hooded Wolf— ‘She Who will Reign while the King of Trails battles with giants and Hel-cold caverns.’

Hilditonn — ON. ‘War Tooth’
Giddy Móat — a region of tunnels believed to lead to Gild-rac; a system of rivers beneath old Modsognirsborg (See Book VII)
thorn-pools — the lagoon from which the thorn leaf was taken to assist Skulvádi’s birth
Þjazi’s Halls — The Moving Wood
Shining Coin — Heidr, gold, passion
Seiðstaftr — Enchanter, Magician
King of Trails — Kerrigan
The Forskarlars' Last Stand: Part One

Sons of Forskarlar — seeds of waterthurs — had taken to arms and wearing armour, and left their posts long forgotten by Nahros' clans who set them there.

The Waterfall Men challenged Kerrigan on Duelling Square near Xima's Ridge. While The Slayer's ships sat shelved on the pier, Kerrigan rose only for worthy duels.

Clanging of metal fed the thurses' courage. They masked in iron to double their skins. Gram's load wearying, weakening skill with weight, they were at their best when standing still.

They came to challenge the Red Clan's charge for the map that led to the golden key sitting in caverns in Utgardr's wells.

(So word had reached them through rumours and spells.)

As well, tales had spread of Dragon Tamer — the sword that could bind Skogul, the Shrieker. The giants' advance in sound and might was a charge to tame lands won by Hrögrmóat.

Kerrigan welcomed the noisy challenge. It was better this than Three Staves Path. And so the King rendered Skuld her needs while he kept at bay Úrdr and Verðandi.

He had not yet found the way to read signs that could take him through the open road. It was much easier to meet the giants than face shadow realms without magic charms.
This bought him time to take stock of foes
that kept the walls of Kerrigardr high
and to put on shows of strength and prowess,
that the Garth whispered: ‘Kerrigan fears nothing.

The Forskarlars’ Last Stand: Part Two

be duelling with giants — what a spectacle!
Iron Hand’s strike laid low three Wet-men.
Pår’s crusher’s might buried their nose-guards.
Great Nápros-feller blew thunder clouds.
The strife and clamour was over in no time:
thurses fell crashing on each other’s spears,
main-stay troops captive to the dizzying strike
of the Terror-days Feller in Iron Hand’s cut.

Their leader pulled rings to open his coat
then unclasped a plate from across his chest.
Some rumbled noisily to catch their breath
Others stood shaken and stripped to the waist.

Little blood was spilt. But the giants knew
that Steel-fist was now as strong as his tales.
Now The Fearless was Gerða’s Ring —
The Rock’s kin not shy of duelling cloaks.

In the lavish feast that followed the duels,
Etn of Armed Lakes — too few not wounded
to renew the fight — made firm amity
by telling stories of The Disir’s Howe.

Modlog Hepnota countered with lays.
He was the first to see Yotxpa’ka —
elves with the eyes of Dagazar’s Dragon,
those who made deals with rebel trolls.

Modlog so drew spells round the giants’ ears —
they shook their cloaks, rattled dented armour
at news of Fire-men, of Loki’s Seeds,
of the oldest foes of Waterfall Men.

The Forskarlars’ Last Stand: Part Two

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The Forskarlars’ Last Stand: Part Three – Jaguara’s Plan to Kill a Witch

The giants were fixed to talk of ‘The Frowe,’
the one who was called ‘Drejmadr’ – Dreamer,
whose name could silence the rattle of giants
for her ways were known with those of Yotxpa’ka.

So Jaguara seized the chance to raise fears
to malign the witch who brought him shame
in Radnir’s eyes. Leaning on his shield,
The Warring Alf said with red-rimmed glare:

‘The Skogka’s gaze will scorch the weary,
glow dark with fire, and from her finger-tips
raise uncut nails as was the way
she broke the bonds that Águdrol fixed.

‘You cannot hold her nor hinder her.
And there is no death born of Nature
that will bind this witch. When she is fittest
and stronger than a boar she must be killed.

‘Yet she lives to dodge the hand of death;
must never fall ill nor go without food.
She is the Skessa that must be found.
Even without drink her power strengthens.

‘Do not let her take her own life.
She must not die by her own hand.
For then her power will know no match
and she will rise to rake us as coals.

‘The soft-horn charger who wields the hewer
must be sure to swing the sating weapon
under black moons, with barren heart-roots
and not speak of the deed until it is done.

‘Only one of you can do this well –
not these tame thurses nor this weary King–
but the one who walked the ways of The Wood
and returns to rule when she is not queen.

The Warring Alf – Jaguara
Skogka – meaning ‘to make fear’;
possibly related to the Swedish skogrd meaning ‘Forest Ruler’
Águdrol – Jaguara’s younger brother and second-in-command within their clan
Then we may rejoice. Then we may say:

"This is a night for food and wine.
This is the time for hunters' fare."
Till then, we must fear the Frawe of The Wood.'

A Seal of Quills

So it was that the Warring Alf achieved two things, aiding Kerrigan’s manoeuvres. The Council agreed to find the Dreamer alive and the King’s reputation was sealed (now that his defeating warriors at Dragonfjord Council, killing Dorr’s prey and felling giants was as easy as taming hawks). But it was to me that the Council turned for answers about the Witch, for Sikalu’s songs were well known.

Riding storms, I said:

In my youth I hid with Logram’s men
To find the ways they hid from me.
While they fought the rims for fresh, planed sands,
They would field tales of a fearsome dis.

I first saw her shape when I braved the Vale
to hunt Wolffem ways, to trail Hurakan —
The Moving Wood was my secret place.
Then, she was not yet ‘The Water Bird.’

She had great wings of draping silver;
her wide body, moon-mantle web.
I stroked her gently, but fearing her beak,
folded my cloak to hide her head.

She made the shield a billowing sail
widening the forest to break my haven.
With wings of light she swept spider-beds
from deep-buried wells of rock-guarded eggs.

I slept, awoke, fell asleep again.
The feathered creature gave me one charge:
‘to build a fort like no other
until fires rise to redden the Moot.’

The Warring Alf – Jaguara
Dorr’s prey – trolls

Sikalu’s songs – ref. songs recited by Kerrigan’s wife, Sikalu, about Skulvadi’s association with ‘Siswyo Kamtsi’ (See ref. in Book V, Part 2, p. 125)

Hurakan – KER. spelling for ‘Hunrakan,’ from ‘húracan’ related to the myth based on sky observations relating to the Mayan figure called ‘Hunrakan’ (The One Leg God) who destroyed an earlier World Age by flood. This anticipates or may be related to the events of Book VII.
She lifted veils through Weki'ka'lır —
from the trunks of trees a skirt of threads,
from threaded skirts a lodge-drawn cape,
from the cloak of dreams signs to bridge-ways:

'We shall travel on different paths
and, though the wind has uneven wings
for east and west and north and south,
we shall meet again with the bird between us.'

Many days later I found fresh tracks
to the Eastern Edge of the Disir's Wood
which seemed to be the silver bird's
but here was no sign of her shining wings.

I traced my steps from the hidden Wood
on Tkatsi's Tail when there it stood:
an ugly fowl never seen before
from Forskarlar's Veil to Útgardrsborg.

The bird was nestled on a knife-edged well
with other creatures that walked and flew
though they had no feet nor eyes nor wings.
These beasts so huddled as to hide their forms.

I said: 'Are you she? The Silver Bird?
And if you are, what have you done
with your moon-swept wings? You now wear the brow
of the dragon-tamed son of Rogaland's alf-slayer.'

The fowl replied: 'I will take you
to the highest peak then I will let you go' —
her whispered magic so dark and trembling
it sucked and swallowed deep knots of twilight.

I waited all night until morning broke
but nothing moved save the smell of dust.
I waited all day without food or drink.
Then, at twilight, the Bird came again.

As đagr, she grasped the two square pools.
She stirred each pool with wyrding breath.
And with each sweep of her swarthy wings
she wove new quills from quilted Need-seas.

Weki'ka'lır — KER. possibly a derivative of A.R. hrwekika-lúr for 'spirit,' a word recorded in the journals of Juan Catalquéz of his journeys into the South American highlands.

Eastern Edge (Tkatsi's Head [the rising sun]) of the Disir's Wood — The point where the rising sun first strikes the forest on Tkatsi's Tail — following the light of the setting sun.
She doubled her feathers – deep-lined her spines – levelling the bays to a hammered shield.
She gleamed black – trapping shadows – shedding bird-fins to form line-fields.

Some plumes sank into silvered pools.
Some swirled back again to claim their place on the strange fowl’s tail that now stretched and grew.
And so she masked every grain of light.

The reed-bed drawn – the leather-sheet scored – the Wyrd’s bird crouched on Hæglid’s Mirror.

She slipped and glided with eyes of coal scanning the air with Garmr’s Grin.

Now, light-leaf raised to a broken branch, she flicked her tail and then she said:

‘I am from the place Tksifro Kooré.
Some have named me “Siswyó Kamtsi.”
Some say I am called “Drejmadr, Dreamer.”
I am Water Bird – a Seal of Quills.’

And she curled her wings to grow quilled fingers sprouting from her spines; her wrist and hand curved as a bird’s claw. Gaður-spells marked her crown and throat with fire – Yosika, the piercer – Yobloka, the pool’s eye – Hal!

While everyone trembled from the scenes of my tale, Kerrigan’s plans formed more clearly around him. The more the giants and Council showed how much they feared the Witch, the better Kerrigan saw his way to bend weak allies and dispose of vengeful enemies. It was so I came to travel to the Moving Wood to bring The Dreamer back to the Garth.
She greeted me on the edge of Forskarlar’s Veil with her blanket already folded for the journey. She did not ask why I needed her, but followed me without a word. It was clear that she already knew where our journey would end.

Above – From Almordozar’s letters, ‘Quill Seals’ stone-rubbing taken from the base of Dragonbing runestone. Almordozar believed these seals were used to make coins such as the ones he traded along with the Gild-rac Manuscript for his life when Sir Walter Raleigh took “El Duende.”

Left: ‘Quill Map’ believed to be a sky map showing numbers and symbols used by nomadic Toltec traders such as Siswyo (according to Catalquéz). It is suspected that Siswyo’s ‘magic’ encompassed her power as a trader and banker. However, it is proffered by Catalquéz that the ‘quill map’ and not the ‘coin-seal’ defined Siswyo’s role more accurately as someone with access to devices and charts unknown or unavailable to the people among whom she travelled.

2. THE SPIRIT WOMAN’S AMULETS

Huldra’s Frowe

Siswyo, The Spirit Woman of Tksifro Kooré, arrived with Tkatsi-gold swinging from her belt. She refused the guest’s seat at The Council’s table. Instead she offered Kerrigan her chair where she could keep one eye on him and the other on her food which she carried wrapped in a divining blanket.

Tkatsi-gold swinging from her belt – with the sign of power, that is, wearing the sign of Tkatsi’ [ON. Sowulu - 5] meaning ‘the sun’ etched on her belt in gold.
ary of codes—laws fixed in houses—
the Bird Woman would not touch our feast—
taste no grain nor herb, drink no gourd nor horn,
et no bowl of nuts nor smoke-dried meat.

She asked calmly for a tray of fish
of dark, red flesh and read its bones.
Hitsko offered it cooked in juices
on a bed of leaves from a lamtaín tree.

She refused this, sent him away
to bring the fish while it still bled
carefully wrapped in maaž-leaf strips
and tied with vines that climbed Sokkvabekk.

Sokkvabekk—The Sinking Lakes
of Kerrigarðr

e poised her fingers over her bowl
taken from a shawl sheltered in her robes.
In it were boiled roots and mokpetl grubs;
then she set the gourds in secret markings.

She did not look up till the last grub.
Then she took the fish, ripped the bones and skull
in one quick motion from its scaly flesh,
counted the spine-knobs, wiped her hands and said:

'Do not trust old mounds. At Four-caverns Peak
the rules of Garmr's Teeth
mark the ways under ground.'

Puzzled by her words, the Members of the Council
addressed her in turn:

Kopatl said:
'We know the Past. So spread your tongue
upon Future's gain and rid us of foes.'

Kerrigan said:
'Past ills will not break as brittle boulders
nor will they yield as yearlings tamed.
We are free of trolls but not of the tricks
of enemies turned to allies in arms.'

Porsteinn said:
'We have no map, no sign to hold us
but Dagazar's words—Ullr's Quiver
raising a warrior from our bones' dust.'
Kopat said:
‘Take us to treasures. Share this kingdom.
Make peace with us or join outliers
and taste our fly-winds fed with the Húracan.’

But Sísuyo laughed, refused The Council
the words they wanted to weigh the future
on burdens past. She signalled no road,
no turn to rest pressing questions.

The Council stood, called the meeting
‘much wasteful art,’ called the woman
‘Huldra’s Frowe, Úrðr’s Maid drawn from madmen’s tales,
a dis of shadows, of misty realms.’

**Wolfem-law**

When all had left but Kerrigan and I, Sísuyo whispered in Kerrigan’s ear:

> You must wait for winding ways,
lines of cargo lifting,
leaves holding seidr-law.

‘All Ívaldi have tried to find them
but no one can seek the coffer’s hold,
one but who embrace Wolffem-law.

‘For you whose heart belongs to Hroðvitnir,
one direction is rewarded,
one enchanted gift.

‘You will never go to Gild-rac’s den.
For every battle dreamed,
victory-banneered wars dream of you.

‘It will confuse you with the smell of trees,
for the fine hairs that hang from its fruit
wander through all Muspell’s lands.

‘Gild-rac whistles every weeping branch,
clears the forest as a book
opening difficult words.

---

our fly-winds – sweeping swords
Huldra’s Frowe – KER. kenningr
for Valkyrie of the Forest
Úrðr – Fate of things past

seidr-law – enchantment, magic,
‘witch crafts’

Hroðvitnir – ON. Fenrir, The Wolf
The book has scored its corners sharply.
Though lightly bound,
no gathering is lost.'

Síswoyo also told Kerrigan of how she became a Lupigash:

She had spent days wandering The Wood
and the vast caves of the Dread Black Hills.
There was not a cloud from The Lake to Xima
when she got the mark that lined her crown.

But when the leaves layered with steel
sent storms to call the hot Huracan,
it was then the floors of forest fire
gave her the stains that marked her chin.

When Steel-fist's nights could find no sleep,
when grey corners coiled his house,
lights from the shore, she said, would lure
ways to seal the signs sitting at World's Edge.

Síswoyo said:
'You may catch these lights and hurl them back
or choose to die as their mark –
lie, the target.'

'They will come wind-borne wheeling three rings,
harvesting the hooves of Huldra's beasts.

'Ifrown Skulvádi Úlfr. Undo Úrdr;
Vorðandi's whispers silence closed lips.'

Above - 'The Water Bird's Tattoos' or galðr-spells (magic-sounds) with arrows showing how they were worn by Síswoyo
Below - From Skulvádi's journal: illustration with the Ximacan words beneath each image, from left right: KER./AR. Yosika (to fix fire), Yohloka (to pierce) and Ha! (the eye of the pool). Above this drawing was a faint untranslatable script that transliterates as "Hgeloc."

Amulets to Pierce your Breast

Síswoyo gave the King glimpses of what she would teach me – that the beast hid everywhere:

Beyond Utgardr's shell lies a stony maze
where all who pass have left their marks
on its narrow walls. There, water feeds fish
as large as a field,' she explained.
‘Sitting in the dark on treacherous banks
stands a landing laden with moss
that can fix a man as it does its wall
in steps of stone and straits of terror.’

She said:
‘Not only this have I seen to tell,
but from its heart brought potions
and amulets to pierce your breast.

‘I have ones to break a man’s spirit,
another to strengthen his dreams
and another to bury them.

‘This potion lies men in the lap of Frigg,
but this will dry their seed in youth,
and this, embellish them for women’s harvests.

‘This is the amulet from Butterfly Valley—the deadliest of all
for it sweetens death.

‘See how it shapes its shades of blue—
all at once it is both the sky
and the core of the beast’s pool.

‘Leave this blue potion for life’s last sip.
Do not grip the amber, alone,
without The Wolf by your side.

‘But others will come to claim your gifts,
if the bearer betrays the load
when the burden of magic hums.

‘They cradle plans to crush your seat,
from the back of the dragon,
from the bones of old battles.’

With this, Síswyo folded her blanket and prepared to leave the meeting halls of Dragonping. But her departure was stopped short at the doors of the Halls by Águdrol, heading a band of warriors armed with drawn swords, shouting:

Above – drawings from Skulvádi’s Books of some of the amulets that Síswyo presented to Kerrigan. The topmost pair of amulets is believed to be the set for administering the ‘blue potion’ (with the second of the two being the blue potion vial although the bottle itself was made of amber)

...the bones of old battles – Síswyo’s prediction of the imminent arrival of the Spanish in Muspell’s Land, fresh from battles against the Moors and travelling by a route similar to that taken by Dagazar Kerrigansson.
"See! The witless volva! The wearisome witch!"

Jagura’s voice trembled with her name.

Kerrigan sent his best swordswoman

for this useless Frowe, this feeble dis.

"I let her walk free to show you all

she has no more power than a broken twig.

Why should you follow Kerrigan now?

His words have failed. The witch is false."

Siswyo would have ignored Águdrol but for the look on Kerrigan’s face as his eyes caught the sea of Kerrigash gathered to witness his shame. Siswyo glanced once at Águdrol, then went on her way, for, despite Águdrol’s threats, no one would touch the Pocheta of Mists.

Within two days of the Wood-frowe’s curse,

Águdrol forgot how to close his eyes.

He could not sleep nor could he eat.

And no one knew how to cure him.

His great pain was not so much

from lack of cures but from his shut door

for he would take no herb from ‘The One Who Walked with The Witch that Kerrigan Summoned.’

So Águdrol built legends of Siswyo.

The cliff-break’s news spread far and wide

that ‘Siswyo’s glance crushed Jagura’s kin

dead as a snake between her thumbs.’

And from west to east, the words were sung:

‘Let no one cross Skulvádi’s Frowe.

Let no one mock the Wolffem’s law,

nor She who reins The Wood’s line-fields,

nor She who folds Skuld’s gilded hold!’

‘.....

NOTE: This section of the Books ends abruptly here.
3. Bragi’s Spells

The Medicine Charms of The Valley of Butterflies

The Ivaldi Clan had taken offence to Kerrigan’s embracing Siswo’s counsel. They sought from his wife, fretful Sikalu, ways to win him back—the means to rest the roving King from Lupigash spells.

Iva prepared an evening feast at which Sikalu would preside the eminent host, lauded with gifts. When Sikalu was full of drink, Iva called her close with plots, with schemes to return her clan to Kerrigan’s court:

‘Your King is tired from that witch’s spells, her odorous ointments, her trailing trinkets. These burdensome things must bury his mind far from your heart.’

‘My husband worries every note I sing,’ Sikalu said. ‘Nothing will waken him from his gilded chest of rings and baubles to climb my bed at night.’

‘With love he presses blue potions and red to his face, like a mirror, to his breast, like a song, while the lays I write fly over his head like hawks not worthy of his glove.’

‘Your songs do vary,’ Iva replied. ‘Some say they put beasts to sleep. Some say they make Dorr’s prey howl. But even Kerrigan would find them sweet if he called us to Council as he once did.’
The dim embers of Sikalu's hopes
livened with the breath of Iva's words,
for the Black's niece loved Kerrigan's touch
were it only the wave of his hand,
the lift of his eye to send her away.
So, she revealed Kerrigan's secret:

'So, she revealed Kerrigan's secret:

After Hitso's feast to Deminan's kin
when all was silence and secrecy,
I heard him chant these sayings:

“These are the charms to the Hawk's Pits —
between the lands beyond the hills,
between World's Edge and Hel's Homes.
One such place opens many of these doors;
this the Valley of Butterflies.

“And if you want to witness this,
you must weigh the potion carefully
for there is a potion for this.”

And he said this:

“There is a great yard where men shave ships
shrunken from keel to bow
into finely grained dust.
They slip dust-vessels through hollow staves,
from one yard to another.

“From there, the dust falls fresh and whole
to form an oar-claw army,
to build a fort of yard-beards.
A man in laced boots, as Vikingar wore,
commands all ships awaiting sail.

“And if you want to witness such things
weigh the words of this amulet well
for there is also a potion for this.”

And he also said this:

“There is a plant with roots to the sky
though it lives under ground,
though it births no trunk nor leaves.
Within its earth-home it boards a bulb
that stores a potent pitch.
“Slice its bloated end. Set this in your palm.
Let the juice seep through your flesh.
Let the sap swim in your blood.
It is the light of Bifrost’s Way.
This is how the Æsas travelled.

“And if you want to witness the ways
to dress in Bragi’s spells,
this is the potion to weave them.”

“But Kerrigan could not decide
which to try or in what order,
on which to set his will.
My husband falter on force and faint,
but soon he will favour one.

‘You will call me mad— but the blue potion
glistens with wyrting stones,
glows from a vial of broken glass.
If a droplet seeps it creeps back to its place
like a river drawn to the sea.’

The Ivaldi High Ones were greatly tempted
to call Sikalu many things,
but held their tongues and saved their strength
for the chance to stand
between Iron Fist and his magic spells.
Afterall, the King owed much to them.

They had helped him draw the holding-lines
of The Edge of The World tighter.
They had made forests from The Very Green
visible beyond the forbidden gap.
Now The Very Green opened at the border
from Modsognirsborg to Kerrigardr.

Where it once took a wild pig ten days
to disappear from eye and ear,
it now took two days if you freed the beast
to cross the dark and misty plains
that stretched between The Shining Lake
and Kerrigardr’s mounds.
Nothing could be heard when the plains swallowed the squealing beast.
On those secret fields no single sound could be distinguished over another.
All sounds were the same. All sounds lived as one in The Gap Beyond The Edge.

While the Ívaldi slept in their tents
(for they were very tired that day from reading the fog that hooded the King)
Kerrigan made up his mind to steel a resolve, to stride galdr-laws.

A man too used to marching to sounds of strings he had strung well,
The Troll Slayer moved in secret to bridle a magic ride,
heedless of the warning not to take it, alone, without The Wolf by his side.

Síswo's First Lay of Kerrigan's Ride to Grimmbjókk:

Modurr of The Hrimnir

On the ninth rise of Manati moons -
the Volva's orb, Máperolu drawn -
the King stained his fate with Bragi's store,
raised his fathers' blood - fires waiting, flamed.

Ten days of Crowning, he sliced the bulb's heart and emptied the amber into his eager breast.
In the Blóð's heat-calm the Fearless King drank the potion and root to double Lupigash spells.

The two brought him strange lands peaked,
bent the World's Edge to Hrimfaxi's hooves.
He gripped the rime-mane. Dagr's ghost-mare reared.
His heart beat wildly. His head spun with caves.

The keel-ox leapt to the realms of Grimm where Hrimnir waited for men in haste.
Their leader, Modorr, welcomed Kerrigan, smiled at the King's way to giants' caverns.

Máperolu - Ximacan elfen people, similar to North American Indian tales as Geow-lud-mo-sis-eg (See Book II, Part 1, p. 38)
Hrimfaxi - ON. meaning 'rime-mane' or 'Night's horse'
keel-ox - horse-ship
Hrimnir - 'giants' from the south highlands
Dressed in Hropt’s hood, Modorr was glorious, a formidable thurs of high esteem. Singly he had faced Great Þorr in duel and, in fair battle, beat the Red-robed Slayer.

At Grimm-sea’s edge Dagr’s mare halted. Modorr pulled the King from the sweating horse, quickly led the Potions-well to a place of dreams bare as aqua trunks and warm as mead.

The giants took Kerrigan into jade-cold halls rooms as high and bleak as the tallest tree, as wide and deep as the coldest wood, with walls that shone like Glitnir’s shields.

The roof was of steel, the beams, of fire. Here, others came and went with ease and so their meetings were turned to feasts when they smelt the mead and tasted the fare.

Giants called this place ‘Grimmdókk’ – Lake of Rimes. But it was warm – no normal rime-home. Yet, rain and snow-waves sprayed from dark-pooled skies. This closed Grimmdókk from other worlds.

At Grimmdókk’s doors cups of rain cooled in balls of snow as if clouds had fallen as white mountain-rain. Some revellers bathed in its slow pools; some watched it fall.

Grimm’s Men were happy to let travellers rest in their Halls, stack dice on musings. As the King watched those setting off for High Plains, he was summoned into Hrimnir Council.

Only Modorr spoke. Bowing his head, he said: ‘A flesh hound, brash and bold, holds arrows from us.’

Hrimnir were not glib nor candid giants, Modorr most of all. They worked on men’s hearts, their sigils and words travelling more strangely in the Grimm’s wells than any place else.

Hropt’s hood – Óðinn’s helmet
Hrimthurs – frost-ogre or frost-giant; one of the Hrimnir
Potions-well – Kervan

Above – restored stone-rubbing from the eastern face of Dragonbing Stone showing ‘Giants greeting Kerrigan in The Halls of Grimmdókk’

beams – stafur (as in skaldic measure), main posts, supports

Grimmdókk – this appears to be the name as taken transliterally from this damaged section of the ms; may also be ON. Hrim-bekk meaning ‘lake of rimes [frost giants]’ or ‘sunken rimes’

flesh hound – transliterates as KER. hörundr-axi-ga meaning ‘flesh-eating horse,’ in the ms., O.N. hörand ‘flesh’
Their lips moved with: 'Gildrac' and 'Four-caverns Peak.'
But Modorr cared little for keys to gold pits.
He left trolls to haggle for stones and gold.
He wanted Stone-keys to Huldra's mines.

king Kerrigan would share nothing of what he knew —
not Síswno's warnings nor the Guardian's face.
He offered one thing to trade for their words,
From his tunic he drew Skulvádi's sound-maps.

The tallest thurs took Kerrigan's leaves
and gave them to Modorr who added new signs.
When the King now looked at Skulvádi's words,
he could not see them — their meanings re-written.

The signs had fallen through Modorr's cloaks.
Now ways to travel to walk between worlds —
from Kerrigarðr's plains to Hel's caverns
would keep him longer from Skulvádi's door.

The Tall Thurs stood up and began to speak
as if Iron Hand had just arrived:

'The Two-braids Bride — she came this way.
So taken with Grimm she stayed for weeks.
She did warn us that our High Plains
would soon be graced by a famous King.

'She found our herbs best to mend her tooth.
She left you a gift but I have lost it.
It may be hard to find her once more
since you first met by an act of chance.

'Now you may go north by the way you came.
First give me the staves to Keys of Stone.'
The King was silent. Modorr stroked his breast,
keeping close his plans to claim Muspell's secrets.

The Dark-dressed Thurs who stood tallest
handed Kerrigan a new set of runes,
ones that the Troll-slayer could also not read.
Modorr rose to go but then he said:

Síswno's warnings — See 'Wolffem-law,' p. 141
the Guardian's face — 'Rónur, First Guardian of Gild-rac' See 'Hel's Level Place,' p. 123
sound-maps — Verse-maps (See Book V, Part 2)
The Wolf's book was full — crowded with new signs. So, the Fearless King opened his ring-shirt, cut open his vest and carved the notes with his crested blade on the leaves of his breast.

Hrimmir shook their heads, were not much impressed. They could have done likewise and spared their blood. But Modorr did not move to mock the King's map cut deep to the tail of each sigil's stroke.

Right — illustration from annotations that accompany Skulvádi's Lays of her Conquests (see Book VII) describing these markings as "The Hrimmir's Runes." The annotation is reproduced here with gaps as recorded in Skulvádi's ms. It is believed that the gap-script detail spells the word 'SkulvaSr' in Kerrigash.

Síswyo's Second Lay of Kerrigan's Ride to Grimmðókk:

The Crest of The Dragon’s Mouth

When the fog lifted from Deminan's Mount, the great revolts of the Ívaldi Clan crushed by The Wolf's Guards, Kerrigan's Garth praised Iron Hand in Skuld's Queen's name.

With blackened face and bloodied breast
Skulvádi waited for news of the King. It was on the heels of Íva's defeat that Modlog's search brought Kerrigan home.

His eyes and heart for lands queen-crowned, Modlog Hepnota said: 'The Fearless King lies with weary-drooped byrnie and wave-caked breast in War-tooth's arms at Four-caverns Peak.'
Shallow whispering, wide-eyed Logramsson
showed the queen and guard his deep-ripped mail-coat
and Modorr’s signs that brought Skulváði
closest to his heart on ‘Katzi’s head-streams.

On the face of the man once called Iron Hand
marched the drengar’s load, words bunting his lips
for ways to speak signs from eyes sunk with rimes.
Petals on her breath, The Wolf’s voice shivered:

‘What have you conquered, Mist-load Bearer,
Have you found lands of which I dreamed?
Where have you travelled that buries your breast
in foundries of words? Are these rimes’ clues?

‘I would have led you to kamtspiro nests
where fiends stumble on their forest songs,
where the female bird weaves calm breasts
from cloud-sea journeys to the Lifts of Staves.

‘You bear Skuld’s scores on the scalding air.
Your grey beard glows with your silvered hair.
Now you are He Who Fathers Grimm’s notes
from the hoary trail of the Serpent’s Crest.’

And Hilditonn’s Bride freed the King’s neck
of a leather necklace and a three-tiered ring –
of his heavy cargo, his jagua-laden peak –
and her cloak, the clasp to claim him her own.

Skulváði Wolf held the closing breath
of Grimm’s Fearless to the caverns’ Peak
that a great stillness hung the weeping Stone
with casiks’ shrouds, with cloaks of Hel.

Over Surt’s lost lands could be heard one sound:
Skulváði’s fist crushing the King’s empty burden.
Then the cave-framed Wolf drew her clenched pause
from the cooling face of Kerrigardr’s Fearless.

In silence, Modlog stood to his charge
to guard the living and the newly dead.
‘Stand to Laws of Stone,’ said the Queen-to-be.
‘Time to lower bones and raise a crown.’
4. MODLOG’S HEROIC LAYS OF THE WOLFFEM
QUEEN AND THE KING WHO RODE TO GRIMMDOKK

Hnitbjorg’s Steeds

Something wild and dread now drives the wind
that feeds the clouds of Kerrigarðr.
Firm-set and foul, fretful murmurings
hold the Garth to night-fires.

A thing of night drawn by wishes
rises with the setting sun.
Mists with crested tails of serpents whistling
shake the very Disir’s Howe.

Outstretched arms — dread augury — owned by Kerrigan
soar twin-perplexed, twilight-borne
raising questions for the waiting queen
against coldest, blackest skies.

Dead King Kerrigan, seeking Love’s pledge,
rides an empty kiss that drags his corpse.
Death on the wind, robed by The Eagle,
hunts Skulvádi for its rest.

With Síswo’s spells deep-sunk in his chest,
Kerrigan carved his way to Hel,
Skulvádi’s mead-leaves soiled by journey’s hand
weighing on his mind.

His battle-leek’s cut bearing galdr-signs
to prove his journey to The Wolf,
plunged itself too well where Skulvádi lay —
beneath the lines of his tunic.

Now when Flame-haired’s cloak sweeps from the night,
her eyes sharp as burning coals,
hers arms stone-ice, she speaks of no one
but Kerrigan calling from Úllr’s Rest.

To the Potions Dis counting beads and stones
on the floor of her room,
Skulvádi said:

Hnitbjorg’s steeds — mythic ON.
mist walls of the mountain fort
where the last magical syllables
[poetry] and potions were left by
the giant, Suttung, who failed to
hide them from Hrimnir and
Ivaldi dwarfs, Fjaral and Galar,
who stole what was not secured in
the fort
night-fires — ghost-deterring fires.

The Eagle — reference to the
menace of giant corpse-eater,
Hraesvelg.

mead-leaves — book
mind — brjóst or mood-thought

battle-leek — sword
beneath the lines of his tunic —
Kerrigan’s heart

Úllr’s Rest — the bluff near
Garmr’s Teeth where Dagazar
spoke with the hunter Úllr’s
apparition (see Book I, Part 4,
‘Úllr’s Words,’ p. 29)

Potions Dis — Síswo
'Riding mist-waves — Hnitbjorg’s steeds —
    clouds have taken whalish form.
The King, mead-saddled, sets watch for me,
    with beasts bearing manic storms.

‘How shall I rest his raging will
    seated on such seamless bow?
Is there a well to close the way,
    to fasten his brazen prow?

‘I, the hunted turn upon his harried breast
    to flee this harvest full of fear.
His double rides the mourning garth.
    The giants’ marks paint his heart.

‘Single-eyed he strides with waiting Asynjur.
    A crown of three wings
fans his smiling face — more luminous,
    peaceful and lean than when alive.

‘Sipping new ale he sinks glassy fields
    with Hrimnir’s runes across his breast.
His mead-moist lips mouth “Grimmdøkk’s Bridge.”
    His finger points Four-caverns Peak.

“To the ghost I say, but he does not hear:
    “You dress dim caverns
with cloud-thread capes and claim Night’s gems
    when brave kings should be buried.”

‘Now I fear to claim the fix of sleep.
    There his steed has tied its reins.
When I raise my tongue to quell his claims,
    I taste the brew that coats his skin.’

‘You must ride the winds,’ said Siswyo.
    ‘Hold the wraith or never sleep.
From his uncloaked heart old heat rises still
    as from a breathing breast.

‘The Ivaldi witch, Iva, Sand Reader,
stole the corpse’s dragon-shield.
    Now, without the buckler to bury the shadow,
Kerrigan sails at will.’

Mead-saddled — reference to Kerrigan’s pursuit of the magical words he retrieved from Modorr

Single-eyed — like Óðinn; Óðinn gave his eye to taste the water from the giant Mimir’s pool where he learnt the wisdom of poetry and signs (runes)

Asynjur — ON. Freyja’s valkyrie attendants

dragon-shield — perhaps a shield believed to protect the King from giants (Hrimnir) in the after-life
Upon the eve of the Crowning Feast
to launch the reign of The Wolf,
Skulváði drank and ate alone
as a bride before her wedding feast.

Her Faithful Guard, I set to mound-watch,
while Skulváði climbed the misty sod
to face the King who walked the night –
Gladhsheimr denied for the Hrimmir’s vale.

The ground below her moaned sinking air,
thick-laid as the King’s breath
while Hildi’s Queen called to the place
where corpses waited for ground or flame.

The Wolf called out. The Death-walker came.
Skulváði said:
‘What is it to walk with time at your back,
yet fly land-fixed – counterfeit’s fall?’

Kerrigan replied:
‘The gravid, wan flesh of the meaded sea
limps cold and putrid from my hand
yet steels an armour, a sleeve about me
where wishes climb a towered space.

‘Every song, chatter; every living thing
cloaked as silence;
for the bow braced, for a meagre touch
that does not shiver on the air…

‘A hold of hopes resound as harmless rocks
thrown into empty bowls.
And where they roll with loud despair,
vibrations flock the air.

‘While streams forget the ripening sun,
leap their banks for buried blossoms
between the deep breathing and the briared dead,
your footsteps haunt with fresh regret.

‘How shall I claim you from such iron bliss
to steal a hunt with hawks.
Yet such as these are wondrous days
so firmly set on cloud-sped cliffs.
for limbs to walk and wake some light,
a hand to crown your head,
for blood that does not race but crawls with love—
these are the things I miss.

They speed before me holding me to tests
where the firmest touch
flies worn with thirst as a dying breeze
sucks against a rock.

I should chase through vast ebon rooms;
all questions, declined.
Here walls are bent on crescented trees
and forests line the floor.

I should wrap you into the safest room,
rally guests with horns of mead,
caress fresh-hewn props where firm-rooted staves
shroud all cry from our lips.

But I sense a wind that rattles your words,' Skulváði said.
'Suttung's wrecks playing with captive signs,
memories turned, capsized?'

Kerrigan frowned:
Why must you also stir the other dead
mounting mares with Óðinn?
Let you and I laugh in whispers.
Let Skögal ride north alone.

You slide to the cage where Niðogg sleeps—
lines straining black encounter.
Its coiled tail alerts one forbidden pause
yet moves at steady forward pace.

Swing each writhing line from its tethering post,
or it kills us both without remorse.
It is I who must race with maddened mares
into Kvasir's Cauldron.

How heavily weighty rests repair—
The Fearless in a puppet-dance
with singular ghosts seeking slanted doors.
Run far from this uneasy place.
Take the thurs-ruled way— the Hrimnir's cave.
With root-fist and potion
you will find the key to Grimmdøkk's door
to the net of sounds beyond.

'Suspended dungeons— seeds masking time
that break with bitter fruit—
lift Óðinn's armies from the noise-bound web
against Modorr's hordes.'

'But, this turtle-road— burdens saddled—
leaves narrow halls tilting,
turns me on false scents, is sealed with shadows.
You must take the path without me.

'A fort will gleam through the chasms
by the power of axe and light.
Build the fort of stone as false refuge
to those who will follow on your heels.

'Your shielded battles— buckled-glories waiting—
force me forward
against my grip to hold the garth
beneath unfinished rule.

'Now a surer tomb is gouged ahead
across Trembling Roadways
where rumours of graves open to sink me
with Kerrigarðr's Feast for the Dead.

'This distance we chart with a final kiss
holds a shrouded ending—
a maze-fixed coffin where a bridge opens
closed with waiting suspended.

'If I fail to grasp the rising mist
where giants cool and high retreat,
then I fail to pass the pits of Hel
and vault my doubts in vaguer dust.

'Do not look back for what is known,
for what is named and passes on.
Cast your eyes instead for Öðrorir's face
than leap pits for shallows tamed.

Öðrorir — ON. meaning 'heart stirrer,' cauldron containing the mead of poetry or magical sounds
SKULVÁDI ÚLFR: THE EPIC POEM

VI-158

'Take this warning well' (patting his blood-weals)
for Azlan sails
from Grimmdókk's Vale to The Moving Wood
with Vanir battering its walls.

The rage of shield-fire with giants’ magic —
this keeps Valhöll bloody.
Gaps halt the Hrimrir from the treasure’s place.
'Keep Modorr from your door.'

So Skulvádi learnt Water Bird’s meanings
from Kerrigan’s blue lips:
a fort of chasms, soil-rulers’ mound-hastener,
the meaning of her name.

Then Ran’s Daughter closed a weed-dressed grasp
wrapping Kerrigan’s face.
Then, he was gone — with the lifting gale
raised by Modgud’s horn.

Lines of Cargo

Skulvádi weighed Kerrigan’s words
on her return from Úllr’s Rest.
But she would not make the hurried journey
as he had — the zulis vial, empty.

Before Tkatsi poured herself again
into the Lake of The Ridge,
The Wolf summoned all to solemnise and praise
Kerrigan’s mound-dressed corpse.

With a piercing cry she pulled rusting spears
and poured molten glories
into Wod-struck hearts — those caught in mourning —
to fill the gaps in Kerrigash breasts:

'Dark days shall blaze to raze these lands
that failed to fall under Iron-fist’s rule,
that close Kerrigarðr still.
Where there is sea, where there is land,
each warrior must wield blood-wands,
each warrior’s battle-axe, the beast’s fear.

NOTE: Skulvádi’s address to the clans is a shield-poem. Such poems were recited when a leader died (e.g. Hákonar Saga Góða XXXVII and, in the Elder Edda, “Hákonarsmal “ and “Eiriksml”). See illustration of Kerrigan’s Wall of Shields, p. 198
"Our ships will sail from virgin staves,
will thrash new shores,
will breach river heads.
For what I have seen in these forests
each clan will kneel
to gain a stake in the spoils.

For giants, dwarfs, poor or regal-dressed,
from wherether they crawl or ride –
from troll-house or giants' stead,
laden with favours or empty coffers –
the silver mines or the twisting sword,
if they do not praise The Treasure Keepers.

"When Modlog has set the sod-borne King
to rest on Weighted Rock's Ship,
to sing pyres to the sky,
I shall stand above on Ullr's Rest
to catch the leaping flames,
to close the burial boat.

Do not let your eyes fail with dawn to see
the old King - flame-black,
the new Queen - flame-bright.
Before the fires die in your eyes this day
you will crown me Queen,
She Who Rules All Muspellsheimr.

For the steel-fisted King who gave his heart
for rules of his breast –
for magic signs to Hel –
Modlog will bear all Iron Hand's shields
to lead lays for the dead,
for the fiery corpse.

This call for the shields brought the Ívaldi
to Skulvádi's feet,
the protector revealed beneath Iva's cloak –
the Ívaldi's power broken by Síswo's sight.

"Under Wolfsen law no one will charge;"
The Wolf's voice boomed,
"without Kerrigan's Shields,
without the closed wall of battler and roarer
or face the mercy of Dragonfing,"

The Treasure Keepers – the Kerrigash
Each shield was brought and each clan leader 
raised praises with trembling voice 
to the helmet-hammer once called Iron Hand, 
The Fearless King of Kerrigardr.

The King’s face stained blue, his limbs stiff with rest, 
pins pressed half their length 
between his skull and skin held his face mask-fixed 
for the winding Valhöll-way.

Skulvádi watched silent armoured lines, 
headed by leaders of the clans, 
to the steep vine-steps of Garmr’s Bay 
where the broken ‘Thrasher’ waited.

With The Wolf’s signal Modlog set the torch 
spreading skirts of flames, 
the King’s breast-shield, a glittering beam. 
A thousand suns leapt the bay.

The raging fire reached Valhöll’s roof. 
The ship—shield-furnace— 
caved into light on Garmr’s Bay; 
The Wolf’s eyes, the fury’s mirror.

Only this mirror of the climbing flame 
saw a second figure glow 
near to the place where the torch was set – 
Sikalu with a dying song for King and Bride.

The ship that sat near five hundred years 
with Vikingar dreams—Northmen’s tales— 
was sucked by the waves, its bow as if struck 
by The Wolf’s death-clenched fist.

The roaring pyre blazed so brightly 
that the Kerrigash gasped 
at Íðunn’s lost gold—Skulvádi’s locks 
lashing her face in the surging air.

Such a swell rose from Njörðr’s Bay 
that warriors clung like leaves 
to the pitted brace of The Hound’s Teeth, 
their eyes on Freyja’s Own for courage.

the closed wall of battler and roarer—warriors side-by-side with 
shields gripped with the left hand 
and held chest-high so that the 
right edge of each shield 
overlapped the left edge of the 
warrior’s to the right, so as to 
make a continuous wall of shields 
(See illustrations on p. 198, Book VII)

helmet-hammer—warrior

the broken ‘Thrasher’—Dagazar’s 
wrecked ship, ‘Great Serpent Thrasher,’ that came to rest on 
Weighted Rock in Garmr’s Bay

Above—from a stone believed to 
be part of the mound where 
Kerrigan’s body was held before 
the ship-cremation: ‘The King’s 
face stained blue/. . . /pins pressed 
half their length / between his 
skull and skin’

Kerrigan’s funeral feast seems 
spare compared with that in the 
Laxdæla Saga for Höskuld or that 
in Landnámabók XXXVII held by 
the sons of Hjalti. Kerrigan’s is 
similar to that in the Gísla Saga 
where the funeral celebration takes 
place some months after the death. 
In Kerrigan’s case he has no sons 
to succeed him and so the task and 
honour of holding the feast falls to 
Skulvádi as his successor

The Hound’s Teeth—the cliff-face 
that overlooked Njörðr’s Bay or 
Garmr’s Bay 
Freyja’s Own—Skulvádi
What each helmet-Tyr had not felt for years
brought the eldest to his knees
in praise of Skulvádi — The Varg of Hoods,
Lady of The Vanir’s Maid.

It is still said that the glow whispered
‘Ss-Skulvá-dí. Ss-Skulvá-dí’
in a quivering sound — her sky-scorched names
circling the groves of the Kerrigash hills.

When the rearing waves stilled to meek crests,
The Wolf led the Kerrigash
to the Hall of Halls, to the Cresting Place
where she ordered the Loafest begun.

Once the bread, broken; the brim-filled horns, shared,
Skuld’s Maid called for me,
her Faithful Guard: ‘Modlog, raise my crown
then lace my boots for conquests.’

Every warrior trembled at the sight
of the Wulfen Queen high-seated.
They clashed shield-fires, raised battle-boars,
crossed and hemmed their millstone-biters.

As the Crowning Feast reached its great boom
of battle-brights and helm-ringers,
a huge gust rose — the whole land gripped
in rainless thunder.

The crash of winds shook the very ground
on which Kerrigardr stood
as if to heave the Garth from its place
to The Edge of The World.

There was never a feast as this
where the sky itself
greeted a ruler with roaring acclaim —
with Cargo-tyr’s plain of chariots.

Each eldest son stood and came forward
to offer his life for The Shining Coin.
And each daughter drew her blood
to seal oaths to Skulvagr.
All stood for their Queen – metal-magic flying from her dusted lips –
like lovers meeting a pledge to die, to break the backs of their rivals.

As in the tales of ancient Vikings of Northern Ice-planes,
of The Wolffem of Sheraki Land, all sang lays to Muspellsheimr’s Queen.

This should have been enough to please her but Skulvôdi rose from her throne.
She called each father who headed a clan, and with gilded-breath said:

‘The fate of Kerrigan opens the forest upon the heels of Tår-pôrr.
We shall stand, a wall of storm-dressed shields, to fashion our fathers’ dreams.

‘Let no one charge, chasing battle-calls without Kerrigan’s Wall of Shields.
Let no one question or query my laws that rule the girth of this Garth.’

From each leader of the mightiest clans she claimed bloodknots
for his bravest men and most loyal thralls, and singled out new Council leaders.

First came my father for his dead brother kept lands disputed by Águdrol’s clan while Skulvôdi Wolf sat behind the King and Kerrigan’s heart was warm.

Then came Thórrstein now ten children strong, for Kerrigan, beneath Skulvôdi’s eyes, was wise to the woes of man and bride and gave him a house far from his in-laws.

Third, she faced Aldrun whose youngest daughter was married to Hitsko, a bride famed for lays that brought berserkers to charge or rest as she wished.

Metal-magic – gold; referring to the Wolffem practice of using a hallucinogenic gold-pollen dust on their lips

storm-dressed – with symbols to defeat enemies in honour of Tår-pôrr; reference to Bôrr (Norse God of Thunder and War) and to Tår (Sheraki Wolffem Wind-wolf guide)
finally, for Hitsko, whom she hailed as Prince,
Skulvadi bid all clans
to give half their best if they wished to hold
their hearth and lands secure in the west.

To them all she said:
‘You dressed the King well for beds of flames.
You will reap a richer harvest
from the crop that springs from feats of his will
and from his bloodied bosom.

‘If we should fall beneath giants’ swords
do not bury your weapons.
Wail for no limb lost, for no split helm.
I am The Gateway to Hidden Realms.’

As dawn unfolded across Kerrigardr –
The Wolf’s face held up to the world –
all warriors sang of glories to be.
The lines of cargo had been drawn.

lines of cargo – ON. farnatyr,
duty or the paths to safe harbour
BOOK VII: SÍSWYO’S SONGS OF THE WOLF’S CONQUESTS & SKULVÁDI ÚLFR’S JOURNEY BEYOND THE HOME OF TÝR-RING GIANTS

The arms of Skulvádi Úlfr’s trading empire spread across Muspellsheimr in a northwest arc to encompass the lands of the Sheraki, Ásatekr, the Viro Cochar and the Cama Zotzur. However, it is her encounter with the Húldrac from south of The Moving Wood that brings her to the remarkable Mœhrn, Amarr, Builder of Trembling Roads. The meeting leads Skulvádi to the discovery of territories beyond The Edge of The World, into the greatest battle ever fought by the Kerrigash, and to the place where Kerrigan Iron Hand’s fate ultimately stumbled. (The events described here place them between 1480 and 1500. It is evident from the manuscript that Síswyo wrote Part 1 and that Queen Skulvádi Úlfr is the most likely author of Parts 2 - 5.)

1. THE MŒHRN OF THE MÖAT RIVER

The Flame-drow’s Messengers

It was on the back of conquests born
that Flame-drow came –
through messengers of message bearers,
on waves of slaves
wound by The Wolf’s whips.

Where Wolf-guards marched – shields masked by cloaks,
mead-forged, steel-armed,
knots tied for Tár, drawn by Atli’s road –
Skulvádi scored the ground
from Hitsko’s lands to Swartalfloimr.

Skálids and spinners and spell-bound Frowe,
charting ways from The Peak of Caves,
brought the kingdoms from north and west
with garlands for Skulvádi’s feet,
with backs to bend the giants’ route.

Word-weavers’ maps, worked from her deeds,
lit all roads to Kerrigarðr
‘for Flame-haired’s grip, for Ídunn’s Treasure,
for She Who Measured Sounds
to Mark the Ways to Gild-rac.’

Tár – spirit guide of the widow Novaini of the Sheraki clan razed by Manir’s beserkers in the first half of the 11th century (See Book II, Part 2)
Atli’s road – the inspiration of Atilla The Hun [Börr]
scored the ground – marked out territories

backs to bend the giants’ route – slaves to tunnel at Four-caverns
Peak in search of Kerrigan’s route from the Hrimnir’s plateau

Ídunn’s Treasure – Skulvádi; ON.
gold & the promise of immortality
Cama Zotzur came to pray for rain;  
Viro Cochar, for days of sun.
Soon Camazotz sat in Viracocha's rays;  
the more gold exchanged,  
more slaves retained.

All revered The Varg –  
Skulváði Úlfr –  
'She who brought  
sunlit showers to shelter princes  
from louts and soothsayers  
predicting drought and trials.'

They bore, with gifts, news of foe and friend,  
each tale reaping victory-oaths.  
To The Wolf they gave their word to die  
or taste sweat-blades –  
wear their enemies' sorrows.

So great The Wolf, so armed her will,  
from the deepest halls  
of The Moving Wood came the Húlðræc –  
secret-finders for the Drow,  
news-bearers for the Mæhrn.

Modlog and I alone had seen the mound-folk  
who secured the secrets found –  
flame magicians – their fire-labour  
set by whistling sounds,  
words cast on burning sighs.

Some say Fire-folk, treasure hunting,  
burnt the best-kept secrets  
lying in the lands and lakes of The Wood,  
their syllables snaking air,  
catching fire where their whispers fell.

Their news bearers with storm-set voice –  
with words of wind-wail –  
sought audience with 'The Varg of Hoods,'  
with 'She Who was Last to See  
the Old King's Stave-stamped Breast.'

With Úllr's whoop clouding his signs,  
the first Húlðræc addressed The Wolf:

Viro Cochar – worshippers of the Mayan sun god Viracocha  
Cama Zotzur – worshippers of Mayan hunting, fate & storm god Camazotz

sweat-blades – swords

Húlðræc – KER. meaning 'hidden scribes' or 'hidden weavers'; related perhaps to the ON. buldufolk and SH. kana'ti 'little men' described as beneficient 'wonder-workers'

Úllr's whoop – the sound of the howling wind at Úllr's Rest, the prominent bluff on Garmr's Bay
'We are the Húldrac, Flame-drow walkers. 
now we speak for those called Maehm, 
for Grimmdókk lands — The Mistland Realms — 
lie folded still from Húldrac will 
while you have found the ways.'

The second spoke in brief, clipped tones, 
reading from his palms:

'Their home lies east, over the Móat, 
through stave-bound paths.
You have found the ways but you do not cross 
beyond water veils 
to The Very Edge.'

The last then spoke with studied notes, 
eyes fixed upon The Wolf's war-net:

'You have found the ways but you do not cross 
so we will show you how, 
for the one who knows and yet does not go 
must hurry by night 
with those who choose to stay.'

Caught by the promise of definite paths, 
Skulváði Úlfrr 
trailed a south-east road with the nameless three 
till, no longer in haste, 
the Húldrac struck fires to feast.

They had too much drink and joked for hours 
that, with Hrögrmóat unclaked, 
Skulváði swore to score their brains 
with Hrimnir-signs, 
if they did not make for the Móat.

The Wolf's eyes sleep-starved — her book cave-sunk, 
her blood racing to end the days 
of slaving paths at Four-caverns Peak — 
she struck Dagaz's battle-rim 
across their blazing fires.
Hrögnmóat writhed in Skulvargr's grasp. The three Húlðrác held their breath. Now sure that The Wolf was the one they sought, they broke their feasting to place the blade upon the flames.

They watched the crasher blacken and warp until its gleam was gone. Then they said: 'Follow. We shall forge another. For this, two long years was the furnace fired.'

In a nearby cave they bared a box: a single cube, the same on all sides, of deep blue light, of dry cold heat. Throbbing egg-sack fingers fed the box with fire.

'We are not useless,' the first Húlðrác smiled. 'We traded this for secrets held in the Wood from all Hisrita, whom you are sure to meet if you must hurry to the Moát.'

When they turned to show that the sword was made, the deep blue cube with blinding heat pierced its sides with humming light folding it one hundred times.

And when the cave's shade claimed the box once more, from the deep black cavern turned a weapon that tales would praise as 'Kvasir's Helm-bolt that silenced the Dragon's Tongue.'

Those who would praise Skulváði's prowess with the blade for which gods weep would speak of it as the 'Moor's Revenge,' that for which 'Atli burnt ten cities,' for which 'Óðinn died on barren plains.'

Kvasir's Helm-bolt - blood-wand or sword the Dragon's Tongue - referring to the sign on Hrimnir shields

Below - untitled illustration from the surviving pages of 'Skulváði's Verse-maps,' reported to be the image of the jewelled weapon forged for Skulváði by the Húlðrác. It was said to be 'one-and-a-half times the height of a man' and that its blade polished to a blue hue.
The Mæhrn

Mæhrn were like men, with youthful eyes,
round-lidded yet wrinkle-skinned,
faces unknown to those who outlived
the years of their forebears –
the smooth-faced Kerrigash.

Mæhrn were so called for when in council
they spoke in moans.
There were other sounds that Mæhrn made.
Only a secret few knew
what these were.

Mæhrn were not as short as their shadows seemed;
their lamps hung from deep ceilings.
They took their seats low so you had to stand
to see who was who
from chair to chair.

Mæhrn slept best on towering rocks
seated on level ground,
in houses surrounded by elaborate trestles
cast in copper and iron,
cut to tree-layered signs.

So green and so thin were their railings,
you would expect to fall
from their high windows if you leant slightly
to take in the view
from the topmost floor.

Their tall narrow homes fixed to ancient rocks
were nothing to the nether rooms
stretching deep down into cool ground.
Shining walls of rippling sun-hues
kept their beds and tables moving.

They massed great reams of writing spaces –
piles of ink and paper,
for they were writers with avid natures,
straining huge cupboards
with ways to say the same thing.
Stores of the paper, stacked ten Mœhrn high, 
teetered on crooked tables –
without ceremony, without system –
that no visitor dared wager
how they retrieved a quill.

Each page was torn, each page jagged-holed.
In a certain light
you could not tell if the gap you saw
was a written fragment
being so well scribed as the solid page.

No one has been known to read these spaces
save the Mœhrn themselves.
The Ivaldi tried for two centuries long
defying the Wyrd’s way
against the counsel of Wolffem.

All Mœhrn ate fish that they caught themselves,
spending many hours
making seams for shoes needed for fish-games.
To the Sinking Islands they sailed –
the east with each new moon.

Should you wish to sail – to field waves – with Mœhrn,
to float or fish with them,
you must wear these shoes to board their boats
with your eyes fixed
 towards the Sinking Peaks.

To fail observance to this fold of rules
(and Mœhrn, for the most part, were keen on rules)
you would surely find your journey slow.
You should never reach the place
for which you slung your oars.

But this was a rule that made its own law
since to set down for any place
but the Sinking Islands – the Eastern Peaks –
was first ruled by east-and-west,
by where you pitched your boat.
Great blade-wood reeds that scored the Mót’s banks
making a certain path
to the Sinking Crests — the East-faced Mounts —
carved such angles,
no skin-boat could lean north nor south.

If you should make it to the sea-bound hills,
your journey’s half-way point
would find you kissed by each Mœhrn
to render you the rest of sleep,
to spare you the dragon’s spume.

If the steed-seats were stormy black
only bad dreams were yours,
soon fare for manatí — soon far remembered —
your hazardous haul
to the Sinking Peaks, sunk.

Mœhrn moaned strange things while they made their shoes.
One such saying is this:
‘a wife is said to be ebunk
if she nobs and crotches’
(though Mœhrn had no wives).

This saying meant: ‘those who say that brides
need mirrors and gossip
do not know how well they tune their silence —
how well mute whispers
light the mirror’s voice.’

In fairness to Mœhrn, this is not their meaning —
but to trade meaning for words.
For these are the signs of Obylýa The Smith,
since Mœhrn could not render
their own tongue in another.

So, if you should hear a Mœhrn say
when the day is wet-hot:
‘Green sprigs are fasting on light, on wing.
Overhead black twigs of light
will soak the greening’;

the dragon’s spume — attacks from
allies of ancient enemies, the
Áztlan Vanir
fare for manatí — swallowed-up by
the natural elements; also, related
to KER. manatu meaning ‘subject
to the manatí.’ SH.: (according to
Catalquéz) ‘It was believed that if
you cut yourself on the sharp-edged reeds, the manatí leaves its
abode in the reed (could also be a
stone) aroused by the heat of your
fear, and proceeds out of the reed
(or stone) when waves bathing the
reeds (or rock) touch you. The
manatu comes out in a steam from
the reed or rock and enters your
body wherever your skin has been
broken. It moves up and down all
over inside the body, driving out
everything that inflicts pain.
Before the manatu returns to the
reed or stone it imparts some of its
nature to the person’s body. That
is why one is likely to feel so
peaceful after travelling with the
Mœhrn.’ (ref. ‘The Shifting Stone
of Amarr,’ in this Book, p. 175)

Obylýa The Smith — Obylýa the
swordmaker who left the sword
Hrógrmōat to Skulváði (See Books
III and IV)
Or, if you should hear a Mœhrn say
when the night is dry-hot:
'She rules a chain shining over plains
kuddled with the heat
closed by the crackling fire';

Or, if you should hear a Mœhrn say
'a bag of shiver and squeak,'
they mean to tell you of insects that live
in the roots of nearby trees
and of the sound the creatures made.

Mœhrn had strange habits: not to cut toenails
after midnight's moon
or throw out water into walking shades
after the dark of sunset
or before the Forskarlar rose.

They would not look back if they heard the steps
of a weary walker
as long as they knew that no one followed
on the same path
or used their fire-light.

For all their strange ways Mœhrn were wise
even when ill-tempered
as when they cleaned house or dressed for meetings
which worried everyone
including Chief Builder, Amarr.

Their Council met in huge maze-rooms—a labyrinth of mirrors—
each wall reflecting their number greater.
To enter with a threat was to meet an army of Mœhrn.

They were well known to moan without pause
from dusk to dawn.
The chant of Mœhrn was only checked
to secure the walls of the maze,
or for a drink of water.

Amarr— ON. mår ‘mew,’ seagull;
the only Mœhrn known to take a break from his work in order to enjoy the view of the sea from Garmr’s Teeth; also called ‘the Cliff-gazer’ or ‘the Gazer’.
The deeper their moans, the greater their need
to secure the walls from cracks;
the quicker the book of blue eyes was filled,
its cover clear-pupilled,
the cut of words confirmed.

If you only heard the sound of water
trailng the curves of the maze,
you knew that discord had truly set in
and the Húlðræc heralded
to call in the Builder, Amarr.

Amarr

When Wâ 'ya-Shî found Amarr at last,
be was at home on the Moat
where the river slowed to a muddy pool,
bussy with building-plans —
the more endless, the better.

The only Mæhrn who looked old as leaves
(if that can be said at all of Mæhrn)
Amarr was also the only one
who shared his name
with strangers he had sent for.

Before she could say 'From where did Óðinn
and Deminan lift your kin?'
Amarr greeted her with cups of green brew,
lumpy cakes of fruit
and eggs wrapped in gold-leaf.

He scooped handfuls of cacao seeds
from an oval box
and shared two each of the sweet brown fruit
(their gilded shells shimmering)
between himself and The Wolf.

He began with tales of the sword mistress,
Ohýla The Seeker,
who lived with them till no longer pleased
with their sitting still
set out against the rule of blades:
'You don't need to say that you knew her better than we could.
She found the way to link the sword with this place,' said the Gazer as if sharing a new-found secret.

'A froward searcher...’ (he gave Skulváði no room to say a word)
‘...she was keen to hunt where no markers lay, caught by Yotxpá’ka’s digs, would not wait till I finished my work.’

‘And what do you do? What is your “work”,’ Skulváði asked, spurred by Opýla’s name — her hopes raised by talk of Fire-men and hunt. ‘Do you know Grimmðókk’s fields? Do you have the ways to Gild-rac?’

Amarr turned from her: ‘You are close,’ he said trying to hide how much his belly tickled, and he rolled and laughed and tugged at his hair until he cried cups of tears and spat lumps of cacao fruit.

‘As for my “work,” a wearying job,’ he sighed, cheeks blue with cheer. ‘I make the plans and plot by-ways from Bifrost Bridge to The Edge of The World.

‘It is tricky work, a trying task: to break boulders, to bend blue-light, to blend metals, not disturb the ground of Gild-rac and still keep Húlnrác occupied.

‘These routes are well known. The Ancients used them to skirt oceans in distant times from North-ice Plains to Green-wood Lands, from Ginnungagap’s shores to the Skraeling’s clans.’

Yotxpá’ka — The Flame-drow or Fire Starters

Green-wood Lands — Vinland
Ginnungagap — Africa
Skræling’s clans — the clans of Skrælingeland
pacing the floor of cacao piths
Skulváði asked:
‘Did Obýla see what Kerrigan saw:
The Pits of Hel?
The Great Temple of Circled Bones?’

‘Funny you should speak of Kerrigan’s hours
in the Grimm’s den,’
said the Old Máier, his mouth full of eggs
and he laughed so hard
he lost half his meal again.

‘No, no, no’ (curved into a ball,
rolling from side to side)
then wiping the tears from his wide round eyes,
he said, ‘The verses you mapped
told only half the tale.’

‘To hear more,’ he said, ‘steer from the King’s way,
from the many false doors
as Kerrigan found save the one I work
which makes masks upon me
that I am called “The Old Cliff-gazer.”

‘This is why you came — why I called you here.
I see you hold Hisrita Flame.
Now I need the signs from The Fearless Breast
for The Trembling Bridge
that sails to Modorr’s door.’

Amar’s face grew staid and stern:
‘The Trembling Walls are egg-shell thin.’
And he crushed a bean of the sweet brown fruit
between his thin palms
to prove his point.

Then he asked to touch the blade, Flame,
sighed in soft moans
and offered Skulváði a day of fish-games.
That night they feasted
on dishfuls of silver-heads.
The Shifting Stone of Amarr

besides the hoarding of copious notes,
the Mœhrn’s chief task
was to safeguard The Shifting Stone.
(How it would bring them riches
and break their Moat.)

Amarr’s Shifting Stone was given this name
because Amarr constructed it.
It was less a ‘stone’ and more a ‘boulder.’
Amarrsotlu could hold and throw
light or dark.

To the lazy eye it is faceless.
At the Cliff-gazer’s command
its facets grow steps — ‘Katzi’s fading tiers.
but the Shifting Stone will fail to be seen
if you peer too closely.

All who guarded the Gazer’s Stone
could look into the light
that brought it out or kept it in.
Wolffem know of this
and those they call ‘Wood-witch.’

Such talents they were that Mœhrn had:
with their throwing spells
they could move a mount, haul sacks of gold,
heave burial stones as heavy as ships,
lift bags of iron two Mœhrn high.

With this power held in thin-skinned palms
they could throw giants,
whatever they felt or feared from The Edge.
It was so they kept Modorr busy
with begging others to steal their Stone.

Above — ‘The Phases of Amarrsotlu’ from an illustration found among the lays entitled ‘Siswyo’s Songs of The Wolf’s Conquests’
It was in this way they built Peak Temples for Asatekr and Cama Zotzur.

Now far too busy to break from their work, they left travelling to Amarr when he missed the view from Garmr’s Bay.

When The Wolf and I arrived in Mœhmland they had taken again
to building bridges on a giant scale—shaved rocks and rivets,
-fired furnaces everywhere.

Amarr’s new by-ways from Bifrost’s edge,
damaged during Ragnarrökr,
were being planed by gangs of Mœhnm—
the twists made straight;
the straight, twisted—

Bent out of shape when the Van’s Men
first waged war on the Æsir,
when the Jötnar yearned greatest
for The Stone of Light,
and the fruit of Ygg’s gold.

No one would avow how The Stone came
into Óðinn’s hands—
whether against it or with Amarr’s help.
It was whispered that any blame
lay firmly in the palms of Amarr.

Many still say: ‘He was led astray
by the glory of his work,
let the Jötnar charge a gap in The Bridge,
ono Asgardr,
ono the feasting Ásas.’

Not only this but the Old Mœhnm
had let the Jötnar cross
as far as they did because he had failed
to extend The Bridge as it should
instead of as it did.
On that way-spur that was meant to guide
trespassers to the Strait of Hel,
he had closed the gap and, opening another,
led advancing giants
almost to the coffin's hold.

But, quick on his feet, the Old Builder
(for they say he looked old, even then)
held the fierce charge of giant men
with The Shifting Stone,
with a blast of palm-strength.

The rampant thurses, though routed by the turn
of the Mæbmn's might,
gathered their forces before the next moon
and set for Asaland
with berserkers that broke the Áses.

For the end of glory to Óðinn's reign,
the Old Mæbmn's fate
was set to the tune of ill-starred deeds
though he vowed upon The Shifting Stone
to end his reckless days.

2. The Garden of Black Stone

Skulváði's Lay of Síswoy's Grottasong
of The Hisrita & Týringar

Before we parted at Low Hill plains
Síswoy said these words:
'Týringar giants time caves of sun.
The sky light scales their backs.
They are fire-balls fielding shades –
heat-framed limbs, frozen light.
The Hisrita mounds hide their wall-steeds — worn elf-gifts, odd-end tools. These gifts were once made by Hel's men — the eight-tipped, Web-blown Cloaks.

Hisrita hurry, hastening spells, bright-bead dressed, sparkling light. The Spider Clan walks, drawn by gems — tri-corn caped, trinket ringed.

Travelling low to ground, these Men of Nets — gold-tipped speared, Mjak’lu born — shackle Týringar at sun set to hum flames, to count rings.

So they keep giants, these light eaters, at Heidr's seat, hunting night. Their speech is garbled; silence spared for blue light — web boxes.

The Hisrita trapped all Tan-beard men, those who hunt their boxes: "We know where light shines, to World's End, never breaks, never bends";

"You need not have ours to hide your place — to keep black in daylight. Stand before Týr’s Rings and no man will see day to strike you."

The thing they would steal — cloaks lit by night, Týr's foundry — now keeps them protecting Flame-drows — sign hunters. Now giants guard the Rings.

The Sons of Muspell now do the work of Ring-guards to keep safe what Asatekr lost, while Hrimmir wait to steal Stone-key locks.

Hisrita trade news — move ancient tales. So they mapped the dark path to Wodan's treasure buried deep. No Huldrac can find it.
"Týr gave half his men to Aztla arcs
for places that now fold
the store of Wod's gems. This is all
tight-lipped elves ever say."

Aztla arcs - the military advance
of Aztlan raiders (See Napros,
Book III)

Skulváði's Lay of The Hisrita [a Fragment]

Busying Hisrita were of little help -
not trusting and shy, shunning meetings,
full of nothing but warnings of night
and black-clay men who wore blonde beards.

When asked for Týr's Rings they would all begin
to talk at once and to climb back
upon their words in a round song,
each one beginning answers with questions.

And when they did speak, at separate pauses,
each said his words at a different pace.
I could not decide what to decipher
from what was said singly and what said by all.

They let me sleep and store by blade
by a sweat-hove on the Kjatsl slopes.
I could share with them a dusty room
for one night only if I needed food.

All night I waited for counsel with them.
They kept to themselves on the other side
of the wall between us shushing each other
while asking me to pass them food.

The Hisrita ate dried insects and fruit
in a noisy manner, scuttling in whispers,
disturbing my rest the entire night
with my passing portions of insect husks.

While Web-cloaks would share the shape of their wars,
they would chew loudly and hide their best food
if I asked to taste their strange meal of bugs.
And so, I slept on a belly of husks.

NOTE: Much of the following
two lays was irreparably damaged
by seawater. What is reproduced
here in translation is believed to be
a small fragment of the entire
account of the Wolffem Queen's
encounter with The Hisrita.

sweat-hove - sweat-lodge

the shape of their wars - battle stories. Above: 'Hisrita in military formation' (from Skulváði's ms.)
prepared for the same I faced them at dawn
to say farewell, climb the hill alone,
when the Spider Men greeted me and said
with unbroken voice and mild tempers:

'This is Hel's region that Loki's daughter
travelled to and from — the way-spur of traders
lost from the Bridge-route, those fighting langour,
battling hunger and other horrors.

'We do not have much to offer you or them
since we find that those who travel here
last very little time in Black-giant lands,
some even less in the Kjastls hills...'

They looked at each other as if to ask themselves
a puzzling question, then they continued:
'.though no one here can say when it was
that the last traveller came to the Kjastls.'

'To come face to face with black giants,'
they said together, 'you must go further —
upwards and out, in a wide circle.
This hill is bigger than it seems from here.

'If you were still at the River Moat
you would have to cross to the south east boundary
to The World's Edge. But you are here now
and will have to take the longer route.

'Beyond The Steep Bank — beyond the last rise
out of the region of Lower Kjastls —
live the Tyringar where seas face north,
on the edge of a cliff near a house of stone.

'They all take turns guarding the Rings.'
The Hisrita smiled and poked each other
then went on as before: 'They are not able
to move from the house while their brothers Ring-guard.

'Then they are dressed in coal and tar
for fear of being seen. Do not trust them.
They are fearsome beasts. But you can beat them
if you lie face down, your shield at your back.

......
You have to be still while flat on the ground.
Best you grasp metal to fix your stance.
Their rooms have one door. The climb everywhere
to their stone summit is rocky and steep.

No one has returned to say if this works.
You need only face one giant at a time.
We go by the words of news carriers
calling themselves the “Hidden Folk.”

The Black-giants

On the far side of the Kjatsl hills
hidden in a nest of rocks
rose the Garden of Black Stone-wolves – the bouldered úlfhednars.

On this plain of hills trees were of grey bark;
each knotted weal,
a stave for rings that breathed and grew
as Óðinn’s valkyrjur.

From lake beds drained of Deminan’s steps
no fowl nor moth flew
while one tree bloomed rings of lightning
and still the plain was black.

In a wide circle of drengar shadows
sat Black-giants at their posts –
warriors frozen as bearsarks hunted
and speared to their shields.

They did not move – the light at their backs
spinning them an arm,
a hairy cloak unclasped, a draw-wand struck
against the shadow-light.

If they had moved at my trembling step
it was not to fight but to hope
for a thaw from stone, a place to pause
from their slavery to rings.
3. The Carnival of Slaves

Eyes of The Moth

racking every leaf, every shifting beam -
my corpse-flame drawn
to break beast or man, my lips dusted gold
to hear twigs hum -
I cleared the Ring-stave Plain.

At dusk, Kjatsls Peak was bitter cold
and still I had not found
the Týringar den of stone-house cliff
nor fare to warm my chill.

Gerða's clan-breakers hung from bone-branches -
berries were baubles;
double-gripped Flame, my steel companion.
The closing night drew spell-deep tight.

On the death-carved edge of shivering sleep,
windless claims of Napros' cargo
lifted Bragi's staves from Skāði's jewels.
When one voice broke the stillness
I swung Flame to silence it.

'You have not yet seen a flying giant
or you would reach instead for your heart.
I see you have come by Lower Kjatsls.
Never trust the Spider Clan,' the voice said.

'Did they tell you of rivers of blood?
They make the red juice
by chewing berries and storing the spittle
in bags for pouring into head-streams.'

'You brave my blade with useless words,' I said,
'when I could cut you down
to an empty husk - for Hiðríta food.
State your name or die!'

'That is dazzling - that weapon of yours.
Do you know,' he said (the man's shape uncloaked)
'that it would make me a fine ornament
in exchange for food and wine.'
'Yet, it may be best in your forceful grip
for the hides of Moor-men
who have spread their ships from Africa’s shores
to make up for losses there.

'You know, of course, that a Tyring giant
could wrench the sword
from the deep-knuckled grasp of The Wolf herself
with the furnace they guard.'

'That is the business of the Spider Men,'
I said to him.

'They weave any tale,' he calmly replied,
'to break the giants’ secret.

'You will find the truth from the Old Amarr.
I am only a traveller like you.
I hold no business with elf nor giant.
But I see duty weighs on your brow.'

'Say what you are called and your business,' I said
(testing my blade on his leather vest
the breaker steady, aimed at his breast).
'I will sooner stamp you with Haeglid’s stare,
than listen to you stall for time.'

'I collect Nawa-coins,' he smiled a reply.
'I gave up home and land
to trade in flesh—men’s as well as beasts—
and I have no name to speak of.

'I follow those who once fought Moors.
Now tired too of fighting each other,
they follow trails that Hfrirata set,
burning gems in Nidavellir.

'If you go disguised I can take you
to their meeting places.
Know your enemy and keep few friends.
Besides, if I die I should prefer to go
by The Wolf’s hand,' he said.

Nidavellir— the underground cave-
system of Hel stretching into the
Hrimnir’s Vale (in southern Americas)
‘Tell me more,’ I said to the bride of Flame,
his skin pouch
strapped to his back, the glass-eyed head
of the beast still hanging from its strap.

‘On the heels of Karibar comes news of warriors,’
he said,
‘whom the dwarfs of Sinking Peaks report to be the West Van’s Men.

‘The Vanir’s kind armed with fire-sticks are already at the north
of the Sheraki’s land and have made harbours on Muspell’s shores.’

‘I know that Pasqvods speak of thunder logs,
of bear-helmed pikemen,’ I replied.
‘What would Moor-hunters be doing in this place?
Why share your trade with me?’

‘They will not break Tyringar,’ he said.
‘Giants accept no strangers.
But rumours say that the Kerrigash Queen takes every willing man.’

‘I take your words to mean what they say
and not what they seem,’ I warned.
And the man who bore no arrow nor sword
placed his neck on my blade.

‘Any fool could put his throat to my blade,’
I said to the skin-eyes carrier.
‘The flood of spears still stain its shine.
But I am not finished with you yet.

‘Prove your threats or change your fealty.
Take me to the place where you trade flesh for Nawa seals
or become flesh-trade.

‘Great lays beat songs to say that The Wolf travels with spells at her back,’ he said,
‘that she breathes gold, that she is merciless.
So I never thought I would see her this close.’
'Then you know my name and yet still keep yours close to your breast,' I replied.

'Those I break call me "The Slayer's Fist,"
"Great Seiðstafr," "Shining Coin,"
"Hilditonn Queen," "Skupladúlf!"

The skin-pouch bearer reached a bare arm over the rock
where he was willing to lose his head—
his black hair clinging to his broad back,
his face stamped with the hawk's stare.

'You may call me "Eyes of The Moth,"
he said, his voice not matching his eye.
'No one yet trembles at such a name
nor do I care if they do or not.

'To pass through the hills where they market slaves
it is best to take a name
which no one fears or you will be trade.
Take this paper and coins,' he advised.

'It is a list of names from which I choose
according to the country I travel.
The ones that are hard on the tongue and lips
are always the best of the pick,' he continued.

'I have always done this though it has taken me
to no new places.
That may be so because I like looking
for new faces in old lands,' he said.

'It may not be easy to see your name
in one glance,' he warned.
'Whatever it seems to be to your eyes
that will be your true name.
You must look with eyes for the moth.'
South from the Peak of the Kjatsl Plains
the country changed.
Stone-tree gave way to green-broad valley.
Fields spread as steps.

Villages broke the bending forest
along branching roads
that could not be far from the Hrimmir’s Vale,
Grimmdokk’s mistland-borders.
Here shape-changers walked the wind
near the Land of Sounds.

We followed a path that forked to a square
where half-built houses stood.
Beside them were huts with smiths, weavers
and blowers of coloured glass.

A woman clothed in rough linen
greeted us with ‘Strangers!’
pushing her trade of wizen-faced dolls.
‘Troll dolls,’ she shouted.

Some of her dolls – mummified babies –
had tied limbs and sealed eyes.
‘If you do not need my amulet dolls
to protect you from disease,’ she said,
‘you want to shelter from Hunters.’

Stretching to the centre – to the throng’s heart –
were wool-elk traders,
sellers of trinkets, cloth and puppets.
In the centre rose the market place –
The Carnival of Slaves.

‘Better wait till dusk,’ the woman said.
‘Then Hunters will drink
and the fair begin of the shadow walkers.
Then you can pick and choose as you like.’

Moth-eyes was silent while the woman spoke,
his gaze fixed far away.
‘I will meet you again when the time is right,’
he said, and disappeared.
As the last flick of Tkatsi's tail stretched from the valley, warriors came wearing blade-ridged helms, coloured leggings and black boots straddling proud war-horses.

They carried banners more beautiful than the Frankforts of Dagr's tales. Their horses' hooves led to the heart of the Masquerade of Slaves.

As torches were set to mark the camp, voices rose to compliment the work of Týringar for capturing trolls to keep Moor-men from their pit.

Men in leather masaks marking their need peered from metal-barred cages, their eyes as damp coals, their arms wide as bears', their legs thick as buffalos.

'Come, look closer at these forest men. Only forty Nawa coins. For you, thirty, if you take two then only sixty in all,' said the grinning trader.

He placed himself to block my view of the chained trolls, their legs peeled brittle as blue-dyed leaves, their chins weighed with poultice.

'Day no attention to their mild disease. I have dolls and herbs to keep you clean of their small blemish so you can savour the ware and not stain your sheets,' he said.

'If the Woods Men are not to your liking, try your tongue,' he badgered, 'on the charmers' pots,' and his voice trailed off as he cornered a buyer, a woman with painted arms.
Musicians carried the sweep of charmers
whose pots of boiled snakes
were hung from poles to secure the brew.
A crowd of buyers grew around them.

One group broke away towards open ground
where torches lifted a house
from a lower valley, every tree lit
on a path to its open doors.
I followed the smells of carnival.

Upon the revellers spread a great hall
to a grand table
where Moor-hunters sat throwing coins for slaves
to out-do each other's bids.

Each man had a bride on his jewelled arm—a skraeling dis
of Cama Zotzur, of Wayana clans
and of others I did not know.

Beyond an Eagle's hall the festival snaked
past a room
where a woman sat with a single chair
and a stave of hats.

Above her, the ceiling of the ornate room
was painted with figures
that climbed spirals from the dark spaces
of Hel's abandoned wrecks.

Deeper in the house danced lines of girls,
she told me,
who made the figures that lived on the ceiling.
Still deeper, rose other banquets.

There, weary women drank and tore at meat.
Some wore shackles
from which they strained for prizes of ale.
Others wore foreheads burnt with sigils.

A short bondsman thrust a horn of wine
into my hand,
pointing to a chair beside a bearded man
with his face in a helmet filled with wine.
I gripped my Flame hidden by my cloak.
The bondsman read my eyes,
as thralls learn to do, lowered his head
and turned to serve another.

Not having eaten for five days and nights,
I could not drink
with thrall nor hunter, not with such company
that turned appetite to illness.

When they raised their cups to toast the barter
of brides for horses
I turned from the light of such dark trade
to face a priest
who called himself 'Almordozar.'

'You are not one of us,' he said from the door
that would take me from the den
of Vanir beasts not worth the slaves
that served their trade.

'I like you find this hard on the eyes.
The screams of Indian brides
are worse on the ears when the ale is flat
and the forest is still,' he said.

'I have had too much to drink,' he went on,
'and you do not carry a goblet.
Your marks betray you. Pull your cloak tighter
Maybe I have something you need.'

What would you gain,' I questioned him.
'You dress as a priest
and you hallow trade that breaks the Woods.
Your robes praise Hunters' claims.'

'This may be my chance to mark their crosses.
Take this map of wars
planned for islands to the north and west.
Spare me if you see my head
when the cannons are firing.'

Before I had the chance to ask the priest
why he chose the death-house over forests,
he was gone in the dark; the crumpled sheets
which he said mapped wars
folded into my hand.
The Maker of Masks (or The Purpose of Nawa Coins)

It may have been the want of food
or the smell of the flesh
of breathing men walking on their graves,
but I vowed to break the gates
that swung Grimmdökk shut.

No moon rose to mark paths to the Mistland,
no sound for Wolffem ear
to track the shadow but the glint of pools
from dew-trapped shards of night.

I slept till dawn on dreams of Modlog
and of Siswyo’s whispers.
Instead of dawn-skies I saw longhouse beams
and a strange elf’s face.

The house caught every ray and so lit its rooms
that where there were shadows
they were deep black as separate guests.
‘Is this Grimmdökk?’ I asked the elf.

She did not answer but other faces appeared
from behind stacks of bread
and mounds of dough that she turned and rolled.
Then she said,
‘I am Arita, Mask-maker.’

‘Is this Grimmdökk?’ I asked again.
‘If it is,’ she said,
‘you have been tortured and survived the worst,
and now it is time to eat.’

As I sat up I saw that the faces
over the elf’s shoulder
were masks of travellers that passed this way.
I saw the face of Moth-eyes.
Mine had just been begun.

The table of bread was soon spread deeper
with sweet roots and herbs
gathered in bowls of stiff-dried skins,
polished wood, and planta leaves.
The elf smelt of rich dis-oils.

dis-oils – perfumes
She kept busy until her table was full of colour and food. Then we ate and drank to the lifting scent of her fragrance and sun-lit wood.

"What is your clan?" I asked Arita. "I do not know your face. Have you heard the name of the Kerrigash or of their Queen and her conquests?"

She let me follow her while she dusted a wall of bowed box-spaces where her masks sat at tilted angles. She paused to offer me sweets but not to answer my questions.

After a while she said: "I must finish these because no one else will. They are too busy building mountains larger than the ones before."

And she stacked the bread that we had not eaten into a trembling tower to show how mountain-work was far more prone to problems and ruin than mask-making.

Then she turned and smiled: "To find Grimmdøkk you have to go much farther until you are no longer there but at the ice-capped plateau, several seasons by foot."

"Only the Old Mæhm knows the short-safe-route. He knows a good face too. His is hard to do for he will not sit long enough to be done."

"I see that you have a good eye for lines. That is my specialty. The noses and mouths are made in one line. Do you like my work? This is how I keep busy here."

"The face of the wood is as smooth as shell," I said. "How do you polish such hard-ridged trees? Where are your tools?"
'Ah yes,' she replied. 'That is how the Nawa
like masks to be made.
What the Moehrn avoid I am prepared to work.
I am no good for heavy jobs;
The Old Builder has seen to that.

'Nawa collect masks,' she said, still dusting,
'to hide from the Tyringar
This is why Nawa have never been seen.
(And who would dare ask a giant.)

'But I know they visit when a mask goes missing.
They always leave payment
in Nawa coins,' and she showed me
the mask-stamps on her coins.

I listened to her; she spared no detail
on the mastery of her skill.
Yet, I could not help but think that Arita
would have moulded faces for herself
whether she had Nawa trade or not.

'The Old Amarr could never keep fold-lines
so well together,' she boasted.
'See how the tones rise and fall on cheeks?
This is why I am here
and no one else.'

'But the face is sad, as if for the dead,'
I said to the maker of masks.
She replied smiling, 'What better disguise
to protect the living from harm?'
4. The Fort of Margrnon and The Hooves of Huldra's Beasts

Sole-bridge and Cover

In Freyja's night of blood – first crescent of Wet Moons – Kerrigarðr's Inner Council met in hidden chambers to feast on conquests won by Skulváði Úlftr – ker plans that doubled the walls of The Fort of Margrnon.

They lifted their horns and beat their feast-tables in the great cave-hall stretching into mountain-rock. They praised The Hilditonn Queen, Hitsko The Peacemaker, Logram The Red, Cebanex and The Great Rock-maker.

They swallowed barrels of mead in honour of those to fall against the giants' smoke-hills, to split the helms of Moor-dogs from Grimmdókk's shores and Kjatsls, from Dagr's cloud-sea mountain to the Sinking Islands and from The Edge of The World.

The Council hammered shields for the fired speeches of Skulváði Úlftr that boiled their blood as when Bónr's flames rose on The Fearless King, when The Wolffem Queen blazed with Mjöllnir's might.

Margrnon – KER. [many-sided] or Marrga'ño-nyi [sea hall]; the fort's walls called ON. Mismargr [many-misted], Loptr's whale-boat and Circle of Halls. ON marr sea, steed; Mist marr sea of mist or air

Below (left) – from a plan of the outer walls of The Fort of Margrnon. Below (right) – from the plan of the Hall of the Inner Council of The Fort of Margrnon
She stood with her warriors, their bucklers etched with sigils. She faced Kerrigan’s Wall of Shields crowning the spread of seats. Doubled by rising torch-flame her shadows carved the walls, her sword, ‘Flame,’ emblazoned with her several names in gold.

Beside her sat her Faithful Guard, Modlog, Sole-bridge and Cover, and before her, to shield bad spells, smiled the Dreamer, Siswyo. ‘All ride their shafts on the floor where your futures fall,’ her voice roared claiming the space between Vidblain and Xima’s Halls.

Each Dragonfing Head stood to mark each word she said while their chosen warriors notched their spears with oaths to arm their wives and children, to hallow Margnnon’s girth — their helm-ringers shone for blood; their tunics gleamed in circles.

When the meeting was over, the warriors who traced their lines to Gerda and to Gyfudan, to Dagazar and He’yeya, to Fyeyoakab and Ragnarr, to Cebanex and Frieda, folded their cloaks to take posts as each one had taken oaths.

Skulvádi took her guard — he who stood with Hitsko’s sons while she marked old enemies and made peace with new friends, who watched her weep in silence on the Old King’s stave-stamped breast — Modlog, The Fort Keeper, He Who Walked Flame-drow lands.

No other was as loyal nor would she find another who had steeled his duty beneath Iron Hand’s fist. No one had watched for weak seams in the building of The Fort as he had done for his Queen with The Fearless King’s heart.

Modlog guarded her return to the halls he had kept clean while he had watched without fail the foundations laid by slaves for the fort that carried praise to old Hitsko’s daughter’s name. Until the wars would come he would never leave her side.

Now he waited on her with baths that Siswyo fixed, sprinkled with blossoms, with potions that could break men and fill their beds with widows but which slid on The Wolf’s skin till she outdid the Treasures of Opyla’s miner’s Halls. Opyla’s miner’s Halls — Cebanex’s Gleaming Halls (Book III, Part 2)

When she slipped from her bath, The Fort Keeper turned away to hold his gaze-and-need from The Wolf’s sparkling rings until she had wrapped herself in sheets he had laid out, her scent silencing the grains that Siswyo had mixed. The Wolf’s sparkling skin-rings — Skulvádi’s tattoos
Skulváði asked her Faithful Guard now forced to face her command
as she ordered him to bring her a torch and tobago leaves:

‘Why do you wait with empty rooms for a Queen late to her crown
when chieftains would leave their halls to have you head all their clans?’

‘I would wait for no other,’ he said and lowered his eyes.

Skulváði declined the leaves and asked him to name those
who would weaken the walls of Loptr’s whale-boat’s load.

‘Agudrol’s sons did not swear on the Disablð horn,’ he replied.

‘Also watch Ívaldi,’ she said. ‘You must give them no maps
to our Circle of Halls. Now, embrace me, Modlog,
for the horrors of shadows still walk hollows through my head.’

So Skulváði opened her heart and Modlog did not wait in vain.

War-fetterer

Beyond the oil-scented halls of The Wolffem Queen’s longhouse,
mighty bear-armed warriors held their posts at The Fort’s doors;
the girth of the war-gate safe, deep in the hills of granite
stretching to the borders of the Hrimmr’s valleys.

The giants had made no move to halt the rising fort
and no one still could tell if they would strike first
or if the Moor-dogs would against the signs that showed
that the Kerrigash Queen was not one to risk defeat.

At dawn, Skulváði rose and ordered her guard
to take letters to Amarr in the valleys of the Möat.
Modlog armed himself with newly-sharpened weapons,
re-string bow and re-made shield, and set out towards the sun.

Skulváði slept and woke and studied The Fort’s plans –
its tiers of rooms and false doors, its several-cornered faces,
its shifting curves and slits, casemates for pikes and slings,
and deep smooth-bellied pits where Síswoyo’s poisons sat.

The Wolffem Queen studied the crumpled charts of the priest
and paced her floors till nightfall, awaiting The Old Möehrn.
Council Members came and went with news of nothing moving
in The Wood or at Lyr’s Fjörðr nor at Útgårðr’s Mount.
The Wolf and The Wood-witch ate and smoked leaves together.
The Queen refused a bride’s suit to hold an open wedding.
Then The Lupigask left and Skulvádi fell asleep.
When she woke again it was to warning cries
that clouds of fire were leaping from the valleys of the Mæhrn.

The sky was lit with storm-clouds that smelt of sulphur pits.
Every post was double-manned. Wives and children gathered cloaks,
filled their bags with small swords and made for the steep-walled Fort.
From cloud-laden Forskarlarsland came giants with black faces.

From the Dread Black Hills by the Móat’s secret route
The Old Mæhrn brought a line of weeping Húldrác.
They had sealed their furnaces and fled with no belongings.
Síswoy counselled them with potions and Wolffem chants.

Amarr, out of breath, said: ‘The Hísríta hold the Van
with forest-burners and sticks. The Mud-giants will fill
each of your swords and pikes with Ring-flames and mirrors.
But you have to swear not to make them take oaths.’

‘Where is my guard, Modlog?’ The Wolf shouted to the Mæhrn.
Amarr hung his head: ‘He took routes burning brightest.’
Skulvádi’s voice roared again upon weighty news of Modlog:
‘Find me one among them who calls himself “Almordozar.”’
Upon her words, Hagræmarg of the Dragonping Elders,
signalled that all Kerrigash who could not stand to fight
had been taken to The Fort — three thousand in all —
and that the same again would stand to die for her.

Thunderers such as no one heard from the dragon’s mouth
on which Hunrakan rode spilt from the naked woods.
In swift reply, waves of spears and flaming flight-brights
pierced the smoke-black mists growing from Forskarlarland.

The Hooded Wolf called for men — Bearsarks maddened by smoke —
to charge east of the Garth with fire-shields and pikes
to scatter the split-helms advancing from Lyr’s Fjördr.
The battle raged till dawn when the Dog-men retreated.

In the lull, Modlog appeared with Almordozar, the priest:
‘This priest says the Dogs will talk. Let me take a message
and laden it with news that will hold Moor-hunters.’
The Wolf nodded agreement with Almordozar and Modlog.

At the pass that cradled The Path of Three Staves,
ten helmed-men on horseback broke the priest’s word
and strung Modlog by his arm to the rear of their beasts.
They sent his severed hands to put stakes through Kerrigardr.

Now, revenge-taking Karibs descended from Útgardr.
With them were tethered bounds champing at their chains.
Starved too long of alfen flesh the bounds pulled on their collars
to set their teeth in the limbs even of their Karib masters.

But Skulvádi was painted, her draw-wand dipped in the blood
of her faithful guard — Modlog of Tyr’s finest.
Her shield held between her and the smoking Wood,
The Wolf set out between thunders to fell the twin-helm traitors.

She cut down each maddened bound and the iron-crowned heads
of the horse-bound Dog-men and raised each skull on her pike
that the Bear Shirt leaders took news swiftly to the Garth:
‘The War-tooth Queen has cracked the heads of thunder-log men!’

Dog-men, Dogs — the Spanish
For half a day, victory cheers followed the Hilditonn Queen around Kerrigardr's walls: 'Týr-vadr – Hound tamer!' On rockfaces, cutters carved poems to Skupladulfr, to her pike with Hunters' blood, to her boots on broken necks.

5. THE GREAT BATTLE FOR MARGRNON

The Rescue of Amarrsotlu

either side moved for weeks – not Moor-hunters nor Kerrigash – each watching the other from their posts, for reprisals. Yet Skulvádi's glory burned Yr's signs on her breast as smoke spiralled the Wood of the Moat's valleys.

The Queen took leave to Úlfr's Rest where Kerrigan's ashes blew. And she howled into the wind for answers from cloud-sea. From Garmr's growl of moans came Kerrigan's weighted voice: 'I will draw you down to me with Ohýla's moon-fist-slice.'

With the Old King's death-words sleeping with shadow-walkers, Seidstafr of Iron Hand's gold came back to the Garth to shake the hold of meddlers from the Coffer-keepers' realm. She summoned Sísawyo and Council Elders still standing:

Left – (top) 'Defence of the Walls of Margrnon with Kerrigan's Wall of Shields,' from the ms. (Below) Detail: image on the face of each shield and its signification (from left to right) 1- Loop, 2- Word, 3- Constraint, 4- Ladder 5- Directions, 6- Flood, 7- Inversion, 8- Black Stone giants, 9- Cipher. Each is a Shield Poem telling a story that summarises significant events in the history of the rulership of Kerrigardr.
'Where is the Wood-witch who killed with a glance!'
Why does she sit and get fat while the Wood becomes charred bones!
Why has Kopatl lost track of the Warring Alf's sons!
Who keeps an eye on Iva now that Modlog is gone!
The huracan is late. Storm-clouds will not save us!'

To the boom of The Wolf's voice, Sísuyo's words came calmly:

'You must take Kerrigan where he would not walk.
You will know where I travel
but you may not follow yet.

'When fires warm our walls you must take the Charms
to walk where the space
is wide enough for one.'

Her face drained of scents on which Modlog feasted,
Skulváði howled with rage against her witch-charmed friend:
'I will not hear of magic when I need backs and weapons
to drive these death-mongers far from Four-caverns Peak!'

But the Wood-frowe would not budge from her place of chant-and-calm:

'They come with giant-hordes when the last troll falls.
Then comes Modorr to our door,
Huldra's beasts at his back.

'Stay still when I call you. You can not look back
from what Ring-wards fear.
You will fall away to Gild-rac.'

'Send me the wizened-face Mæhrn. At least he makes some sense,'
Skulváði chaffed the dis with the words on her lips
that had taken the Queen to endless caves at The Peak,
to the Garden of Black Stone and to shadowlands of slaves.

Kopatl, knowing his place, stood to answer one question:
'Amarr of the Mæhrn studies plans to close the Rings.
to bring The Stone to the Garth and to open the Bridge-gates.'
The Huldrac huddled nearby nodded agreement firmly.

Almordozar, kept prisoner, in chains in The Wolf's rooms,
shook his shackles to tell them that he too shared their burden.
The Shining Coin said to him: 'You will be spread on poles
if you do not give the name of the chief who leads the Dogs.'
But Siswyo spoke instead: ‘Give the poor Dog-slave some food. The Moor-hunters do not come with the say of troll-beasts, nor by the Alf’s son’s hands, nor with Ivaldi blessing—though they have all played their part selling news behind your back.’

And the Old Bird Woman sank back into deep-chant: ‘You shall no more see shadow than see light—every where about you as upon a spider’s web.

‘Listen to the ground. Bring Amarr the Moehrn to the belly of the Fort, to Margrnon’s Mists.’

Losing her patience with the Witch, the Weaver closed the meeting to count her store of irons—clamourer and end-scored, cutlass and leg-biter, whiskered Viglod and lancet, war-light and double-wood, blood-wakers and wound-knuckles.

Yet Skulvádi could not leave Siswyo’s chants in the casemates. With the priest’s war maps of the Dog-men’s death-trail, she worked her way to The Wood to ash-painted Moehmland hoping to find Amarr within a day or turn back again.

She came to a clearing strewn with Bear-ripped men. One corpse moved, then lay still. From beneath him slid the man with Eyes of the Moth. Skulvádi held her stance, for no thing can be trusted while the raven-banner blows.

‘Do you take such pleasure to follow the steps of death?’ she asked him, and he replied: ‘Death has always framed the Garth that you call home. I have kept my promise to meet you at the right time. What is it that you want?’

‘For myself, nothing but Need—to quell Muspell’s flames,’ she replied, to which he said: ‘Then I will let you have Amarr of the Moehrn.’ The Wolf said: ‘Stand aside! Deliver him in one piece!’

‘He tells me he is sleeping behind a mighty rock but as you can see for yourself he lies in an empty space. He makes a comic picture. But I have nothing to do with these parts, and must go where the wind takes me next.’
Then the man calling himself ‘Eyes of the Moth’ slipped away.
Amarr looked up from his place, his stare wider than ever,
smoke-tears streaming from his eyes. ‘We are no more,’ he said,
but I have saved The Stone, fixing his stare near a tree.

‘The Shifting Stone is heavier than I remember,’ said Amarr.
We must take it at once to Mismargr’s battle-steeds
where the last By-way needs me to seal its cracks and breaks.
The sluice gates must be opened and closed at the right time.’

Gild-rac

The Wolf’s return was greeted by her Garth under fire.
With the Elders of the Clans she gathered their armies
to find the Bridge-way quickly repaired by Amarr
with rock-vice, light-sticks and with the humming Stone.

It was with little warning that the steel-winged Moor-men
descended from Low Hill Mounds on the fourth day of silence.
Blood-stands cleaved the air and skulls cracked on shields,
but still the Hunters’ fire-balls heaped Kerrigash upon their kin.

The Great Battle raged beneath blackened Vidblain.
Their best was diminished to bloody weeping limbs.
The wounded were carried into the bowels of Margrnon.
Deeper and deeper they fled into the Fort’s sweating halls.

They met to ponder the fall in their numbers and morale;
driven from their limits, their only refuge, Hel.
Still, no man nor woman left guard-posts at Kerrigardr’s walls
while Hithsco’s clan secured the shields of Cebanex and Iron Hand.

While most stayed behind to flame the charge of Dogs,
Amarr marked mock entries to the false hearts of Margrnon.
The Garth given up to Úrdr, Skulváði clasped the Books
and the Flame for magic to sweep the last advance.

The Old Moehrn grew weary with holding The Shifting Stone
and working his tools but when he balanced all
he was very skilful – better than he ever was –
at shifting deep-set sluices to flood the Kerrigash plains.
Skulvádi issued orders for Amarr to set in motion
The Fort and The Bridge, but the Old Gazer was slow—
fire-clouds shielding the sun forced him to reset mirrors
and several moving parts until they worked as they should.

There was a great clunking and grinding and shifting
of mirrors and doors and walls, and skalds put down their swords
to write unexpected rhythms in every sight and sound.
None was prepared for such noise from the Mæhrn’s machines.

All trembled at the clamour for it was a shock to see
that the Builder’s art was so much unlike himself.
Soon every river would swell every empty Sinking Lake
to cut the Hound-men from the Møat’s way to Hel.

Walls trembled with Skádi’s groans. Boulders fell from the sky.
The outer door was pulled shut. Arrow-slits rained flight-brights
on the thunder and spear-lights of the Dogs at the door.
The Veil poured sail-stays to fill the lakes for years.

By nightfall the caves of Hel, as Amarr had marked them,
would lift shields of water over the under-ground route
that led to the hidden realm for which clans from north and south
had braved Hel’s rims and bargained with Black-giants.

While all listened to the rules that the Old Mæhrn spelt out
if they wanted to pass safely through the Mistland Realm,
Sísywó told Almordozar: ‘There is one more door
where we will let you go. You will not come with us.’

But the silence that soon fell between Margmon’s walls
was suddenly ripped by Hrimmir-howls of war
let loose upon the train of two hundred Kerrigash
before the last wall was closed by the tiring hands of Amarr.

Left - Amarr’s tools: ‘Mirror-box’ (leftmost) and ‘Vice,’ from the ms.
At their head, Modorr of Grimmđokk; at their back, Modorr's horde
with targes as wide as three men, with helms as steep as two doors.
On their bare breasts were moulded the carvings of the dragon.
Modorr roared and raised his arms, his red nose-guard gleaming.

The last rank of berserkers charged from the secret curves
of the Great Fort's wall-skin and the Mœhrn closed the hall.
Skulváði hammered the wall that Amarr threw up to save her,
howling for her warriors at the mercy of Grimm's Men.

When the clash of man and giant closed on deathly silence,
the weary Moehrn released the wall that saved the Queen.
Skulváði did not look at the faces of her slain –
none stood to fall forward, neither giant nor Þór's bravest.

The Varg of Hoods signalled those who stood to guard the rear
to step on the bloodied limbs of dead and dying Hrimnir.
The long journey took them below the earth-packed caverns
of Grimmđokk and by Hel's ways that once linked Bridge to giants.

In the haste and mêlée many lost their way
before Skulváði found the final gap to flood-sea
beyond the last boundary of The Edge of The World.
Booms broke the hazy sound-lands to cut Grimmđokk from The World.

They had long left the walls of the Fort of Margrnon,
Kerrigardr, now nestled in the mouth of the dragon –
their pots, bones, foundries, their Great Dragonping Stone,
their army of hawks and beasts, their grand halls and recipes.

When the Kerrigash Queen turned around to call those
who had braved the flames and the onslaught of Benders,
Bifrost was empty save three – the priest, Amarr and Siswyo.
'The Bridge takes many routes. We cannot turn back,' said Amarr.

He pointed out a valley of Ásatékir traders
to the priest clasping his cross: 'When we leave, you go that way.'
Then the Old Builder said that he had to take a rest
for his Humming Fate had grown too burdensome to carry.

Being practical as Mœhrn are, he would never leave his tools –
not let go The Shifting Stone nor the treasure of shields,
not his sack of Nawa coins nor, his most valued gifts,
the bag of working tools and measuring mirrors.
Síswoyo stopped to rest too and opened her elk-wool-bag to count their losses on bones that she carried with potions. The Wolffem Queen ran her palm across her pitted mail-coat where she had taken the force of the Hunters’ metal bolts.

In her fist she still gripped Hísrita-Flame and the Books. When the four reached the last edge of the shivering Bridge-way, Síswoyo said, ‘This is the door to the horn-peaks of Gild-rac.’ But Skulváði Úlfr’s heart was empty of travelling.

The frowe of Tkisfro Kooré said: ‘This is the way for you.’ But Skulváði’s steps were heavy, slipping walls weakening her stride. Trusting the work of Skuld, the Moehrn and Bird looked back once and stepped through the silk-stone door of Trembling Way’s last wall.

‘Where do I go now?’ Skulváði asked the Wood-frowe who stood on the other side. But the old witch was silent, frowned and turned to go, while the Moehrn’s face grew dark and he told the priest once more the way that he should take.

Below them rose the Red Plateau—the reaching peaks of Gild-rac, hemmed by a road that grew dew-spread sheets of silver light. From its circle of blood-earth stood the horns of Asabrag, while its step-jagged rim bent beyond Valboll’s shields.

Skulváði Úlfr pressed her palm to the Books and wave-caked Flame. ‘These leaves are all that is left of The Coffer Keepers,’ she said to Almordozar and she etched the Books’ last signs and strung their spines with threads pulled from her bloodied vest.

Below – from a manuscript fragment entitled ‘Amarr’s Plans of the Stone-key’ revealing the structure of the facets of the Amarsotlu while it was in ‘transparent operation’

Above – Illustration series (reading from either direction - north to south or vice versa) – diagram showing the ‘floor of the by-way sluices’ of Bifrost Bridge (Rainbow Bridge or Trembling Roadway) that Amarr controlled and how the parts are meant to operate. The diagram is the only visual image ever found of the Bifrost, described in Snorri Sturluson’s Edda as ‘made with more skill than other structures.’
Now Mistlands close the Grimmsland with cracks of echoed steps that drive me into forests on loosely anchored lines.

Now night-trees' limbs bend caves from Heyeoakkab's spells raising ships from under ground with dark-pawed hills set sail.

'Not the hooves of Huldra's beasts nor clashing Hound-stave's sweep will stand against the one who guards the Books to Gild-rac. Where none of Skádi's Clan could scald Hrógmóat's gleam, you, only, can destroy us with a single hungry flame.'
SKULVÁDI ÚLFR:

HISTORICAL LACUNÆ AND POETIC SPACE

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Skulváði Úlfr

HISTORICAL LACUNÆ AND POETIC SPACE

VOLUME TWO

THE COMPANION READER TO
THE EPIC POEM OF THE HISTORY OF THE KINGDOM OF KERRIGARDR

BEVERLIEY BRAUNE
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**CHAPTER 1**

**INTRODUCTION**

**HISTORICAL LACUNÆ AND POETIC SPACE**

This is a tale of dread—
sped by dragon's breath—
when Ásgardr's ailing realm
blew auguries that ached
with threatening scour,
when such scalding tides
reared steeds beneath us
riding salty graves
of those freshly laid.

This is a lay of awe
of ice and fevered flame,
when Fairhair's fire
gripped Vikingar hearts
with the hunt for heathen-gold.

*Skulvádi Úlf* is an epic poem of a fictional history created from blank spaces in history; a work that explores synthesis—the whole and its parts. The poem also tells the real story of the troublesome nature of rulership over the unknown territory of the poetic imagination. It gives a detailed account of the phenomenological and ontological nature of encounters with the poetic terrain. As such, it is a translation of the signposts of this landscape—an empirical study of the configuration of the intuitive terrain and its bearing on the reading of poetry.

*Skulvádi Úlf* tells the story of this exploration as an account of the history of the Kingdom of Kerrigarðr founded by Viking warriors in the mid-eleventh century on the island of Ximayaca. According to the 'evidence' of the poem, this island is likely to have been Jamaica in the West Indies. In a real sense, Ximayaca is the place of uncharted territory
created as seven Books detailing the History of Kerrigarðr translated from an obscure Norse language into English in the sixteenth century. The poem describes the significant events in the lives of Kerrigarðr's rulers, the most formidable being the warrior shaman and mistress of swords, Skulváði Úlfr (The Wolf born of Future's Pool) who ruled in the late fifteenth century.

As much as the creation of the work as real evidence of my exploration signifies my need to determine the mapping of the unknown territory – the language of the intuitive terrain – so it is important that the work occupies a real or credible place. It is important that the poem occupies a space where listeners or readers may be convinced that the events described there could have taken place. For readers to believe that Skulváði Úlfr could be an authentic story, we will need to place ourselves in that indeterminate space between the work of art and the observer. It is here that we can begin to give it validation.

Roman Ingarden argued that the observer of a work of art concretises the work by giving credibility and value to the indeterminable space that stands between observer and artistic work. The relationship between the reader and the aesthetic value of the work of art is based on lacune, cavities, blank spaces, gaps in the definition of that relationship. A work may be perceived for what it teaches us about its historical setting or tells us about our

pleasure or displeasure with it. Yet if our response to the work is based entirely on our pleasure or displeasure, we may value the work one moment and devalue it the next. The value we put on our reception of the work depends on our perception of it. Perceptions may vary among observers. However, if a number of us agree upon the same values, the work is given that value. It is in this relational space that the work of art becomes an aesthetic object.

On its compositional level, *Skulváði Úlfri* is an adventure towards determining the levels of values that bring reader and composer to the literary work of art. The poem tells the history of retrieving the facts from the intuitive terrain much as we would regard the retrieval of the details of a memory of a concrete experience – *an historical* experience. *Skulváði Úlfri*, therefore, depends on *lacunae* in history and form in order to map its terrain. Thus, the story is placed in the period of the *missing* years of the recorded history of Viking exploration westward, the Cherokee before contact with Spanish explorer Hernando De Soto in 1540 and the Arawaks before 1490. In other words, it is roughly placed between the end of the eleventh and fifteenth centuries. The historical setting in itself is a remarkable journey through the machinations of the nature of establishing one set of events against others as a statement of *what happened*.

What is historically regarded as the Viking Age lasted from 850 to 1050. Viking expansionism probably came to its real end in 1066 with the death of Haraldr Hardraði in battle against the English two days before William of Normandy crossed the English
Channel. Such a definitive end, however, seems unlikely for the single-minded Vikings whose travels touched the borders of the Arctic, the "Blueland" of Africa or the Sahara, North America, and stretched considerably into Central Asia. Little survives in history that credits Vikings' achievements near the scale of the 850-1050 period much beyond the late eleventh century. The surviving work in "saga-history," Graham-Campbell warns, for example:

must be treated with caution, for the information recorded about the events that took place several centuries before is in the form of stories that have been preserved by constant retelling, and thus were always liable to distortion by personal, political and religious interests, before finally being committed to parchment.

Nothing of Viking trans-Atlantic settlement of the kind that took place in Iceland or Greenland survives in their poetry, and "no whole poems have been preserved outside Iceland," notes Kristjánsson. Records of Viking trans-Atlantic expeditions can be found

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3 Johannes Brøndsted puts the end of the Viking Age, at least "as far as Norway itself was concerned," a bit later, almost to the turn of the twelfth century with the rule of Harðrǫð's son, Olaf Kyrri. The Vikings, trans. Kalle Skov (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965) 107.


"Blueland" refers to the Sahel regions of the blue-robed nomadic Tuareg or Berber according to Paddy Griffith, The Viking Art of War (London: Greenhill, 1995); may also be a heiti for sea.


5 Graham-Campbell, The Viking World, 68. "For Iceland, however, in addition to the various Íslendinga Sögur (Sagas of Icelanders), there are two historical works compiled in the twelfth century that deliberately set out to record the country's early history: the Íslendingabók (Book of the Icelanders), and the Landnámabók (Book of Settlements). But even these depend ultimately on unwritten traditions for the earliest events that they describe."

in Old Norse (Old Icelandic) sagas and from the evidence of L’Anse-aux-Meadows. Even here, the sagas differ significantly from each other to the extent that it is not possible to determine from them alone what the historical facts are. *Eiríks Saga* (Eric’s Saga) and *Grønlendinga Saga* (Greenland Saga) contradict each other regarding who first sailed successfully to the North American coast (Bjarni Herjólfsson or Leifr The Lucky?), when (986 or 1000?) and where settlements were attempted (“Vinland” meaning Newfoundland, Florida or the whole North American continent?). Doubts about the geographic location of Vinland have thrown up false sightings such as the acknowledged fake, the Kensington rune stone.

As well, the relevant extant Icelandic sagas referred to as the Wineland Sagas are not dated earlier than the fourteenth century. The scholarship on the historical references in extant saga documents has consistently pointed to the same inconsistencies. In addition to *Eiríks Saga* (c. 1260) and the *Grønlendinga Saga* (c. 1194), these include: *Landnámabók* II. 14 –

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7 The only proof of Norse settlement in North America, L’Anse-aux-Meadows in Newfoundland, raises questions such as: did it serve “as a ‘gateway’ to Vinland,” where exactly was “Vinland” and does the word “Vinland” refer to “grapes” and “wine” at all or did it mean something or some place else? James Graham-Campbell, ed., with Colleen Batey, Helen Clarke, R. I. Page, and Neil S. Price, *Cultural Atlas of the Viking World* (Abingdon: Andromeda Oxford, 1994) 179.


8 “Roughly speaking, the two sagas describe the same historical events and the same historical personages; but the key difference lies in the role played by Leif the Lucky, son of Eirik the Red. In *Eiríks Saga*, it was Leif who made the first accidental discovery of America, in the year 1000; whereas in *Grønlendinga Saga*, Leif made a planned voyage of exploration to America after it had been accidentally sighted by Bjarni Herjólfssson some fifteen years earlier.” Magnusson and Pálsson, 32.


Eric the Red and the colonisation of Greenland; *Flateyjarbók* (The Flatey Book, c. 1390) – Herjólfsson’s adventure, Leifr “the Lucky” Eiríksson’s discovery of Vínland, Thorvald’s and Thorsteinn’s unsuccessful ventures; and the *Fríssbók* text. The *Fríssbók* text states that Leifr the Lucky “came in the autumn to Greenland” while the Flatey Book’s account of King Olaf Tryggvason reports that Leifr “came at the end of summer to Greenland” and not only this, but both books place Leifr in Greenland “in the year in which he set sail.”

*Hauksbók* (Hauk’s Book) includes Eric the Red’s journey and Karlsefni’s expedition, but contains passages not found in *Eirík’s Saga* or *Landnáma* although in its abridged form it coincides with the other two. It is the *Descripicio insularum Aquilonis*, a volume completed by German priest, Adam of Bremen, around 1075 which supports *Eirík’s Saga* and *Groenlendinga Saga* that Vikings went to Vínland, while throwing real doubt on the geographical location of Vínland. Bremen reported an account by Danes which described an island believed to be in the Atlantic Ocean where grapevines grew in the wild and produced excellent wine. This throws the discussion of the location of Vínland south of Newfoundland, perhaps to Florida and into very exciting terrain.

Historical documents do suggest that some contact continued between Greenland and the North American Atlantic seaboard as late as 1347, evidenced in Greenland by animal pelts indigenous to Markland (Nova Scotia?) but not to Greenland. Discussion surrounding the date, provenance and philology of the poetry is vibrant. The origins of *Rígsþula* (Rigr’s Song), for example, have not been definitively resolved and may never be. Joseph Harris

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11 Magnusson and Palsson 24-25.
notes that attempts to date and place Rigspula have tried to fix its influences and composition in the 800s to 900s Western Isles, Ireland, or Britain; in 1230-1250 Iceland; in connection with the Danish monarchy; with Celtic Pictish customs and with German social-structure patterns. As well, a sense of incompleteness plagues the poem.12 These points attest to the continuing gap and sometimes compelling questions that seem to have provided at least a reasonable answer, for now, regarding the provenance and date of Rigspula as composed in Norway (if not by a scribe of Norwegian origin in Iceland) in the early thirteenth century.13

Other discussions find that the poetry supports archaeological evidence. For example, the poetic description of swords writhing like snakes in battle confirms the Viking forging technique of twisting lengths of steel, then forging the twists together so that the sweep of a sword as it reflects light would create the optical effect of moving twists - snakes.14 Discussion about the historical proof that subjects of the heroic poems actually existed has bearing on Skulvádi Úlfr. Some figures referred to in the oldest manuscripts of the Codex Regius can be traced to “famous men who figure in the pages of reliable chroniclers -

12 Kevin Crossley-Holland notes at the end of his translated retelling of Rigspula which concludes with “they know what it means to temper their weapons with the blood of enemies...” that “the manuscript breaks off here and so ‘The Song of Rig’ is incomplete. The poem probably went on to establish the divine descent of the Danish Kings - the names Rigr, Darr and Danpr occur in early genealogies - and perhaps to celebrate one particular king.” The Norse Myths: Gods of the Vikings (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983) 25.


Re dating, however, Kristjánsson says: “Rigspula is in the Codex Wormianus, written towards 1400, of Snorri’s Edda.” 39.

14 “Norse Literature is full of poetic allusions to arms, most of which were held to be pure fancy until the archaeological evidence of the weapons themselves became available.” Ewart Oakeshott, The Archaeology of Weapons: Arms and Armour from Prehistory to the Age of Chivalry 1960 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1994) 150.
Ermanaric, king of the Ostrogoths (Jörmunrekr), Gundaharius, king of the Burgundians (Gunnarr), and Attila, king of the Huns (Atli) who “lived in central Europe, some as far west as the Rhine, some as far east as the Black Sea.”

The history of the East Cherokee (historically an independent tribe of the Iroquois) and that of the Arawaks before the mid-fifteenth century is even more problematic than that of the Vikings. For the contemporary researcher into Cherokee and Arawak history, there are no historical written records on the scale of that of the Vikings.

What survives of the lives of the East Cherokee, before Hernando de Soto, comprises physical artefacts, oral histories, legends and myths that continue to baffle scholars as do many of those in Viking poetry.

The recorded history of the Cherokee begins with the year 1540 when the first entry into their country was made by De Soto advancing up the Savannah on his fruitless quest for gold in May of that year. The earliest Spanish adventurers failed to penetrate so far into the interior.

Kristjánsson 47-48.

The Cherokee and Tuscarora lived in the Southeast of North America, though part of a larger group, the Iroquois, that lived in the Great Lakes and included – possibly as one group – the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca; Huron; Petun; Neutral; Erie; Susquehannock.

On Cherokee historical background, Rodney L. Leftwich, explains:

“There is much evidence from archaeology that the Cherokee were long-time inhabitants of the Southeast. From the mounds, shell-middens, stone graves, and village sites of the Cherokee area, an enormous mass of specimens has been taken in an extraordinary range of shapes, sizes, and media.

“Although there have been differences of opinion concerning the origin of the thousands of mounds of the Eastern area, sufficient evidence has been found and presented to conclude with reasonable certainty that the Cherokee were Mound Builders.”

“Although[sic] the Cherokee, a detached southern element of Iroquois stock, were probably Mound Builders, the war-like Iroquois proper to the north show little evidence of the trait. Mounds are found at nearly all the large Cherokee settlements.” Arts and Crafts of the Cherokee (Cullowhee: Land-of-the-Sky, 1970) 6-7.

Leftwich 7.
Similarities between some Cherokee and Viking practices are also pertinent to the text of Skulváði Úlfr – aspects of craft techniques, diet and shamanistic belief systems. It is not so much that similarities or differences are used in the epic poem to prove the fictional elements, but that they exist so the reader can make connections across the lacuna between historical evidence and the History of Kerrigardr. Such evidence includes the Eastern Cherokee practice of tanning “ox hide as thin as a calf’s skin,” that they, “as did many other tribes, often buried objects of use or value with their dead,” and the rôle of spirit-guides in daily life. Factual references like these help to provide a common ground to the premise of the text of the epic that Vikings travelled south of Newfoundland. As a document, however, the epic poem does not suggest who might have brought the technologies first to whom. This is not its purpose. If there is a purpose, it is to suggest that questions arise out of gaps provided by the use of the available historical information.

In regard to Cherokee history based on their lore and myths, James Mooney surmises that stories relating to “invisible beings, the ancient monsters, and the hero-gods” are almost certainly mostly “disjointed fragments of an original complete genesis and migration legend, which is now lost.” Furthermore, it is not possible to trace accurately the origins of the stories of animal lore that survive in tact according to oral tradition.

Except as to the local traditions and a few others which are obviously the direct outgrowth of Cherokee conditions, it is impossible to fix a definite starting point for the myths.... Indians are great wanderers, and a myth can travel as far as a redstone pipe or a string of wampum. It was customary, as it still is to a limited

18 James Mooney, Myths of the Cherokee and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees (Nashville: Charles Elder, 1972) 229. “Whatever it may have been, their national legend is now lost forever. The secret organizations that must have existed formerly among the priesthood have also disappeared, and each man now works independently according to his individual gifts and knowledge.”
extent in the West, for large parties, sometimes even a whole band or village, to make long visits to other tribes, dancing, feasting, trading, and exchanging stories with their friends for weeks or months at a time, with the expectation that their hosts would return the visit within the next summer. Regular trade routes crossed the continent from east to west and from north to south.

...it is as useless to attempt to trace the origin of every myth as to claim a Cherokee authorship for them all. From what we know of the character of the Shawano, their tendency toward the ceremonial and the mystic, and their close relations with the Cherokee, it may be inferred that some of the myths originated with that tribe. 19

In his study of the East Cherokee myths, Mooney concludes that “we may guess how many attached to the ancient territory of the tribe are now irrecoverably lost.” 20

There is useful information gathered since the early 1960s on the Amerindian population on the islands of Cuba and Hispaniola, but nothing survives in Arawakan hand before Columbus from these islands and certainly not from Jamaica. 21 The following report on the conquest of Hispaniola (present-day Haiti and Dominican Republic, lying north east of Jamaica) accounts for Spanish contact with the Taino Indians in the West Indies.

Conquest of Españaola

The conquest of Españaola began in earnest with Columbus’s second trip. Fifteen hundred adventurers, ex-prisoners and ex-soldiers with experience in the final campaigns against North African Moors came back with Columbus. They came seeking their private fortunes and would be ruthless in this pursuit. The Spanish (Castillian, Aragonese, and Extremaduran) soldier of 1494 was a deadly foe. He had good steel armor and swords, arquebuses, cross-bows, trained mastiffs, and excellent cavalry.

19 Mooney 234-35.
20 Mooney 235.
21 “Xmayaca” meaning “land of wood and water” was considered the original Arawakan name for Jamaica. A standard Caribbean textbook, Sources of West Indian History, comp. F. R. Augier and Shirley C. Gordon 1962 (Burnt Mill: Longman, 1981) opens with an extract from the Journal of Columbus, 1492, under the heading “People of the Caribbean” with the first sub-heading “Arawak Indians,” ascribing the description in the Journal extract to Arawak Indians as one of the “American Indian communities” encountered “in the Caribbean area” by Europeans at that time (1).
One battle had already been fought. During Columbus's first trip, his flagship, the Santa Maria, ran aground and was wrecked. As a result, a fort, called Fort Navidad, was built and some forty men volunteered to stay behind. They were charged with maintaining good relations with the Taino and with searching for the source of gold. They were true to the later [sic] mission though not to the former.

Almost immediately the men broke into factions, fought each other and proceeded to harass the Taino population, hoarding as many as five women apiece. While Guacagarani, the local cacique, remained loyal to his promise to Columbus that he would care for the men, a band of conquistadors carried on their terror campaign deep into the territory of another cacique, Caonabo, who had made no promises. Caonabo would not tolerate the depredations and ordered attacks first on the intruding band and later on the fort itself. All the Spanish were killed but the attack became justification for retribution upon Columbus's return with seventeen ships.

The Spanish mounted almost immediate military campaigns against Indian villages. For several years the fights went back and forth and by 1496, according to Las Casas, only one third of Indian Española was left. Other historians assert that the pace was not quite as quick, that it took until about 1510 for that kind of extermination....

In 1496, Columbus led an assault later known as the Battle of the Vega and called by his followers the principal battle against paganism, in part to punish a cacique, Guatiguanax, who had killed ten Spaniards and burned forty others. Guatiguanax had taken revenge for the killing of one of his own elders, who had been torn to death by a Spanish mastiff commanded by two Spanish soldiers. Columbus captured many Indians that he sold into slavery during this campaign. (Fernandez-Armesto 1974) 22

The above account is useful in understanding the 1500 historical rim of the epic poem and Skulvádí's attitude to the Spanish – called “Moor-hunters” and “Dog-men.” It was however with some excitement that I found aspects of the epic to sit well with the above information that I consulted after the drafts of Book VII were completed.

Of the presence of the Arawaks in Jamaica, only potsherds and a few human bones remain as evidence of their having inhabited the island, if at all. In recent years, the official description of the Amerindians depicted on the Jamaican coat-of-arms has changed from

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“Arawak” to “Taino.” If written records of the Cherokee do not pre-date the late fifteenth century, physical proof of Arawak remains in Jamaica provides even more tantalising gaps.

It is now being argued that the Arawaks only inhabited the Lesser Antilles of the West Indies, the eastern arch of the Caribbean islands. They are believed to have been expelled to the South American mainland around 1000. All that is known about their political organisation is that they had substantial kingdoms and, of their religion, that they were animists. It seems an anomaly, but it is held that their kings, Caciques, held absolute power over their subjects while they themselves were thought to be “quiet and peaceful.” The general consensus is that the Arawaks “have totally disappeared from the surface of the Earth” as a unique population.23

In April 1998, I also came across an article published a year earlier in a Jamaican newspaper, *The Gleaner* on-line. Freelance journalist Ken Jones looked at the Arawak-versus-Taino controversy that stretches from Yale University to the Jamaica National Heritage Trust. Jones’s commentary ran:

No Arawak lived here

ONE OF the best-kept secrets of Jamaica’s history is that the Arawaks were not the original settlers in the island, that they never were here to greet Columbus and never even set foot on these shores. English-speaking historians have for centuries been telling us tales about the Arawaks, but now distinguished archaeologists have unearthed facts which indicate that it was the Tainos, not the Arawaks, who discovered Jamaica fully five hundred years before Columbus. ‘Artificially’, no Arawaks lived here.

Professor Irving Rouse, of Yale University, a noted expert on indigenous people, has studied the subject for decades and his findings are regarded as conclusive. Spanish-speaking historians have long ago recognized the fact that the Tainos were here when Columbus arrived, and our own Jamaican historians, including Basil Reid,

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have in the past four years been finding evidence to support the claims made by Rouse and others. There are Spanish documents clearly indicating that the people encountered by Columbus, described themselves as Tainos, which means 'noble' or 'good'.

Similarities

Sure enough, there were similarities between the Tainos and Arawaks, but as Reid points out in 'Geography in the Caribbean Classroom', ... The Arawaks of South America generally had a simpler culture. While Arawaks slashed and burned the forest to make temporary clearances, the Tainos of the Caribbean, especially those in Jamaica, Hispaniola and Puerto Rico, practiced a sophisticated form of conuco agriculture. The mounded fields... were arranged in regular rows. They retarded erosion and improved drainage, permitting more lengthy storage of mature tubers in the ground. In contrast to the Arawaks, the Tainos built much larger, permanent villages. The latter were also characterized by a more elaborate political organization, with district and sometimes regional chiefdoms.

Other accounts place the “Arawak/Taino” as inhabiting an area stretching from present-day Florida, through the West Indies to Brazil. The Arawaks are credited not with a peaceful simplicity but as having minimal conflict. They may have had an elaborate political and social structure, a class of hereditary chiefs in addition to three other classes, the lowest of these being slaves. They were a matrilineal society, skilled at pottery weaving, wood- and metal-work.

The deepening lacuna in the history of the Arawakan population in Jamaica at the time of the arrival of Columbus ironically provides more room to establish the credibility of the created Arawakan populations of Ximayaca in Skulváði Úlfr – the Ximacans, Møhrns, Forskarlar, Hisrita and Týringar. Ultimately, maintaining the setting of the story on Jamaica, as an implied location, was dictated for me by a particular feature of the Jamaican landscape, the Cockpit Country, which features in the terrain of Kerrigarðr as “Hel’s

Caverns” or “The Hawks’ Pits.” (I will come the reason for this in Chapter 2, “Stop gaps.”)

By way of providing annotations to the emerging poem, my encounter with texts pointing to the blank spaces in Viking, Cherokee and Arawakan history helped to bring me to closer consideration of gaps as an historical context for the poem. However, it not so much here that the heart of the poem emerged. The lack of historical background for the setting of the poem helped to create the rim or hinges of the epic. The nature of historical lacunae was the more important facet and had significant bearing on how I considered the nature of the imaginative terrain with which I was struggling to give sound and form on the page.

Ingarden’s work is useful in explaining the place of these historical lacunae in the poem – the places where the story-tellers live – if we think of the logic of historical lacunae as the spaces that Ingarden terms “indeterminate” in our comprehension of the literary work of art, the aesthetic object. The purpose of each story in the epic poem is itself and its revelations. Some stories continue across Books. The first story continues till the last Book. In Book I, tempest is transformation. In Book VII, transformation is tempest. At the end of the epic, the main character, Skulváði, turns away from all that which is upheaval to a still deeper, quieter and more mysterious place extending the intuitive realm as drawn in the Books towards yet unmapped planes. The action and motivation of each story are based on what the characters see and hear next; what rhythms abound, are noticed, described and the characters’ reactions to them – To whom do they respond? What does it take for them to initiate action? In other words: What is the stage of their journey?
For my purposes, any discussion surrounding the historical ground provides a sounding board that feeds my encounter with the available historical information and what I might speculate from the gaps in that information. An example is the link made between Jormungandr (the Norse mythological World Serpent strangling Middle Earth or the world of men) and the historical fifth century Ostrogoth (eastern Goth) king called Jörmunrekr. This connection is used to establish the reality of Dagazar's anticipation of continuing military conflict with ancient enemies, in Book I, even though, in style, Book I might be considered, in some instances at least, as a mythological lay. Connections like these, however, were made in the final stages of the composition of the poem and affected the composition of the annotations rather than the content of the poetry itself.

If my imagination speaks from a point where exploration begins, what if I were to map the territory from which that imagination comes, collecting its booty and treasures and moving on to report my claim. It is a claim that would be incomplete if I did not also retrieve the contours of the territory, the form in which it came. But, in the nature of the imaginative world, how should I get to the place where it was hidden from myself but to treat it as a new territory of exploration, to act out the activity of exploration, taking from it as an explorer shipping away its booty.
The poetic forms used in *Skulváði Úlfr* are Eddic (or eddic) and skáldic verse, the natural voice for the Viking poet, Dagazar Kerrigansson, who initiates the writing of the Books.  

Old Norse poetry flows through a complex balance between sound and silence, between intertwined structures and spaces; as much by intensive detail as by sudden breakage in narrative. It works through complex metaphor, fixed numbers of alliterative stresses making it more akin to musical composition with specific rhythms and repeated notes. The stresses, combined with an exacting syllabic structure, drive the plot of a story with highly evocative music and esoteric overtones. In writing the opening lines of the poem, for example, I found that the rhythm and stresses of the verse helped to create the elements and the referential points of the telling.

In the extract below, written in speech metre, one of several forms used in the epic poem, each half-line has five to seven syllables. There are two strong-stresses per half-line (bold italics) on syntactically important words. In addition, at least one of these stresses in the second half-line falls on words with a stressed vowel or consonant (bold italics underlined) which alliterates with a stressed vowel or consonant in the first half-line. Even in observing

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25 In reference to literary voice and poetic practice in Iceland, Kristjánsson notes: “There is first the period of creativity which existed before literacy based on Latin learning became established among the Icelanders. It lasted from the settlement c. AD 870 to the years round 1100. The only literature in a formal sense from this time was in verse. Ancient poetry was remembered and transmitted from generation to generation, and new poems and ‘occasional’ stanzas were constantly made....

“Little of the verbal art of this early age was ever recorded. It is true that in mainland Scandinavia verse couplets and longer sequences were inscribed on rune stones, and a few sources say that whole poems or entire narratives were written on rune sticks. We have such a report in *Egils Saga* but this thirteenth-century account is not trustworthy evidence of tenth-century practice, and it is altogether more probable that poems were generally known by heart and passed on by word of mouth.” 21.
a fixed number of syllables, the length of vocal sounds with the use of unstressed syllables
and the pattern of stressed syllables can be employed to add tone to a line.

The length of voiced sounds plays an important rôle in creating the music of the verse. For
example, the long vowel of the weak-stressed “those” in line 5 is not diminished in
significance by its lesser-emphasis in terms of stress, for it not only gathers the weight of
“graves” in the previous line but emphasises the import of “freshly laid.” Whereas, if the
half-line read “the freshly laid,” “the” weakens the significance of that half-line, works
against the gravity of the rhythm and further diminishes the effect of the already weak-
stressed “graves.” To the same end, the short sound of “such” in line 3 gives “scalding”
greater weight, complementing the play between short and long vowels, between
unstressed and stressed syllables carrying the main prop of the opening phrase, “tale.”

Writing Skuldáðí Úlfð involved being very conscious of the use of the stresses and rhythms
of the poetic form and the overt caesura. My goal in working through these historical and
poetical spaces was to create a text credible in sound and historicity through a composition
of the experiences of the characters that inhabit Kerrigarðr. It is a world that we can grasp
– a world of texture where we come into encounter with a world that quivers on our
tongues and under our fingertips – as much as we can imagine of its composers as they
worked to record their history.
The validity of *Skulváði Úlfr* as an historical document rests on a probability logic. The Books tie two sets of historical *lacunae* together on an if-clause. If we pose an “if” on the first premise, we have to follow the probability of the first to the others that follow, providing the first and those that follow are inseparable in the document. In this case, taking the premise that the Vikings are likely to have travelled far south of Newfoundland: if the Vikings travelled to and settled beyond Florida and wrote their poems about the Arawakan Hisrita, Mœhrn and Ximacans, these Arawakan people are likely to have existed.

Book I gives the history of Dagazar Kerrigansson, beginning at the point when he leaves Norway in the summer of 1050 with ship loads of Vikings on a journey across the Atlantic for Vinland in North America. A fateful raid on a Cherokee village plunges the diminished numbers of Vikings along with three female Cherokee captives into a storm. Losing virtually all his cargo and most of his crew, Dagazar and the rest of the survivors are washed up on an island that was once held by Vanir – descendants of the wandering Aztecs, ancient enemies of the legendary Norse king-deity Óðinn (or the Germanic and Anglo-Saxon, Wodan) in *Skulváði Úlfr*. The process of settlement in this region, that Dagazar identifies as Muspellsheimr (Land of Fire Giants), takes the survivors ten hard years leading to the establishment of the city of Kerrigarðr. Their settlement on the island is first confirmed by Ximacan (Arawakan) Casik (Chieftain) Ceibano, who informs the Vikings that they are on his island-territory, Ximayaca. The History of Kerrigarðr then leaps two generations between the first and second Books.

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26 “Since so much of our material comes from late and literary Icelandic sources, it is difficult to know how much of what we learn from them can be applied to Odin worship throughout Scandinavia.” Graham-Campbell, *The Viking World* 179.
Book II takes focus away from the personality of formal leadership to that of Heyeoahkah, a descendant of Cherokee Wolffem priestesses and Viking, an ordinary member of the community, or rather not so ordinary, for she is gifted in culinary, story-telling and visionary arts. The year is approximately 1180. Heyeoahkah’s tales reveal the issues with which the established community struggles when she recounts the personal and political difficulties of Dagazar’s successor, Viglid. She also verifies Dagazar’s account of the raid on the Cherokee village by telling of a raid before Dagazar’s and of the changes it brought to the village with the birth of the Wolffem Clan. Most importantly Heyeoahkah confirms the existence of other tribes and nations in Muspellsheimr – the continuing tension between Vanir (Aztecs) and Æsir (the eastward-extended armies of Asiatic King Ódinn or Wodan).27

Book III takes up the story several generations later in 1410. It is also dominated by the voice of a non-ruler, Obyla, an aspiring swordsmith. She describes the underlying facets of the rule of King Logram the Red, his struggles with a break-away clan and how she turns his alliance with Ximacan Grand Chief Cebanex to her advantage. She is instrumental in the rise of Logram’s son, Kerrigan, and the pivotal character who makes the birth of Skulvádi Úlfr a reality. Like Heyeoahkah, Obyla documents her encounter with those outside Kerrigarðr – Vanir overlords and Karib (Carib) Indians. She extends their world not only to the outer edges of Muspellsheimr but beneath it, to the underground treasure-world of Chief Cebanex.

Book IV continues Book III, about 15 years later. This is the core Book of the epic poem because more than any other it demonstrates the proximity/distance of the intuitive territory. It explores the process of wooing the text of the imaginative terrain, of trying to remain in clear recall while, at the same time, it admits to the ease with which the landscape reveals itself because this section of the poem was written in a *virtual frame* - literally written by the terrain from which I seemed to transcribe the text.\(^{28}\) The story of this Book therefore takes the form of the history of Kerrigan Iron Hand’s rise to power as told by the young poet Helga. Kerrigan’s history dominates the teller about whom we know very little. Helga maps his rise to fame and his complex relationship with Skulváði Úlfr. We are told that his rule expands alliances with the Ximacan House and that he proves himself a great negotiator and warrior, but it is to Skulváði Úlfr that his gains are credited.

Book V continues Kerrigan’s history. It is now 1450. This Book is recorded by several voices, not all identifiable. They include Kerrigan himself, unknown court poets, Helga of the Saxon’s clan, and his advisor Íva of the Ívaldi, a member of another migrating North American priestess clan. The focus is on Kerrigan’s desire to secure power beyond that over the daily lives of his allies and enemies, leading him into the underground world of Kerrigarðr’s caves through the discovery of Skulváði Úlfr’s maps. His journey extends him outward and downward.

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\(^{28}\) I feel uncomfortable using the word *“virtual”* because the imaginative terrain seems anything but virtual. However, I will stick to this term because the terrain does not have physical properties as we know them in the mundane world, but rather as we *experience* them in memories or in dreams.
Book VI, written by Skulváði Úlfur, gives the account of her rise as Queen and of the now ageing Kerrigan's lessening grip on his allies. A challenge by a tribe living on the outskirts of Kerragarðr leads to the invitation to Kerragarðr of the remarkable Toltec trader, magician and medicine woman, Síswyo, from her forest hiding-place. Síswyo's arrival in Kerragarðr draws out all underlying conflicts in the kingdom. Because of her revelations, Kerrigan meets a hidden tribe, the Hrimnir of Grimmákk, lead by Modurr. He discovers the hidden meanings of Síswyo's magic, but at a fatal price.

Book VII takes up the history of Kerragarðr in the year 1480 with Skulváði's rise to power. This Book comprises Síswyo's songs of Skulváði Úlfur's conquests, and Skulváði's account of her journey beyond the most deeply hidden zones south of the island into South America. Her trading empire now spreads across Central America and as far as the central plains of North America. She controls movement to and from that of the Cherokee, Aztec and small scattered Mayan chiefdoms. But it is her encounter with the hidden people (living in areas near the eastern coast of Ximayaca, the deeply-forested islands south of the island and along the northern borders of South America) who bring her into fateful contact with the extraordinary engineer, Amarr of the Möhrn, and the means of saving Kerragarðr from Spanish subjugation.

The text of Skulváði Úlfur details the experiences of Kerragarðr's rulers and their court advisors, some of whom also author the Books. We might call the sum of the details of all the characters' experiences the whole event of the Books – the whole encounter. Because their experiences are deposited within the text, composed of layers forming a series of smaller or briefer encounters, the whole text may appear to be credible. Our understanding
of the texture and context of the smaller encounters hangs on our believing that the whole encounter is credible in some way. The more we are convinced that the whole encounter is credible and that its parts are also 'true.' Our encounter with the text opens up the reading of it as if it were a reconnoitre with undreamt-of possibilities. It stimulates our imaginations to the realisation that we can create our own intervals and fill them with sound.

In other words, let us call our discovery of this text – the sum of the characters' experiences – the whole encounter within Ingarden's indefinite lacune. And let us say that the individual stories of this text are partial encounters. The way we read the partial encounters is a requirement of our comprehension of the whole encounter. If we find the whole encounter is plausible, the more we may be inclined to accept the existence of the partial encounters, and vice versa.

We may agree on the reality – the value – of the sum of the events if the whole encounter is historically grounded, has historical hinges, upon which we open the book. In Skulváði Úlfur our hinges are Viking and Spanish expansion across the Atlantic – hinges that themselves hold gaps upon which historical discussion speculates, generating itself, as it were, from the enticing spaces of probability. In this way our very speculation becomes an historical place. In fact, the greater the gaps – in size and number – the greater the speculation, the more substantial an historical place we give that speculation. If we allow ourselves to be seduced by the whole encounter, we give it meaning – that indefinite gap becomes a meaningful event. In this way we participate in authenticating the text. In keeping with Ingarden, once the value-system of the language has been set up by Dagazar,
that language would become the significant literary and historical value in the writing and reading of the poem.

For example, the narrative opens with the story of Dagazar, to whom Skulváði Úlfr traces her Viking ancestry. He recounts the journey that led to his fleet's shipwreck on the northern coast of the island of Ximayaca. In the opening lines of "Dragon's Breath," Dagazar’s Dreams, we find references to "Fairhair," to "Hard Counsel Haraldr" and to "Rogaland" (southern Norway).29

It is the more specific reference to "...one hundred eighty years since Hafrs Fjördr / when Fairhair beat the Danes..." that helps us hinge Dagazar's story to a place in recorded history linked to Haraldr Háfagri (Harald Fairhair or Finehair) of Vestfold. It was Fairhair whose decisive victory at Hafrs Fjördr made him for a long time the invincible King of Norway who focussed on drawing power to himself by dispossessing the most independent Viking jarls or earls of their land.30 This political move by Fairhair drove Norwegian Vikings in search of new lands. Because Fairhair's victory at Hafrs Fjördr is generally placed around 872, this fixes Dagazar's expedition on the rim of the historical

29 Kings of Norway leading up to Dagazar’s expedition: Harald Fairhair (also referred to as Finehair) son of Halfdan The Black d.c. 940; Harald Greycloak r.c. 961-970; Cnut the Great d. 1035; Harald Hardradi (Hard Counsel Harald) r. 1046-1066. Brent 252.

30 “Western Norway was a great breeding-ground for Vikings and here it was that Haraldr met the stiffest resistance, for he made every effort to pacify the country and destroy their power.” Kristjánsson 12.

"Towards 900 King Harald Finehair of Vestfold set about becoming the sole ruler of Norway and successfully established his control down its west coast, after which it seems to have been accepted that Norway should have one king. It was said that many men left for Iceland in order to escape the imposition of Harald Finehair's rule, choosing to create in that country a republic." Graham-Campbell, The Viking World 197.
gap, that is, around 1052, a time which roughly marks the beginning of the end of the recorded history of the Viking Age (800-1050).\footnote{31}

There are other markers such as “Eiríkr’s tales” and “Thorfinn Karlsefni” that refer to the accounts of Eric the Red and Leifr Eiríksson’s journeys across the Atlantic to Vinland. In addition there are references to the ports of Husavík and Bórrshov and to “missions” (which we take to be Christian missions) that help to fix the historical as well as the geographic location of the setting in the opening series of lays, “Dragon’s Breath.”

\begin{quote}

From slaves of ice weighing upon our weary chests, we worked adventures for warm Wine Lands dredged from Eiríkr’s dreams, driven by revenge one hundred eighty years since Hafrs Fjördr raged— since Fairhair beat the Danes and stole my fathers’ lands, our hard-won chiefdoms pillaged by lawless men.

I, Dagazar Kerrigansson Jarlaskald of Rogaland, sealed a bargain of blood upon the slain breath of Kerrigan, my father, to cast nets of steel and to chain elsewhere what Haraldr’s rogues plundered. And then, all too soon, new grief set upon us: Harðráði – Hard Counsel – with bounds at our heels.

It took little coaxing to lead twelve hundred. The desperate came—the lean, the dispossessed exiled on meagre islands swept with barest ice. Chiefstains came from Sogn, from Skåne and Saxony, from Götlund to join those in Husavík and Bórrshov to ride west for gold and land along vast, glittering wastes.

\end{quote}

\footnote{31 “...Harald Finehair’s great victory in 872 (or possibly a few years later) at Hafrs Fjord...” writes Brøndsted 56.}

Brent places the Hafrs Fjördr victory in c.875, 192.

Though our winter broke late with the tales of Leifr, harvests were covenanted even on Karlsefni’s woes. We vaulted thirty ships under the veil of missions to Greenland’s shores. Warriors and skalds set out, ignoring every leaf of Swartalfheimr’s legends— mound-alfs in skin-boats beneath The Trembling Way.

“Vast Glittering Wastes” (I:1, 5-6)

Writing Skulvádi Úlfr involved rôle-playing through several imaginations based on their encounters with the very ordinary and reasonably expected as well as the extremely weird. The inhabitants of the poem, for example Dagazar and Viglid and their adversaries, are no less strange than those of the heroic tradition of the Heldensage and would have been accepted by a translator in the sixteenth century as falling within that tradition.

The hero and his adversary are extremes, both of which have an affinity with the monstrous. The Beowulf manuscript was apparently felt to belong among those of marvels and monsters since it is included in a codex together with the Wonder of the East and the Letter of Alexander on the Wonders of India. Beowulf is no less extraordinary than the Grendel monsters and the dragon. This historical Hygelac must have been remembered as a monster-like creature—presumably because of his gigantic bones, which, posterity notes, were preserved in a grave on an island near the mouth of the Rhine— for he is listed in the compilation Liber monstrorum (ms. in Lieden).32


For an introduction on the subject of modern readings of the mythology of Old Norse writings see Margaret Clunies Ross, “Medieval Norse Mythological Texts and Modern Readers,” Treasures of the Elder Tongue, Fifty Years of Old Norse in Melbourne – The Proceedings of the Symposium to Celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Old Norse at the University of Melbourne 14th May 1994, ed. Katrina Burge, gen. ed. John Stanley Martin (Melbourne: U of Melbourne, May 1994) 11-19. “I think that, in the first instance, our way towards an overall grasp of what the corpus of Norse myth is about, in the form we have it, is to discover for individual works, and for the whole corpus, its major, recurring compositional units, roles and themes.” 16-17.
In *Skulvádi Úlfur* the premise that a storm could have blown a Viking fleet off its course along the North American eastern coast beyond the southern tip of Florida and brought the survivors to a place where they settled is a reasonable probability.  

For readers to believe it, that is, feel it in our hearts — relate to it as we would a private memory — such an event requires to be surrounded by extraordinary circumstances. In other words, the more distant the individual event grows from the reasoned probability of the whole text, the more likely, as readers, we are to pay it attention, give it free rein upon our senses. Dagazar’s experience with the storm that blows his fleet south to Ximayaca, then, can be no ordinary encounter:

Then it rose — the Wyrd’s Beast — winding itself to my grip.
It tethered me to gasping air, locked my path on gravid heave.
It doubled skywards grasped oarsmen mortified;
the manic raven blown, torn from its very mast
and sitting on its seat the sign of wolf enthroned.

No sooner could I track its feast of warriors
than I set myself the task to test its weaknesses.
I fastened my mind to the path it sped.
It and I alone rode between the flaming prows.

From Wod’s second eye, cast and couched in dread,
the Dragon struck and set circles of emerald-beds
seamed with threads of lightning. It lashed me firmly
to the bite of its jagged teeth. It struck me with dragon’s breath.

I held my sword high to carve the howling beast.
But it stood upon our path: its stare as diamonds cut —
mirrors of brine-scarped roads, corpse-lights of dipped steel,
it’s tail of frenzied weight, its breath of foulest air.

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33 In relation to the L’Anse-aux-Meadows archaeological discoveries, Simpson remarks that the smallest find is an indication of “the type of evidence which would most valuably supplement the saga accounts, as it would indicate the presence of true settlers, accompanied by their womenfolk and practising their usual crafts.” Jacqueline Simpson, *The Viking World* (London: Batsford, 1980) 40.
And its murderous eye — measuring the pit
of my dimming courage — swelled its ranks with pride.
It held our gaping timber sucked in its fiercest tow
that I abandoned new gods who filled our sails for Vinland.

"Graven Signs" (I:1, 11-12)

At the heart of the adventures of Skulvádi Úlf is a story of passion and intelligence, of the "wind of troll-wives" and unruly skessa — brjöst. It is a ground of indeterminate encounters with the intuitive terrain and the levels of retrieving it. In the text, this is articulated as a story of inward exploration, of ambitions thwarted, desires gone astray, promises just shy of fulfilment and of love. The music and language of Old Norse poetry are ideal vehicles to describe this between-worlds journey. Because "the distinction between the living and the dead is so much vaguer," desire and death combine to produce a special quality in Old Norse verse.

The movement between the first and second Books is indicative of changes in language and tone that characterise the work, becoming more layered as the Books proceed. In the second Book, Hyeoahkah’s Tales, Dagazar’s storm journey is re-told by his grand daughter, Hyeoahkah, but the texture of Dagazar’s story appears to undergo a mythic re-interpretation. Her story is told in another traditional Old Norse metre, song measure, but slightly freer than its standard form. This is a story which marks a major step in the

34 Brjöst or breast, heart or thought. Skessa or female giant (where "giant" usually meant a member of the Vanir). On the subject of skaldic descriptive language, Snorri’s Edda tells us: “Thought shall be referred to by calling it wind of troll-wives and it is normal for this purpose to use the name of whichever one you like, and also to use the names of giants, and then refer to it in terms of his wife or mother or daughter.” Snorri Sturluson, Edda, trans. and introd. Anthony Faulkes (London: Dent, 1987) 154. Hereafter, I will refer to Faulkes’ translation as Snorri’s Edda. See Chapter 6 for the use of descriptive language in Skulvádi Úlf.

transformation of the travellers, through their language, as it blends traditional Norse metre with Cherokee storytelling techniques. Song metre has a freer, quick-moving rhythm compared with speech metre. In Cherokee narrative, unusual phenomena are not separate entities functioning from outside the individual with whom they coincide by fate, so to speak. They are not only Other World spirit-guides; they are part of the physical or natural world. In the re-telling, Heyeoahkah relates not only Dagazar’s raid on her grandmother’s village, but a raid before that led by a berserker named Mani.  

Let us imagine ourselves – as we will need to in order to step into the worlds of Skulváði Úlr – seated in a circle in the balmy, wind-blown Arawakan hills surrounded by a forest so thick and green that it seems to shine black even in broad daylight. It is now late into the night on a feast day to celebrate keeping ghosts and poltergeists well away from our doors. We have feasted on the meat of rodents and wild pig and we have already been through two-and-half cups of the best mead fermenting for no less than three years. The voice which rises from the face that dominates the circle is that of Heyeoahkah, known to be a “wizard” at reading the past and the future.

*It was like this.*  
*With her heart fixed,*  
The Wind reared wolves upon Novaini,  
a mourning priestess, pried from deepest sleep  
to place amulets on her husband’s grave.

She stumbled blindly, searching for a path  
to take her from her tent.  
Tar, meddlesome guide, gave her lost routes;  
took her instead to a room of gilded wood.

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36 berserker – crazed Viking warrior sworn to Óðinn; professional mercenary. As a group, berserkers normally attacked with a great roar in a free for all charge, were unstoppable and were said to raze trees in their path. Dressed in animal skins, they were also referred to as bearshirts, bearskins, wolfskins, wolfcoats. Tacitus’ description of the terrible battle cry of Germanicus seems apt: “It is not so much an articulate sound, as a general cry of valour. They aim chiefly at a harsh note and a confused roar, putting their shields to their mouth, so that, by reverberation, it may swell into a fuller and deeper sound.” Church and Brodribb 710.
Tar tricked the priestess on a twisting trail
to another grave that she guarded,
then set her down to sing burial rhymes
until red skin-doors sunk the grey horizon.

There a gale rose in a thunderous voice:
'I am The Hallowing Wind.
You have not grieved with grace nor fear.
You did not truly love your dead while he lived.'

Then The Wind swept her down a second path
where she kept her many guises.
The Goddess of Gales, with gall in her stride,
sped Novaini into secret valleys.

There rose a white stone, a strange wyrding hoop,
floating from a fearsome height.
Soon, a longhouse sailed from breaks in the sky,
from clouds that caught the rains.

When the house was close, the priestess entered.
It had high, wholesome beams;
its hearth, bare and damp, austere and dank,
set deep within its wooden floors.

There a fetid pond lapped its faded boards
with fungus, floating thick.
It was then she heard the shrillest cry of death:
a wolf fiend struck the hooded night.

Upon its heels, beasts roaring, beating shields,
ploughed through the night, razing trees
in their hellish path with howls and screams of
'Mani, Mani, Ma-an-ir!'

She turned to run, but heavy with sleep,
her eyes would not tell what was true.
The wolfskins stalked her as she staggered home
praying to The Riotous Wind as she ran.

But the hungry beasts arrived before her,
broke every sleeping tent,
ate every Skraeling son, struck the very moon
from the silent skies.

For many long nights the village mourned,
waiving at deaths and weeping at births;
for the Manir beasts attacked each woman
and the women bore and birthed their children.
Only females came, called themselves 'Wolffem' (for The Hallowing Wind had a hand in this).

"Novaini and The Wind-wolf" (II:2, 42-43)

Besides the considerations of bringing a world of eleventh-century Norse, Cherokee and Arawak together, there were also other considerations of encounter that needed to be taken into account in the writing of the epic. There was the matter of exploring the material to be used: the material world of the 'original' records and the material world of the translator. The translator, Gwen Terrane, as a credible figure within Skulváði Úlfr, would need to be drawn from a time when there was reception to ideas we would now regard as 'unscientific,' when such ideas were regarded as considerable enough to be given the voice of credibility.

The translator of such a work would also belong to a world of exploration – sixteenth-century Europe – when the world was subject to global political change and a renaissance of ideas did not separate fact from speculation. Such a translator would need to reflect the full texture of the original form of Skulváði Úlfr by reflecting the 'hand' of the material found. The translation would include remnants of the text in its original language, at least. In addition, as a publication, the work would bear the stamp of Gwen Terrane's time by the kind of paper on which it might be printed, the choice of script, the layout. All of these historically relevant aspects were used to provide me with materials, in a contemporary sense, in commanding the imaginative terrain of the work.

As each Book, each layer of texture within (and in the margins of) Skulváði Úlfr authenticates the previous terrain and the territory ahead of it, the patterns bond to
convince us that the encounters might actually have taken place. We are freed from the historical ground itself to leap its perimeters. The seven Books act as layers of the garments of my encounter with the unknown territory, complete with the qualities of the terrain – the stitch of its textures, its sounds and the order of its events.

It is the quality of this unknown and the response of the travellers, and those they encounter, which drive the writing of their story, the articulation of their journey. Discovering the meaningfulness of events requires us to make our way along difficult paths. We must feel we have found what was hidden. After all, the desire for the encounter in the first place and its many possible meanings are fuelled by the knowledge that we will stumble on the way, even lose our way. A meaning to the whole is the ultimate goal. We expect to indulge in deciphering secret codes; we expect mysterious meetings and are willing to accept them as long as they move to some rhythm recognisable in one, if not in all, of the previous encounters.

In this way, probabilities are not endless, however. If I was to bring the relationship with the work of art to the reader-listener into a satisfying definition, I could not forget that the whole event is hinged indelibly on the textures of the original bond – the historical rim, the poetic forms, the logic of the intuitive terrain – the agreed value. Yet the lacunae, the gaps that allowed me in, in the first place, held infinite possibilities. The complexity of this can be fully appreciated when we consider that the spaces which allow us to question what is probable and what is not provide valid intervals, apertures which can take us across several layers at once, stretch the limits of the characters’ and, indeed, our own imaginations.
Beyond speculation and questions, the working out of an authentic life for the Kerrigash relied on the more remarkable terrain of the creative process. *Skulváði Úlfr* became a language map which narrates the legend of the real evidence of my exploring the intuitive terrain and the troublesome nature of rulership over that territory. Historical lacunae provided opportunities where unexpected realities were mapped to create their own authenticity (in much the same way in which we validate those indeterminate spaces between ourselves and a work of art when we give value to our experience with the creative work in that relational space). In these spaces I charted the ‘wrap’ of the objects of the terrain, the logic of casting each in a rôle. I explored the manner in which each image looked back and ahead of its propositions as it revealed and created itself and continues to do so with each occasion of reading the Books.

If a story from these lacunae could be told, what language would it arrive in; how would it be ‘clothed’; what would its references be within the language of Old Norse poetry? Perhaps it was composed of Norwegian-Swedish runic scripts and the basis for Cherokee written syllabary recorded by Sequoya (George Guess 1760-1843) although Cherokee traditional history dates the existence of the syllabary much earlier than when it came into acknowledged use in 1821; how much earlier than this is not known.

As a contemporary work written for contemporary readers, I decided to create a translation that presents the contemporary English reader with a readable script at least on the level of recognition of its scripted characters. For the contemporary reader, this translation is our first but not our only point of reference with the work for we are encouraged to test the historical references in the margins and form our own conclusions.
The reader is ultimately required to make a great deal of effort to place himself or herself below the script, in a time when the story could have happened, where the world of Kerrigarðr might have existed – an actual world in my imagination, so to speak. The parallel at which Kerrigarðr lies takes its nature from caves – the misty, jagged, barren terrain. In order to retain 'authentic' elements of Kerrigarðr, Old Norse and Ximacan spellings (the latter created from Piro Arawakan language) have been maintained for proper nouns and names of groups of people.³⁷

Skulvádi Úlfr is also a ‘real historical document’ in another sense. It offers up (to the modern reader and to the sixteenth-century contemporary) a “genuine forgery” produced in the sixteenth century, or as poet Gwyneth Lewis put it, “the real thing,” on hearing my reading of “The Mœhrn” (7:1) at Varuna Writers’ Centre last May. To have written the text in sixteenth-century English, however, would have been to remove it from my contemporary reader’s immediate entry to its first level, to have encumbered it with a difficulty which does not parallel my experience of the intuitive terrain. It is a landscape that is as immediate in its ability to be recognised as a memory is and yet equally as difficult to translate. If any of the original manuscript could be shown it would be a


Matteson et al also conducted studies on Proto Arawakan languages exploring, from a selection of subgroups, “percentages of shared vocabulary, and apparent structural similarities” (160). Her research took into account: Pareci of Western Brazil; Amuesha from the montaña area of Peru; Guajiro of northern Columbia; Black Carib of Guatemala. Comparative Studies in Amerindian Languages (The Hague: Mouton, 1972).

As a general guide, the following pronunciations are used in Skulvádi Úlfr: á as “a” in “father”, ō as “o” in “or,” y and i as “ee” in “feel,” ū as “oo” in “fool,” b (uppercase B) as “th” in “think,” ð (uppercase D) as “th” in “father,” j as “y” in “yes,” z as “ts” in “puts,” s′ in “Russ’” pronounced as “sh” in “shut,” xi as in a soft “xi” in “exit.” Proper names take first-syllable or first double-vowel emphasis. Cherokee words are reproduced as closely as possible to reflect their pronunciation using standard phonetic marks.
largely indecipherable script, such as the illustrations of images from my imaginative terrain demonstrate in Chapter 5.

Ultimately everything in the unknown territory and from it remains hidden, remains a secret. The question hanging over the poem is whether or not the language of the terrain can ever be retrieved as it exists. Can it only be retrieved as an extracted image and within a presentation such as Skulvádi Úlfr? Is this the reason why the strange language of the imaginative terrain can only be recorded as an obscurity? Perhaps it is indecipherable in its original form because it cannot be brought to the surface of the terrain except as a story about the terrain. Its true nature may be that of a secret, so that only the originator of the secret knows the original words, as only a Mœhrn knows what “a wife is said // to be ebunk / if she nobs and crotches” means (especially since Mœhrn did not have wives). Why can the following Mœhrn saying not be more than its translation from the hidden worlds neighbouring Kerrigarðr —

“Green sprigs are fasting on light, on wing,
Overhead black twigs of light
will soak the greening'

“The Mœhrn” (VII:1, 170)

The answers may lie in the fiction of the epic poem, that it was written by poets whose style and diction, as dictated by skáldic tradition, was normally obscure and “made all the greater by the fact that word-order and clause-distribution are generally very different from that of ordinary communication, spoken or written.”38

38 Kristjánsson 88.
Another explanation may lie in the construction of the work from the language of the intuitive terrain – the actual construct from which the poem is recorded. The composition and presentation of the text as a whole address this by raising questions in relation to the casting of the voices of its characters. Within the fiction, the characters ask questions which parallel those from the actual construct of the terrain of the imagination. An examination of the cast of figures in Skulváði Úlfur forms the basis of the greater part of the study of speaking and reading in secrets – their staging within the poem as a set of player-readers. Above all, the writing of Skulváði Úlfur compelled me to address the relationship between the construction of poetry from the reality of intuitive planes and the nature of contemporary reading.
CHAPTER 2

STOP GAPS

THE SILENT CORPUS

Skulvádi Úlfr grew from my returning to a series of encounters that began in 1972. The writing of the work which eventually emerged, however, began in 1994 as a poem without sound or rhythm, a narrative set around a mysterious heroine, Beah Wolf, her name inspired by the title of the Anglo-Saxon poem, Beowulf. Beowulf was one of three books that I can confidently acknowledge as the earliest influences on my reading. It was not until late 1995 that I made the connection between the heroine’s name and the title of the poem – the connection between the sound of her name and the sound of the title of the poem, Beowulf. I had failed to see the music in it and the connection with the music of alliterative poetry, but I will come to that later.

The other two books which influenced me were W. H. Hudson’s Green Mansions and a volume (the title of which eludes me now) which included a Norwegian tale entitled “East of the sun and west of the moon.” It is a story set in post-Viking Norway, with “all good

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Christians who were captives" in the castle east of the sun and west of the moon being freed at the end of the tale. When I re-read the story recently, while writing Skulváði Úlfr, it struck me that what had most impressed me about it were two specific things. One was its repeated lines which act as refrains; for example, “you’ll be there late or you’ll be there never” and “you can sit upon my back, and I shall carry you there.” The other was the question which arose from its title – Where exactly would east of the sun and west of the moon be? In the tale, it was the place that the heroine wanted to find at any cost. By the end of the story it was also the place which she and her “prize” (riches and a prince cursed to bear-like appearance now returned to normal through her persistence to find him) would leave without looking back: “And then they took all the gold and silver they could carry, and moved far away from the castle that lay east of the sun and west of the moon.”

The elements of “Beah Wolf,” though unruly and somewhat formless, were clear in terms of the main character (the mysterious heroine) and the plot. “Beah Wolf,” however, was not conceived as a fairy tale. Its plot-sketch ran like this. There is a mysterious slaying of a giant in a country – its landscape dominated by a jagged, misty barrenness and underground caves. The ruler, Kerrigan (a female, in “Beah Wolf”), is jealous of the hand that was victorious over the giant, taking glory away from her. Caught between her martial nature and her love for the female warrior, Beah Wolf, whom she suspects as having defeated the giant, Kerrigan is torn between her jealousy of Beah’s victory over the giant

and her love for Beah. Kerrigan commands a search for the unknown slayer of the giant, bringing into her story the first of many rivals, dubious allies and ambitious schemers.

Elements of “Beah Wolf” are still recognisable in Skulváði Úlf in Book II Parts 2 and 3, Book IV and Book V Part 3. “Beah Wolf” created the seeds of minor character sketches such as that of Lila and Hogrum, as can be seen in this extract from the abandoned “Beah Wolf” manuscript:

Lila breathed in the green air, cool icicles formed above her wild brown curls.

In both arms she carried the finest swords in the queendom of Kerrigan, Swordsmistress, and most fearsome beast slayer anywhere west from where the winds blew and brought monsters with them.

When Lila returned with the news Kerrigan’s voice, silent at first, came booming into the light “Set the places before the storm approaches. I want no more of monsters here. Lila, my finest sword pieces.” She stepped out of the gathering hall ahead of Lila to outpace her as a Mistress should. She needed ‘need’, a sword of fire by her side. She had fought all winter long to win over the water giants, foul pretty creatures with arms like tree trunks, liars with sweet tongues.40

40 I have reproduced the fonts, here, in which “Beah Wolf” and other early drafts were written because the script, as I will explain in Chapter 6, played an important rôle in commanding Skulváði Úlf on the page.
Aspects of the female Kerrigan and Beah Wolf also informed the drawing of The Black Alf Queen and Silver Brows Nadlan in the self-contained tale, The Legend of Nadlan The Rus', in Book V:

The Wolf had been thrown upon the Black Hills shore
a picture of wistful delicacy her arms bristling
with the gashes of manform claws and
Kerrigan’s heart had soared.
She ordered Lila to mould to health
the starving female Lupigash
better than the finest sword ever made
in all the Queendom. And as iron that
grows from rust and blackened filings
into glistening wrought shape
Beah the Wolf, her hair thin and mouse coloured
glowed in the weeks under Lila’s strong hands
so that when Kerrigan looked upon her
after the third full moon, she was a goddess
the colour of wet cool sea earth and eyes
with the midnight set deep within her
sad and beautiful face, her lips pursed
tight sometimes screwed to the firelight
as if she wanted to speak of what she had seen
in those days when the beasts
raged across Lupigard.

In the completed epic, Kerrigan is cast as a troubled male warrior. The story of Lila and the beheaded giant takes place long before Skulváði is born and many rulers are documented rather than the history of one. By the end of 1995, the essentially undisciplined note-poem “Beah Wolf” had been reduced to an outline claiming itself to be:

a narrative poem telling the story of how the first Lupigash (shaman warrior)
came to rule deep in the Black Hills overlooking the sea of lands once called
Kerrigard seated on the limestone plateau of an island in the Atlantic where
a kingdom of warriors rose undetected in the eleventh century until the
fifteenth century when the first Spanish conquistadors travelled across the
Atlantic for gold.

I had taken the first step to establishing an historical rim: the eleventh and fifteenth centuries. Bringing the outer historical rim of the epic to life, however, did not emerge
first with a study of the history of those centuries but with imagining the voices from the landscape of the original idea for the poem—“a jagged, misty barrenness and underground caves.” The narrative sketches presented by “Beah Wolf” and a later piece called “Dead Birds” would cast the tone or mood of Skulváði Úlfr in establishing aspects of the wider narrative influence of the main character, Skulváði Úlfr, and those of the Tales of Book II, the last lay of Part 4 of Book IV and the legend of Nadlan in Book V. In a fundamental sense, the “Beah Wolf” narrative formed the mould of the point of view of Skulváði Úlfr. However, it would take more than the logical organisation of unruly notes from the failed “Dead Birds” (discussed below) and “Beah Wolf” to bring Skulváði Úlfr to life.

In October 1995 I experienced the first narrative intuitive experience which was to indicate the rôle that the precision of conveying intuitive images was to play in the construction of the epic poem. This brief sequence would appear in Book V. It provided the turning point in creating Skulváði’s and Siswyo’s characters and in the use of images as source documents throughout the poem.

The sequence is reproduced here with its inconsistent punctuation and line-breaks as it stands in the hand-written manuscript, showing words and parts of words that were struck out. The large blank space preceding the last three lines was left to be filled with the words spoken by “the creature,” but again I could not fill the gap between the image and the words of the hidden language in the image.
Looking round the square spaces.

The creature lived behind the houses
That sat on top of and around each other
The creature looked small in the distance
sitting in one of the two square pools
its feet kicking up water on to the
walkway that divided the square pools
Around it As it — well — unfurled
itself, it spread out across the still square
water like a peacock without its
colours, all stringy and grey, the feathers
fell out upon the water into a flat
light strawlike bed. Only a few feathers
didn't realise this fate tipping up
at the back of the creature like a brown
pigeon's tail.
Suddenly it left its strawy bed and
floated a few inches about the water
through the window from which I saw
it and into the room in one of the houses
I was filled w Fear overtook me as I
watched it slide, glide with sad
and menacing eyes.

It's head was green, lii-sire the skin —
you could say — stretched tight like plastic
It's body in yellow, it's small arms
red and ochre. it's feet pale and round Its eyes — now, its eyes
were even sadder, face to face, wide and
white like saucers in the green head from within
the green plastic skin. It stood on the window
ledge for a few long moments then it said:

"It's voice was small and happy.
It even smiled once or twice.
I felt at ease, rather nice

A third incomplete sketch — “Dead Birds” — was also to become an essential part of the plot
of a lay in Book II. It was a one-page short story idea revised later as a poem in prose (a
kind of interlude piece) also written in 1995. It was part of the first steps to finding a way
of speaking that would lead to the lure of alliterative accentual and syllabic poetry. This was
an attempt to find the music in the language. Again, the nature of the background landscape was the referential point for “Dead Birds.” In this case, the terrain was moist and rich with death and ambiguity, an ambiguity not entirely different from that of the Kerrigan of “Beah Wolf.” It was written in a strange accent that I was quite sure no person ever spoke. Yet, this interlude would not go away.

Dead Birds

The wetlands were expectant with colour
United by a constant drizzle.
Few birds now graced the sky
While boats and booted men
Lurked, weaponed and justified:
“Aye, you shot her,” the first said.
“I thought ’twas a part of the flock, astray,” the other replied;
“we was all firing. It was an accident”.
“It’s okay”, the first said.
‘I didn’t kill no girl. I shot a bird”, the other said.
“I seen her afore it happened”, the first affirmed;
“’twas as if the feathered one suckled from the human.”
“And did you know t’was a girl, the bird so one with her?”
“I did; yet the distance ‘twixt you and I kept me silent’
would have scared the flock above if I’d shouted;
would have wasted a whole day,
maybe a whole season of killing.”
“But how did you know ’twas a girl —
’twas the human bird alive, afore I shot?”
“Like I said, I seen the bird on ’er; looked like it was flapping, nesting, like this,
wide on her ample chest; but it was dead alright,
even though it moved up and down
like it did it by itself.”
“A dead bird?”
“Like it was alive and she was the dead one.”
The two men peered around the falling drops:
“Now?” the first asked.
“Now, nothin’ s movin’;
nothin’ at all”, the other replied.

One further slightly revised (unsuccessful) draft of “Dead Birds” as a story-cum-prose poem was attempted in late 1995. At least, now, the figures were, in my mind, English-county poachers from a distant century – the damp, wet and marshy setting establishing the shadowy figures within it:

Mourning births into deaths it is as if
The wetlands were united by a constant febrile drizzle
Few birds now graced the sky whole boats and booted men
lurked weaponed and justified; two remained after a day’s killing
crouched on the eastern marshy bank:
“I think you shot ’er”, the first said
“I thought t’was part of the flock. Astray”, the other said
“I seen ’er before it happened”, the first maintained
“’T’was as if the feathered one suckled from the human.”
“An’ did you know it was a girl; the bird and she as one?”
“I did. Yet distance ’twixt you and I kept me silent; would have scared the flock if the rain ’adn’t.”
“But was the human bird alive ’fore I shot?”
“Like I said, I seen the bird on ’er, shifting about, nesting, like this
wide on ’er high bosom. But it was dead all right.”
“A dead bird moving all by itself? Like it was alive and she was dead?”
“She was ’olding it and breathin’ hard.... Like this.”
The two men peered around the waning drops:
“An’ now?” the second asked
“Now, nothin’s moving. ’ Nothin’ at all but a leaf that’s fallen for the dead.”

Like “Beah Wolf,” this piece had halted in its tracks, had become a vacant place like the silence of the creature between the two square pools. It could not ‘find a home’ (though the importance of form had already made its impression on me) nor could I complete it until the writing of Skulvádi Úlfur. You will see that there is little change in the characterisation of the hunters in this episode as they appear as Halfdane and Údur in Skulvádi Úlfur in “The Last of The Mani-men (or Dagazar’s Fate in the Wolfem’s Land)” (II:2, 43-45).
The process of moving on from these stop gaps was much like meeting a stranger at the stop junctions and falling into conversation with him. I had to begin by listening first to his story, then proceed to investigate the past and future course of action of the stranger based on the elements of the story that he chose to reveal. The investigation became an act of partially disbelieving the stranger – his existence as he related it – by questioning where he fitted with others into a readable background.

In the process, as the listener to this stranger's individual stories, I began to piece his stories together against the available history. The point came, however, when his stories fell into a place but where no referential material could either authenticate his account or prove his reports to be that of an unreliable witness. Gradually the stories began to be references themselves and to each other. The stories of the stranger I had met began with my attempts to master his tales as voices, then as figures in a mist giving bits of their details gradually; one figure appearing now, another coming forward, sometimes together or alone, shouting or whispering. And when these voices told their story as a group, I found that the need to refer to an historical record (a record already available to others in the actual world, or able to be refereed) was unnecessary because the individual stories authenticated each other by questioning each other. Sometimes the “voices” told me more about others than about themselves, according to their motivation to tell their stories. Yet for all this sense of being in the present, Skulvádi Úlfur claims to be coming to us third hand – the stories of the voices via a finder, translator, and publisher.
In composing *Skulvádi Úlfur* I consulted translations of the *Poetic Edda* for information on the mythological references and their links to historical details in my search for a home for Beah Wolf. Wherever these links conflicted or did not support each other definitively, I found additional spaces with which to make the history of Kerrigardr sit more properly in those *lacunae*. The decision to create a Norwegian chieftain as the starting point for the poem was not accidental.

**GAPS AND CRITICAL CONTEXTS**

Most Viking poetry is placed as having originated in Western Scandinavia, Iceland or Greenland. It is generally agreed that Eddic poetry originated in Norway and is mostly preserved in Iceland. Its origins remain shrouded in much mystery and continue to be the main force confounding attempts to classify the body of work called the *Elder Edda* or *Poetic Edda*.

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42 “The antiquity of the oldest poems means that they must have been brought to Iceland from Norway. When sources begin to tell us more about Norwegian and Icelandic history, we find no references to continuing composition of eddaic kinds of poetry in Norway, though there are one or two Norwegian allusions and runic quotations which point towards some knowledge of eddaic poetry in Norway in the twelfth and thirteenth century.” Kristjánsson 29.
In the context of *Skulvádi Úlfr*, “Edda” meaning “poetics,” the language of poetry, seems the most satisfying because of two reasons. First, the term may be applied with specificity to the period in which it is placed as a fictional publication, sixteenth- to seventeenth-century Europe influenced by twelfth-century ideas. In Medieval Europe...

... *edda*, as well as being used as the title of Snorri’s book, is also used as an abstract noun meaning ‘poetics’, and this latter may have been the original meaning of the word as a literary term.

The name *Edda* later (in the seventeenth century) came to be applied also to the newly discovered collection of traditional and anonymous poems on legendary subjects that has since come to be known as the *Elder or Poetic Edda*.

Second, in a contemporary and a general sense, the most useful way to think of the use of “Edda” as “poetics” in *Skulvádi Úlfr* is to consider it in the same way that *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* offers a short definition of the word “philosophy” – it “is thinking about thinking.” The short definition that *Skulvádi Úlfr* offers is: it “is thinking about remembering.” The long definition would be, perhaps: it is “thinking about poetic space as a virtual reality in the same way that memory seems to be.” The epic poem

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43 Snorri’s *Edda* xvi.

*The Poetic Edda*, *Elder Edda* or *Younger Edda* refers to the earliest-dated manuscripts (of Eddic poetry bound as the Codex Regius, GkS 2365 4to and is not to be confused with Snorri Sturluson’s *Edda* or *Prose Edda*. Among the narrative-settings in *Skuldskaparmál* and the stories in *Gylfaginning*, the tales found in Snorri’s *Edda* are based, with variations, on poems of the *Sæmundar Edda*, *Poetic Edda* or *Elder Edda*: *Voluspá*, *Vaftraðsmál* and *Grimnismál*. The antecedence of Snorri’s *Edda*, or aspects of it, over the *Elder Edda* or vice versa is not known. In addition, “a number of Snorri’s stories are similar to ones told by Saxo Grammaticus and must have a common source which need not in every case have been in verse.” Anthony Faulkes, introd., ed., *Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning* by Snorri Sturluson (Oxford: Clarendon-Oxford UP, 1982) xxvii.

Of the *Poetic Edda*, Kristjánsson states that “some of the poems were in all probability recorded already in the twelfth century: the oldest recording we have are the fragments quoted in Snorri’s *Edda* from the 1220s. The forward limit is set by the age of the manuscripts that contain the poems, especially the Codex Regius, the biggest of them.” 26.

considers the bringing of the relationship between intuitive spaces into definition through lacunae provided by its critical and historical contexts. The critical background to the Eddic poems *Atlamál* and *Atlaqviða*, for example, helps to show how the critical context of the form used in the epic bears out the historical difficulty of placing texts with which it grapples.

*Atlamál* is significant to Book V Part 3 in particular. *Atlamál* is considered by Theodore Andersson and Ursula Dronke as likely to have originated in Norway even though the Codex Regius places it and a similar poem, *Atlaqviða*, in Greenland. In his essay "Did the Poet of *Atlamál* know *Atlaqviða*?" Theodore Andersson concludes that *Atlaqviða* is the source Scandinavian story, that is, *Atlaqviða* was written first. He surmises that Eddic poems were re-workings of other Eddic poems. The other influence making *Atlamál* and *Atlaqviða* so close in narrative details and interpretation is their close comparison to a lost north German or lost Saxon version of the story. Andersson argues that the writer of *Atlamál* used the German version to rewrite *Atlaqviða*. He theorises that the poet of *Atlamál* was either a Greenlander, an Icelander or a Norwegian who came "into contact with a German version of the story," arguing strongly that the mention of "Limfjörd" places the story in the context of South Scandinavia. Dronke notes that "the mention of wolves and bears, mountains and heaths, of halls of kings and their dróttmegir, suggests that the poem was composed by a court poet of Norway or Sweden, to whom all these things would be a familiar part of his surroundings." She adds that "because we know so

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little of Swedish heroic verse in the Viking period, it is most natural to attribute *Atlakvida* to Norway, where poetry – and especially scaldic poetry – is known to have flourished at least from the ninth century. 46

What evidence there is of “ancient alliterative poetry,” Hallberg notes, from both Sweden and Denmark, “is known only from runic inscriptions.” 47 Turville-Petre furthered discussions on the link between Norwegians and Iceland and his work is also useful in fixing *Skulvádi Úlfur* to Norwegian beginnings, although the poetry in which it is written is generally attributed to Icelandic literary development. In the account of the settlement of Iceland, *Landnámabók* (Book of Settlements), the ancestry of settlers is traced primarily to southern and western Norway and “their civilization was that of Norwegians” who had given up their independent chiefdoms rather than give in to Haraldr Hárflagri. 48

The discourse concerning critical approaches to the literary texts, their technique, language, historical and mythological references highlight the problems of fixing Viking poetry to points of reference such as place, time and author, and purpose of the work. John Lindow, for instance, raises an interesting point, that “if the skald’s narratives are not religious, neither is their use of mythological kennings, despite the curious, almost symbiotic relationship between kennings and myth.” 49 Besides the problems the *Hauksbók*

46 Dronke 45.
raises in relation to *Eirik's Saga* and the *Graenlendinga Saga*, the decision about which to take as the preferred version rested on its style.\textsuperscript{50}

In addition to questions about the provenance of texts, Joseph Harris raises another point which is important in relation to reading Viking poetry in a purely literary or historical context. Harris takes up an argument surrounding the gap between myth and legend. He noted that pictorial monuments were brought into the discussion of “historical and literary poles” in the 1960s along with closer attention to iconography. A further question raised was: What is “legend” or “heroic legend/lay” (*Heldensage*) and its relation to Eddie lay/song (*Lied*)? Does the relationship rest on the interpretations of the individual composer-poet or Andreas Heusler’s national interpretations of historical events, “literary monuments”?\textsuperscript{51} Where does myth end and legend begin? Whether in embracing distinctions or ignoring them, above all, the question “Who is the author, who is the reader and what is the poetic form?” remains at the heart of the enquiry brought more so into focus when the figure of the translator is introduced.

\textsuperscript{50} “In the past, *Eirik's Saga* has been preferred by most scholars where its account differed from that of *Graenlendinga Saga*, chiefly on the ground that *Eirik's Saga* (particularly the *Hauksbók* text) approximated more closely to the ‘classical’ saga – and therefore, presumably, was a more reliable source. But the relationship between the two sagas has now been clarified beyond all doubt by the researches of the late Professor Jón Jóhannesson of Iceland (Aldur Graenlendinga Sögü, in *Nordæla*, Reykjavik, 1956).” Magnusson and Pálsson 32.

\textsuperscript{51} Harris 87-92.

In his research into Danish heroic legends, Axel Olrik’s preferred method of emphasising the location or “geography” of narratives sought to eliminate gaps created by distinctions between classifications of the “genuine” and the “spurious” in the heroic stories, “since both give us the legend as it lived in the mind of some one individual.” Axel Olrik, *The Heroic Legends of Denmark*, trans. Lee M. Hollander, Scandinavian Monographs vol. IV (Millwood: Kraus Reprint, 1976) 8.
In Patricia Terry’s translation, *Poems of the Elder Edda*, her notes demonstrate not only the gaps of continuity to be found in some of the earliest manuscripts of Viking poetry but also the gaps that are created by translations themselves. For example, in the notes to her translation of *Völsunga* (The Volva’s Prophetic Words), she explains:

> This translation of *Völsunga* is based on an edition of the text recently published by Paul Schach. Meaningless passages have been omitted, and what seems a more satisfactory order has been restored. In addition, Professor Schach’s explanatory notes have provided many valuable interpretations, including indications of probable gaps in the narration, shown here by large spaces between stanzas.\(^{52}\)

Terry goes on to explain that Schach “gives convincing reasons for deleting” references to a specific mythological character which occurs at the beginning of *Völsunga* in other editions.

She notes that in respect of *Grimnmál* (The Lay of Grimnir),

> Boer, in his edition of this poem [that is, The Lay of Grimnir], separates the stanzas translated here from the many interpolations containing miscellaneous mythological lore.

> Unlike *Völsunga*, which, despite a mention of Valhalla, shows only the gods participating in the *Ragnarök* battled, “The Lay of Grimnir” specifically mentions the participation of the Valhalla warriors (stanza 8). Deleted stanzas refer to the boar endlessly replenished for their meals. Odin himself lives on wine. His ravens, Mind and Memory, fly over the earth every day.

> Laerad, in stanza 9, seems to be the Ash Tree. In addition to the goat which eats its buds – and gives mead instead of milk – the Tree’s branches are endlessly devoured by a stag. Deleted stanzas tell us that the Serpent lies below, gnawing at its roots. On the top of the tree sits an eagle, whose messages to the Serpent are carried by a squirrel.\(^{53}\)

This is not so much to question Schach, Terry or Boer’s decisions to edit the manuscripts but to indicate that the writing of *Skulvádí Úlf* has not been much different for the

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\(^{52}\) Terry 8.

\(^{53}\) Terry 49.
composer-poet translating the ‘evidence of the poem.’ The point here is also that the evidence of the manuscripts and their translations contributes to the state of lacunae of which Skulváði Úlfr makes the most, striving to use every space to create itself.

FROM EMPTY HELMETS AND A FEW BONES...

Skulváði Úlfr therefore developed initially from the search for a voice for Beah Wolf. Listening to her history (the terrain behind and ahead of her), as if she were the stranger with whom I had fallen into conversation, opened up windows to her incomplete history as well as to the process of listening to my imaginative sense. What survives of “Beah Wolf” exists as echoes within stories in the Books of Skulváði Úlfr.

The new heroine did not find a name until mid-1996 as “Skulváði Úlfr” – “The Wolf born of Future’s Pool.” The questions that eventually gave her shape were: Who is Skulváði? How did she get to where she was? And who wants to know? In answer to the questions as to how and why she came to be where she was led to the first drafts of the opening of Dagazar’s Dreams. The process brought to mind deeper questions surrounding how I drew her out. What was I using to bring Skulváði alive? What processes were at work in my head? In short, how was I creating the poem? Would it be possible to bring the

54 The quality of imaginative sense or unapparent sense which has been used to describe my work where the poetry appears to show “levels of consciousness which are beyond or beneath those at which we ordinarily live.” Publisher’s blurb for Camouflage (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe, 1998) quoting Mervyn Morris’s comment regarding my first collection, Dream Diary (Kingston: Savacou, 1982).
indeterminate lacune into determinacy? Is it possible to map the lacune on the first level of a literary work of art – the physical page? And if this could be done, would the map be readable to others or would it become another indeterminate lacune or, at best, a set of objects too dense to illustrate their transparency?

The hiatus between me, the poem-to-be, and the gaps in history of the place where I would set her story – pre-Columbian Jamaica – now became the compelling key to the composition of the epic poem and led to additional questions about the command over the imaginative terrain. At the end of 1997 when the first complete draft was finished, the emergent unexpected element was the rôle that illustrations would play in the scheme of the music of the poem – images from places which were not part of the concrete world (as we understand it to be physically).

What could one teach me about the other? What could one event teach me about the reality of another? How did I think about the two? Which was more real and why? It took returning to actual journeys before I could understand how to use both the physical and the intuitive experiences together in an actual event, before I could clothe Kerrigash bones and fill their helmets.

In 1972, 1983 and 1985 I travelled, literally, into the heart of landscapes which dominate Skulváði Úlfr: the Caribbean and Western Europe.

In 1972 I was part of a high school geography expedition to the caves of the Cockpit Country and to an Arawak museum in the mountainous north-east country of Jamaica.
The journey to the Arawak museum in St Mary, a north-east parish of Jamaica, was a fortuitous one because the manager of the museum invited me to paint a diorama for an exhibit in the museum. It was on the return visit to paint the diorama that I was shown a few potsherds and, most importantly, the only human remains believed to prove the existence of Arawaks in pre-Columbian Jamaica at that time.

In 1983 I visited the overwhelming mountains of Dominica, a small island in the Caribbean's Lesser Antilles. While there I visited novelist and poet Phyllis Shand Allfrey, author of *The Orchid House*, a novel which has been favourably compared to *Wide Sargasso Sea* written by her compatriot Jean Rhys. At the time she was working on a new novel *In the Cabinet* based on her political work as founder of the Dominica Labour Party. It was through Allfrey that I first encountered a descendant of the Carib Indians. He was her adopted son, who, she confided, was a source of deepest concern because he was being turned against her as he grew older, was being influenced by his peers and assuming a Carib aggressiveness, wanting to be associated less with his adopted mother of European ancestry. He was a striking young man, as intense as the black-green mountains of Dominica which rose straight from the ocean, defying the survival of beaches and sandbars. His was an aura that I would never forget and, perhaps, found a place in the figure of the inculpatory Águdrol of Book VI of *Skulvádi Úlfur*.

In June of that same year I went to Bayreuth University to deliver a paper at a Commonwealth Literature Conference and was invited to read at the conference opening.

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from my first book *Dream Diary* (1982). The three-day stay became a two-week journey from Frankfurt to Bayreuth to Alsfeld. The significant event was not the reading or delivery of the paper but the long walks through the gardens and streets of Bayreuth, meandering through Alsfeld and a hike to Elizabeth from the mountains overlooking Elizabeth. The journey was to prove remarkable when I came to write *Skulvádi Úlfr* for its textures of forests, of Germanesque stone statues and the ancient ground of Bayreuth and Alsfeld with buildings where the bones of plague victims were housed to their rafters, of Elizabeth Kirche with its holy relics, sweating sarcophagi of crusaders and sanctified personages.

It was in travelling to the United Kingdom in 1985 that I made the second connection with *Beowulf*. It began with a planned trip to see Hadrian’s Wall but which ended in an unplanned detour to York and to the Jorvik Viking Centre in November of that year. Here, a back-in-time tour took visitors to a re-created Viking village with its likely sounds, smells and ambience. In the foyer of the Centre, empty helmets were impressively mounted inside perspex-cased boxes, and it was here among the archaeological objects that the feel of the man or men who might have worn such helmets, for example, made its impression on me.

Perhaps more significant than all the above journeys was an unfulfilled ‘journey’ in 1978, between the trips to the Cockpit Country, Arawak Museum and those to York and Bavaria. In 1978, I was given an opportunity to go deeper into the Cockpit Country to a Kumina (a ritual dance of West African origin) in Maroon Town. This unmade journey also coincided with the co-writing and -direction of a play set in eighteenth-century
Maroon Town, “Nkuyu,” involvement with which I abandoned for reasons I can now neither identify nor explain. But it seems that the hiatus in fulfilling my rôle in the production came with my decision not to take the trip to the Kumina which was an integral part of the research into the production. The 1972, 1983 and 1985 trips became the covers of a book for the empty pages of 1978.

A more impressive set of meetings of quite a different nature also began for me as early as 1972. This was a way of seeing and listening that gave me the ability to recall shifts in consciousness experienced while I was asleep or awake. These meetings affected all the main elements that make *Skulvádi Úlfr* what it is – as far as is possible removed from an ‘ordinary reading’ of what we normally expect of contemporary poetry.

It was not until the writing of Books V and VI of *Skulvádi Úlfr* that I was to realise how heavily those experiences – those other ways of seeing and listening and the vivid memories of them – would come to bear on my understanding of how I write poetry. It was not until the completion of the epic that I realised the significance of the evidence of these ways of seeing in the context of the tradition in which I felt compelled to place it at the outset of the work – that of a Norwegian skáld.

The closest element in Old Norse literature to which the intuitive experiences can be linked are the references to “dreams” and “dreamers” peculiar to that literature. Ellis and Turville-Petre give interesting accounts of the place of these in identifying the *lacuna* in
the literature.\textsuperscript{56} Although information about the importance of dreamers and poetry in Old Norse literature comes to us largely from Iceland, Turville-Petre notes that "as is well known, Iceland was first peopled, chiefly by Norwegians, in the ninth century, and Icelandic historians of the thirteenth century wrote not only about the dreams of their own countrymen but also about those of their Scandinavian kinsmen and ancestors." It is a tradition that can be followed through the sagas, for example, \textit{Íslendinga Saga}, and in the poetry, such as \textit{Guðrúnarkviða} and \textit{Atlamál}.

Despite the ease with which the intuitive experiences consistently impressed themselves on me, it was the need to \textit{command}, in some way, their stories as 'unsought journeys' which was to form the heartland of \textit{Skulváði Úlfri}. This attempt to command evolved in a number of ways: the choice of historical background and setting, the choice of a poetic form which still holds mysterious and esoteric under- and overtones, the creation of the circumstances of the 'discovery' of \textit{Skulváði Úlfri} as a hidden document, and the use of the page to present layers of comprehension – to exhibit the \textit{performance} of the imaginative terrain. It is from here that propositions emerged about our experience of the \textit{physical} or \textit{actual} world – what we \textit{regard} as constituting the real world – and considerations of the workings of the immutable objects in a literary work.


Olrik points out in comparing Danish and Norwegian styles: "The Norwegian conception is imaginative, fantastic, and unrestrained, losing itself in a dream world of the interior of the mountain and the influence of the elemental powers on human life..." \textsuperscript{8}.
Considerations of the historical setting of the poem as being presented first to a Medieval audience helped to place these stories in a context where they would be treated as more than just fantasy. (See Chapter 3.) But it was not until March 1996, that I realised the importance of documenting the images from my imaginative terrain in terms of the composition of the work. Until then, my focus was on using the interpretation of the images as a source for plot. By keeping the images in their own environment, they provided elements that I would require from the historical edges of the epic and dictated ‘historical facts,’ particular to Kerrigarðr, used to authenticate the story. Above all, the function of the sound of the poem was to dominate all stages of its composition, a primary function if the images were to be drawn with the reality in which I experienced them.

The images made sense in the context of ninth- and tenth-century skaldic poets making ‘moving stories’ — mythological and heroic poems — from the pictures on ceremonial, military shields, such as inspired Bragi the Old Boddason’s Ragnarsdrápa (Elegy to Ragnar [Lóðbrókr]) and Þjóðólfr Hvinir’s Haustlong (Autumn-long). Their poems were

57 Ragnarsdrápa “describes the mythological decorations on a shield which the skald has received as a gift. In the stanzas that have been preserved one can discern four different motifs, probably corresponding to as many picture sections on the shield.” Hallberg 107.

Ragnarsdrápa exists in fragments in Snorri’s Edda (7, 69, 72-73, 89, 105-06, 120, 123-24, 142). The four narratives of trickery and revenge given in Ragnarsdrápa are about Gefiun and Swedish king Gylfi, Þórr and the giant Hymir, the death of Queen Gudrun’s sons (Hamðir and Sorli), and the battle of the Hiaðnings. The order of the stanzas as we now have them are attributed to Gísli Brynjólfsson (1860). The story of Þórr and Hymir is also found in work by tenth-century poets Úlf Uggason (Húsdrápa) and Gamlí’s and Eysteinn Valdason’s poems, and eleventh-century Hymiskeða, parts of which are in the Elder Edda and in Snorri’s Edda.

“The skald’s anatural syntax has been seen as analogous to and inspired by graphic art interlace design... (Lie 1952:3; Stefán Einarsson 1963-64; Marold 1976); a poet’s version of events may derive directly from contemporary pictorial art (Schier 1976) or be reflected in it (Weber 1973; Buisson 1976; Margeson 1983).” Frank, “Skaldic Poetry” 179.

The skálds may also have been influenced by existing Irish poetry and by examples of poetry describing shield images such as the “The Shield of Achilles” in The Iliad (Hollander 26). Also, if the shields were gifts to the poets, as their poems indicate, the influence of a response of gratitude
organised into four sections, or quarters, to reflect the four painted quarters on the shields. However, neither the complete original poems of Bragi Boddason or Þjóðólfr Hvinir nor the shields to which they refer have survived (nor proof that the shields ever existed at all).

The Journey of Puzzles (V:2, 114-26) and Bragi’s Spells (VI:3, 145-52) examine the intuitive pictures as if they were sources for shield-poems more than any other sections of the Books. As in the creation of skaldic shield-poems, Skulvádi Úlfr is a ‘moving story’ of my intuitive images — experiences encountered as objects as real as the materials and their reconstitution as a functioning shield. Where pictures found their way more easily than others into the real world of Kerrigarðr, presenting themselves as actual pictures, they function as shield images. They operate as the source of information as Viking shield images provided the narrative for the skáld. They help to tell the story of how the images are brought to the page. The process itself becomes part of the history of the imaginative terrain. It shows what can happen in hurrying to command the act of creating a poem without due respect for the dangers involved if correct processes are not adhered to. The to the giver may also need to be taken into account when considering the subject of each of the quarters of the poems. Snorri’s Edda 123.

For the present, it may be fair to surmise that the complex word-order and kennings were significant to the construction of skaldic meta-language perhaps based primarily on the method of reading images and their contours. In the form that we have the Ragnarsdrápa and Haustlong, it is suggested by their four-part structure, at least, that the layout of the pictures on shields is related to the layout of the stanzas in the poems. If, however, we take the examples of these two shield-poems as our earliest evidence of skaldic poetry, it may be that skaldic reading was not directly related to pictorial images but to ways the contours of image-sets on shields might be read. Attempts to translate the skálds’ shield-poems are rife with considerations of what might be the grammatically correct way to read them. With regard to the third quarter of Ragnarsdrápa for example, Turville-Petre acknowledges that “no satisfactory interpretation of the first half-strophe has been given, and this one is no more than a series of guesses” — his aim, to discover the “subject” of each set of images conveyed. Scaldic Poetry 2-3.

See also Kristjánsson 88.
correct process is much like what happens when, as Ingarden’s reader, we do not observe
the sequential rules provided by a series of pictures in the object stratum. When we are
untrue in bringing them from the page we run the risk of distorting them. When we do
not allow the previous events to flow through the series, that is, are not true to them, we
participate in running the gamut of dangerous curves, in remaining lost in lacune of
readings or interpretations.

The experience of this process has been useful in presenting some of the illustrations in
Skulváði Úlfr. The apparent lack of background or backdrop for an illustration sometimes
created the whole image if the process of finding the background was incorporated into the
image itself, as was the case in creating the Phases of the Amarrsotlu or The Gazer’s Stone
in “The Shifting Stone of Amarr” (VII:1, 175), Úllr’s Book of Broken Words (I:4, 29) and
the transparent Stone-key in “Gild-rac” (VII:5, 204). The attempt to record these images
also reflected the way they functioned as intuitive images, not static but moving in several
directions, exactly as described.

In other instances, a directional image could be used to extend the terrain of Kerrigarðr, as
in the illustrations of the Fort of Margrnon (VII:4, 193). All the images in Skulváði Úlfr
have been reproduced in the text from my diary of images. There were a few images that I
could not accurately record and which were not included because I had difficulty in
bringing them from the diary to the pages of the text. In other words, I found that in re-
drawing them or even simply tracing them for digital scanning I lost an essential quality in
them. These images, however, remain – as memories are wont to do – quite clear ‘in my
mind's eye' but unable to be brought from across the gap to the page, as if they were a well-known common-place name just on the tip of my tongue.

A few other images were also not brought as successfully as hoped to the page though they were essential to my recognition of their rôle in creating the poem. I trusted their eventual expression and included them as part of the narrative within the syntax and sound object strata of the work. The striking description of Síswo as the Water Bird is not a lengthy sequence, but I found that the language describing her overtook and essentially overwrote the image. Still I was puzzled at this conundrum and tried an experiment that resulted in illustrations as the Water Bird Icons series (VI:1, 137). In frustration at not being able to transcribe the image from my imagination, I read the lines to my ten-year-old daughter. I asked her to draw, without revision, as I read the lines. The result felt as 'true' as it could possibly be on the page and confirmed for me an inherent link between the words and the images. (I should note that her drawing appeared to be a telescopic view of the same bird-image 'in my memory.' What this could mean, I still do not know.)

Sometimes an image could only find its expression in the Books as a picture of something that cannot be explained. Then it was used to extend not only the character with whom it is associated but the limits of the temporal elements of Kerrigarðr. These elements could be likened to rumours. They are clearly articulated but with no substantial basis to confirm them. In this case, the “Quill Seals” stone-rubbing image (VI:1, 139) is plotted within the framework of the story in “The Water Bird” to extend rumours about the mysterious background of Síswo, the merchant from Tollan. (See “Quill Map,” VI:1, 139.)
Where some images made it to the page but were even further removed from ones such as the Quill Seal, they were retained in a graphic translation and relegated to the rôle of unexplained artefacts, such as the Quill Map and the images on Kerrigan’s Wall of Shields in “The Great Battle for Margrnon” (VII:1, 198). The series that became Siswyo’s amulets were experienced over a period of time, as were the tools of Amarr (VII:5, 202) and the moving parts of Bifrost Bridge (VII:5, 204). They appear as sets of composite pictures in the relevant sections of the Books. Other images were experienced as complete narratives. They did not lend any aspect of themselves to a single illustration or series of illustrations even though they remain highly visual sequences. They include: “Gerða's Dowry (or Freyr's Eight)” (I:3, 21-23), “The Grand Hall of Gleaming Tables” (III:2, 73-74), “The Great Feverish Mirror” (IV:4, 100-02), “The Woman with Two Long Braids” (V:2, 122-23) and “The Shadow-walkers” (VII:3, 186-89).

The decision to use the images was the most difficult to make in creating the epic poem. It was the process of experimenting with the form and placement of the poem on the physical page that brought what seems now natural and obvious to light, so to speak. But I will come to this again in Chapters 5 and 6 when I discuss the world of these “post-modernist runes” which became the pivotal foci for drawing up the maps from which Kerrigarðr emerged and my attempts to exert control over the imaginative terrain.

Before getting to that point, however, I had to try to understand the sound of the voices from the stranger’s stories not only to find out who was speaking and how many faces were behind the voices but who was listening or reading.
CHAPTER 3

WHO IS "THE READER"? AND HOW MANY OF US ARE THERE?

READING Skulvádi Úlfr

“We tend to read ancient documents more carefully,” Friedrich Nietzsche said. When we take up an ancient book with the intention of reading it, we begin, before we open its covers, to assume lacunae between ourselves and the book. In a real sense, we open the covers to such a book as we would sit still and prepare to enter a memory – to summon a memory. We approach the book with a warning that there will be greater differences between this book and the books we normally read. We expect to discover material which challenges our comprehension of its structure, its mode of expression and presentation, its linguistic and factual relationships. In picking up the ancient book we accept the first major lacuna between ourselves and that book.

Keeping each reader-and-text relationship in time or in tune in Skulvádi Úlfr as an ancient and incomplete document works as a means to holding the images from that troublesome terrain of the imagination. This helps to concretise the context of the proximity/distance of the experience of the images. We prepare to focus our reading more carefully, looking for connections that we would not normally consider, such as the significance of linguistic
nuances brought by the distance of the work from our contemporary lives. Understanding how to read before we begin the process of reading creates the pre-text of the reading.

Each sub-section of each Book of *Skulváði Úlfr* opens with a sense of the expectancy and potency of distance. Each section sets us against complex phrases encapsulating information about the world of *Skulváði Úlfr* at that particular point. Book I Part 1 opens the entire set of Books with a panoramic view of the unknown where what is close-up is pulled into the distance. The primary reader of this view is Dagazar. The secondary reader outside this text is Gwen Terrane. The third – a set of readers – outside the text is Terrane’s contemporary reader. Within the framework of reader-outside-the-text, there is at least a set of two readers – the Medieval publisher and the person to whom the book is dedicated, Sir Thomas Terrane. Within the text are Dagazar’s own generation and those that will follow. The many readers provide windows to reading the text, acting like Old Norse *fylgjur* or ‘Other World’ personal guides. As character-guides in the epic, these readers are most clearly stated within the fiction. For example, Hyeoahkah’s story introduces Tár, the “meddlesome guide” (II:2, 42). Skulváði’s lay of her first meeting with Síswyo gives an account of the Water Bird (VI:1, 136). Kerrigan Iron Hand’s journey to Grimmdókk brings us face-to-face with Modorr of the Hrimnir (VI:3, 148-51). There are also characters, named and unnamed, who indicate the beginning or end of a journey but do not provide further guidance, such as The Woman with Two Long Braids (V:2, 122) and Rónur (V:2, 124).

Let us focus on the readers within the text at the opening of each Book and its sub-sections. Book I Part 2 opens with Dagazar’s view of the island on which his diminished
fleet has been shipwrecked. Between him and what stands ahead of him lie death (corpses) and the promise of insurmountable enemies reaching from the past (the mountainous outpost of ancient enemies). He is “caught without elm-staves.” Part 3 begins with the casting off of one known set of objects but leads into another unknown landscape. The dead are “draped” while the image of ancient enemies (their symbol, “Nidogg”) feeds on them and survivors go hungry. In Part 4, the unknown barren expanse outside is replaced by the examination of tumultuous expanse inside: “He’yeya’s lem-gold lips / lures me to Bragi’s bed,” the intuitive terrain of poetry. In Part 5, Dagazar’s object of desire is given outward recognition and so expands the range of objects outside while actual Kerrigarðr-time has worn away at resistance to inner turmoil “when the poison // rode Ymir’s blood, / Garmr’s skin was red // with the whetstone’s grind – / I wed the Wolffem, Golden He’yeya.”

In Book II Part 1, a new set of objects provides a revision of one of the sub-sets of the first in Book I Part 1 with a mixture of tangible and intangible elements - ritual and magic. It is the night of the Disablóð Feast (feast of blood sacrifices) when women wear charms dedicated to beasts [instinct]. Part 2 takes us into the sub-levels of the intangible strata. The readers are people unknown to the listeners of the story told by Heyeoahkah. This is a time “when wood-trolls stoked // Hel’s frost and ash.” We are prepared for contradictory objects to appear in the poem. Part 3 takes us up one level to assess what lies above the intangible levels. Historical objects are introduced from Kerrigash past – the history of one Kerrigash leader, Viglid. We must not forget, however, that he is introduced as being “masterful” while his title declares him as “mad” – “The Mad Poet Prince.” The nature of mastery of the terrain that Viglid encounters has several faces and counter-arguments in
the form of challengers – a difficult Council, unreliable allies, perceived potential usurpers, himself.

Book III Part 1 presents, with limited perimeters, another point of view – that of Logram The Red. He is seen through Opyla’s eyes. Opyla is a woman of concrete objects and her world-view is grounded even in the face of the inexplicable. She reads her world in terms of its objects of gain and loss. She is a finder. In Part 2 Opyla is the reader of the hidden terrain, but her feet are firmly on the ground for the most part. If pushed off balance, she always lands on safe ground. On her journey she is accompanied by someone who is able to read her, Ximacan Chief Cebanex. Part 3 introduces an unexpected object of test in her life. What she expected from solid objects proves false once more and her greatest challenge is Skulváði’s umbilical cord. Here, Skulváði’s mother, Frieda, is Opyla’s reader. Opyla chooses, as we discover in Book IV, to step into the hidden unknown – the then still uncharted Moving Wood.

In Book IV Part 1, Kerrigan Iron Hand summons assistance to chart the unknown after a period of rest and gathering of harvests. The promise of journey’s-end is the prize of gold and command of his terrain of rule. He is read through the eyes of the young poet Helga about whom we know nothing except as she reads her own self in two lines in parentheses. Part 2 opens with the beginning of this journey to chart the unknown with a change of plan initiated by Kerrigan. Part 3 already acknowledges that the journey did not yield gold or command but thorny paths. In Part 4 Helga reads Kerrigan’s shift in the journey. Now it is for a claim to hold Skulváði Úfr who has no trouble stepping on to the most illusive paths.
Book V complicates the question of who is *reading* with the possibility of many readers: Kerrigan, Íva, Helga and anonymous court poets. Part 1 opens with questions and the inability to read anything at all where all is perceived to be hidden in stone. Part 2 begins a new stage of journeying – that of puzzles – prompted by the obscure language written by ‘she who can walk illusive paths,’ Skulváði. Instead of finding answers in Skulváði’s books, however, we are left with the *impossibility of reading* and a detour is made with a story of travels set far in the past and physically very distant from Kerrigardr.

In Book VI Part 1, the world of Kerrigardr is read by Skulváði, heir to the king who cannot find answers at home or abroad. The perimeters have narrowed. These are the days “before Húlðrac came, / when The World’s Edge // was at its narrowest.” Here we are greeted with Skulváði as the leader who can read herself and knows how others read her. Part 2 begins with Skulváði’s reading of Síswoy, “The Spirit Woman of Tksifro Koore.” Síswoy is cautious about the concrete world: “laws fixed in houses.” Part 3 opens with a reading of a *conflict of methods*, of using one specific reading to claim power over action and thought regarding another. Part 4 brings a new reading – Modlog’s – to Kerrigan’s and Síswoy’s stories. Modlog has a special way of reading, searching below the actual events of Kerrigardr; he *reads* “fretful murmurings.”

Book VII involves two distinct readers: Síswoy and Skulváði. Mid-way through Part 2, the two voices overlap in the Grottasong about Tyringar and Hísrita. Part 1 opens with Síswoy’s ability to read the conjunction of futures-to-be – that between messengers of Flame-drow or Fire Starters and Skulváði’s new harsh claims to command her physical
world. Part 2 is Skulváði’s reading of Síswoy’s words. The language of the double-reading is fracturing and from there on introduces figures from the landscape who seem hardly human, certainly not allowing themselves to be recognised easily. Part 3 is a reading of defensiveness and a desire to read and interpret sound. In Part 4, Skulváði reads the construction of what is concrete as a construction of what is hidden, The Fort of Margrnon. The opening of Part 5 is Skulváði’s reading of a state of siege between what can be heard and read but is clouded. Because Parts 4 and 5 are written in the third-person voice, while the subject is Skulváði, we are introduced in the final lays of the epic to questions of the possibility of a new unknown reader or readers or we must accept that Skulváði is reading herself in this way. Within the fiction, the translator Gwen Terrane states that “the most likely author” points to Skulváði herself. As observer-readers, distanced from the fictive reality and the reality of the fiction, we have very little ground on which to argue with this. Our very familiar place as readers at this point, however, makes us far more confident about questioning Terrane than if we were faced with this dilemma earlier in the epic. It is the rôle that doubt plays here, regarding authorship, in opening the fiction to other possibilities that creates the challenge for us as contemporary observer-readers. This doubt also enhances the rôle of the composer-reader as someone who stands on the double-ground of identity as a speaker.

The presentation of Skulváði Úlfr as a translation from “ON.,” what Terrane calls “Obscure Norse,” and published at the end of the sixteenth century is straightway restrictive as is the nature of retrieving intuitive experiences into the physical world. However, within this apparent restriction are levels of speakers and listeners that open windows into the text. The translator’s annotations are in several ways useful to my
contemporary reader who will find the gap between the annotations and the poem tantalising.

The annotations, as written in the sixteenth century and of a text recorded between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries, create three *lacunae* at the outset for the modern reader. We are forced to manoeuvre ourselves across three windows, to begin with. Each *lacuna* stores a time-set as well as possible mind-sets. The contemporary reader has the best view of all into the text, being able to time-travel and play innumerable rôles all at once. And yet, although the modern reader's first frame of reference is the translation and annotation apparently giving hidden stories and sources to the poem's settings and as such opening the *lacunae* between the ancient poem and the translator's hand, the poem is the entity which remains consistently hidden – bound by *lacunae*. Reading, as writing, *Skulváði Úlfri* is a tricky and specialised encounter (not only in a linguistic but a rôle-playing and directional sense). Speaking about his "work," Amarr expresses this best:

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It is tricky work, a trying task:
to break boulders,
to bend blue-light, to blend metals,
not disturb the ground of Gild-rac
and still Huldrac occupied.
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"Amarr" (VII:1, 173)

Having set the poem at a distance in time, I needed to justify it to the twentieth-century reader and, at its fundamental level, to the reader for whom it would have been initially translated by Gwen Terrane. At the same time, it must be kept in mind that the *original poem* would have been written for succeeding generations of Kerrigash themselves. In
addition to this, there are instances within the poem where the authors themselves refer to 'hidden books.' Reading 'as a Kerrigash' furthermore requires us to listen as contemporaries of the author or authors of each Book and as members of each generation (following that of each author) listening to the succession of Books. The reader's compounding-view is essential to the construction of the poem as a parallel of my experience of the intuitive territory – the sense of distance with which I first encountered the images from the imaginative terrain and their accumulative complexity. As the Books become one book to the reader, so has my encounter become one layer rather than several and of which the whole History of Kerrigarðr is the result. *Skulváði Úlfr* then becomes not only a sum of its parts but a whole picture of the imaginative terrain.

Created to make its appearance in the world-outside-Kerrigarðr at the close of the sixteenth century, Europe on the verge of renaissance, *Skulváði Úlfr* is to be read as a poem meant first for an audience familiar with twelfth-century translations that saw a revival of in Late Medieval Europe. These works would have included such works as *The Mabinogion*, the work of Chrétien de Troyes, Hartmann von Aue's *Erec and Iwein*, Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzifal*, Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. As an actual, historical document, in this context, the modern reader may regard *Skulváði Úlfr* as real sixteenth-century forgery. This was a time of Bestiary books of imaginary beings. These creatures were actually documented at the time as existing in real places.58 Others sat well inside

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maps of non-existent seas and islands, some of which were verified or rediscovered, and later found not to exist and not likely to have existed.⁵⁹

In composing the imagery that I encountered in the intuitive terrain, I found a rather comfortable home in the hands of a sixteenth-century European translator. Terrane would have been part of an intellectual culture that regarded imagination differently from the twentieth-century reader. This thinking may not be quite out of sympathy with our thinking today in terms of how we regard virtual realities as part of our actual lives. Her place in an acceptable context would have to be part of her portrayal in the world of the poem. If she was seen as a complete outsider, she would not have been successful in getting the Books published. Her publisher, the fictional Rinaldi da Giacomo, would not have been able to provide a supportive argument for the work. This was, after all, 1594, a time of inquisitions and the singling out of non-conformist Christian elements in Western Europe.

In Late Medieval Europe, imagination was considered part of “the hierarchy of cognitive functions.” “Twelfth-century writers in particular elaborated a new poetry by the projection of Images formed in the Imagination.”⁶⁰ The focus was highly moralised and followed on neo-Platonic notions on the representation of ideas and man’s responsibilities. Despite the aim to categorise poetic narratives as historical or allegorical romance and later within ecclesiastical usage, the fabulous stories of Medieval poetry sought one thing: “to

make the invisible visible.” Poetry was seen as “the making of poetic picture” where the depicted image was normally comprehensible in words “only by intellection.” In the Books, I have left the intellectualising entirely to Gwen Terrane in ‘her space’ as translator and that reserved for her in the margins as annotator. Some pictures in the Books find their way more easily than others into the real world of Kerrigarðr, as it were, jumping the sound-barrier to present themselves as drawings. All that the contemporary reader has to do is to follow the leads set by Rinaldi da Giacomo in his “Argument” to the work. The outcome is that the contemporary reader is likely to question these leads more than the Late Medieval reader would have, given the questions surrounding the provenance and accuracy of the historical texts. However, thinking like Gwen Terrane in her time-frame helped me to accept the place of the picture of my own experience as a poet. Gwen would not have necessarily understood the work in this way but perhaps purely as an historical document of exotic places and people, much the way in which we regard a tourist guide to Tibet today.

Despite the importance of truth to the historical period of the fictional translation, as a twentieth-century work, the enjoyment of Skulvádi Úlfr’s contemporary audience neither requires a knowledge of Late Medieval/early Renaissance European cartography nor beasties nor a knowledge of von Eschenbach. Yet, in the context of sixteenth-century Europe, the work remains true to its time-frame by giving the untutored reader all there is that is required to understand the work. The poem assumes the existence of a gap between reader and work in that time-frame. The poem is constructed on the premise that the

61 Kelly 30.
poet's intuitive world is unverifiable – as much as a single eyewitness account cannot be verified. However, that world may be virtually verifiable, in much the same way that a sole eyewitness to a crime describes the features of the criminal and the description is recorded by a forensic artist. In *Skulváði Úlfr* the fictional translator and her annotations play the rôle of the forensic artist.

The requirements of the Late Medieval reader are brought to bear on the setting up of the poem as a contemporary piece. Contemporary obsession with virtual realities surprisingly has much in common with Medieval European ideas on imagination as a process of creating mental images that have a substantial part to play in intellectual thinking. The main difference between Medieval imagination and contemporary imagination is that we invest machinery with the ability to make imaginative images repeatable, whereas human imagination or intuitive thought is considered unverifiable and unrepeatable with any exactitude. The Late Medieval poet and intellectual regarded the dreamt and intuitive image as a foundation point for the construction of ideas that fed the moral and religious ethics of the time.

*Skulváði Úlfr* ultimately depends on lacunae in history and form for validity. So, how are we to read a history of pre-Columbian Jamaica as a reading of historical lacunae – virtual historical documents? As a virtual historical document, the text exists as a testable historical document, not just because it asks us to pretend that this is so, but because we read every document as a virtual reality, both the literary and non-literary. It takes no extra leap of the imagination or extra effort on the part of a person who picks up a book because we approach every document and experience with the ability to read lacunae.
Australian poet, Alison Croggon dedicated her first collection of poems, *This is the stone*, to "the perfect reader" in the figure of John Leonard, someone Gerald Prince might identify as the "ideal reader," the observer of the poem who is capable of understanding the overt and covert steps set up by the poet beneath the surface of the text, through the cultural codes of "narrative" and "meta-narrative" – someone who has achieved more than what Stanley Fish would call "linguistic competence." Perhaps, this is Umberto Eco’s highly educated and literary reader (as must be Jonathan Culler’s, dependent on a highly developed vocabulary to communicate precisely). Eco’s reader must be able to determine meaning from the state of closure or openness in a work where "no text is read independently of the reader’s experience of other texts." Maybe it is I Ians Jauss’s reader – able to slide into a population of endless interpretations or perpetual "fusion of horizons." However we define the person who reads the poem, the poet has to be the best of readers because the poet is primarily an inventor. Poets may use different tools, vastly different formulas and blueprints. When we find a poet with a unique formula, we

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62 Alison Croggon, *This is the stone* in *Pharaohs returning*, Australian poetry series (Ringwood: Penguin, 1991)

63 "But what is a reader and what is a reading? Very generally speaking, reading may be defined as an activity presupposing a text (a set of visually presented linguistic symbols from which meaning can be extracted), a reader (an agent capable of extracting meaning from that set) and an interaction between the text and the reader such that the latter is able to answer correctly at least some questions about the meaning of the former." Gerald Prince, *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative*, Janua Linguarum, Series Maior 108 (Berlin: Mouton, 1982) 103. Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1980).


65 Eco 21.

often say we recognise the genius in such an invention, in the affirmation of the existence of objects as being as real as, say, a chair in a room.

A poem involves at least two distinctly different readers. The first is the composer who reads ontological resonance and creates the poem. The second is the observer who reads the record of resonance – the poem. The genius of the reader begins with the poet. At the same time, the reader-who-picks-up-the-poem involves a second level of reading. Because the poem, unlike prose fiction and creative non-fiction, entails not so much the filling of lacuna, but the creation of them, the success of the poem depends on how well the poet is able to read-and-record lacuna-subjects in the creative work. The uniqueness lies in the nature of the lacuna-subjects that stand between the composer and the objects of the poetic work. It is seldom the actual objects that the poet story-boards in the work. We might recognise clearly described objects but often “the chair” in question is described by what surrounds it, the shadows it casts. It is largely in this territory that the composer relies on the genius of the reader. It is here that the difficulty in reading poetry lies – in the observer’s ability to read lacuna-subjects.

I would suggest that the “perfect reader” is a virtual reader (to extend David Bleich’s ideal reader). The virtual reader begins with the poet, not so much as the generator of the physical work, the poem, as the observer of resonant readings behind the creation of the poem. The solution to the ‘problem of reading’ begins with the first reader – the composer of the work, in this case, the poet – not with various possible readers. In such a case,

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however, a poem might have only one reader: its composer. Nevertheless, this would not stop others from picking up the poem and attempting to read it. Perhaps, then, the success of the work depends largely on how well the poets read their own reading, that is, the work before it lies ‘finished’ on the page, rather than on the ability of the observer-reader to rediscover the genius of the composer-reader, for it is taken as a given by the poet that not every observer will receive the work in the same way. Indeed, Croggon’s dedication to the “perfect reader” assumes that there is a hierarchy of reading attentiveness, ranging from perfect to imperfect.

If the objects in a poem exist in the same way that a chair does in another room into which we have not yet entered, and no less so, discovering its existence is a matter of reading the map to its position so that we find “the chair.” As the composer, the poet is the first observer to enter the room and describe the chair to would-be observers waiting outside the room but with little inkling as to how to enter. If the entrance into the room is difficult it is likely that the first reader, the composer, might be reading too carefully, that is, reading as if to avoid disturbing the objects in the room rather than interacting with them. When this occurs, the observer may be unable to decipher the key to the room, the mechanism by which to enter it. If the poet ‘reads too carefully,’ two problems are likely to occur (not counting posing the problem of making any real assessment of either the genius of the observer or the composer). The composer may invent an object that the observer may recognise but is unable to put to use. The poet might, conversely, speak so

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I first used the analogy of the “set of objects” in a poem as being “as real as a chair in a room” in the following review article: “The Genius of the Reader (or Who’s sitting on the chair?),” *Southerly*, vol. 58, no. 2 (Winter 1998) 240-48. Some of the material in this chapter and in Chapter 6 was published in that article.
mundanely about 'the chair' that it is no longer a mystery. The poet's genius we might say therefore lies in his or her ability to traverse lacune to 'the room.'

What happens when the formula is far too complicated for the observer to understand the steps to the room? May every observer's comprehension or lack of it be worthwhile to be taken into account? If, let us say, the inventor reads the chair as to create a one-legged one, how would the chair be kept from toppling over, or how much effort is required on the part of the observer to keep propping up the chair? In any case, how would we test that this is the case or not – the incompetence of the observer or the inventor, the observer's difficulty in misreading or the composer's puzzlement? How might we understand the nature of the room in which 'the chair' exists?

Reader-oriented theories take up the argument that the transmission of a literary work relies largely on the genius of the reader, that is, the person who picks up a book of poetry, say, and attempts to understand what is written. Yet these theories are sometimes the least helpful on how to find the clues by which we may read a poem. Reader-oriented theories hinge on the rôle of the reader as someone making sense not only of what is written but what may be implied. For example, a structuralist reader such as Jakobson's, might see a successful poem as hinging on the viewer's capacity to recognise the relationship between formal elements of the work.

No doubt, for any speech community, there exists a unity of language, but this all-over code represents a system of interconnected subcodes; each language
encompasses several concurrent patterns which are each characterized by a different function. 69

Gerald Prince’s reader is determined by how he/she responds to the persona addressed by the narrator within the work. Hans Jauss would regard the variations or “misfits” in a Jakobson-reader (or even an Eco-reader) as leading to interpretations ad infinitum.

Structuralist, Michael Riffaterre would add that understanding poetry lies in its peculiar syntax and grammar. 70 Roman Ingarden’s reader must follow the value-system of the strata of objects in a poem, always aware of the presence of indeterminate lacunae between the reader and the work. 71 David Bleich’s reader is an entirely subjective creature, slave to his/her own psychology.

Stanley Fish’s reader knows that the same methods are used to make sense of literary and non-literary sentences but must suspend reality to some extent (offering a state of fuzziness as a requirement to measure something of the world but not quite like it), the means to measuring such a suspension remaining undefined.

An infinite plurality of meanings would be a fear only if sentences existed in a state in which they were not already embedded, and had come into view as a function of,

70 Michael Riffaterre translates the text of a poem by distinguishing between two main types of “signs”, “between lexematic and textual interpretants” – “textual interpretants” being “a model of the equivalences and transfers from one code to the other, and they lay down the rule of the poem’s idiolect, guaranteeing, with the authority a normative grammar, a tradition, or convention would have, the semiotic practice peculiar to the poem.” And the “lexematic ones are the mediating words.” Semiotics of Poetry. Advances in Semiotics, gen. ed. Thomas A. Sebeok (Bloomington: Indiana UP-Methuen, 1978) 81.
some situation or other. That state, if it could be located, would be the normative one, and it would be disturbing indeed if the norm were free-floating and indeterminate.\textsuperscript{72}

To the propositions posed by Fish's question "Is there a text in this class?" Skulváði Úlfr's reply would be that there are as many readings as there are readers and that all of the readings and readers are literal (simultaneously or not). In some ways, Gwen Terrane may appear to act like one of Fish's "willful interpreters," but she stands in the margins because the original whole text is hidden. What keeps Terrane in the margins is that in Skulváði Úlfr the meaning of words depends on the literal reader who exists in indeterminate lacunae at any point rather than on the reader's circumstances because the language of poetry partakes of the nature of the literal reader's regard or way-of-looking at any remembered experience — not the experience itself and its circumstances but the manner in which we prepare for, consider and converse with remembered events. In this sense, recognition that Skulváði Úlfr is a poem is related to the logic of regard or looking at instead of primarily to mundane and linguistic circumstances.\textsuperscript{74}

The heart of reader-oriented discourse, it appears to me, rests not so much on the fact that there is no way to test the complete reading of a work but that the nature of the objects within a work being described is itself in question. For, perhaps, theoreticians are looking

\textsuperscript{72} Fish 307.

\textsuperscript{73} The "real question" behind this question is determined by the circumstances in which the questioner has placed the question, which Fish explains might be: (1) it is a question by a student about "a required textbook" (2) a question by a student about "the instructor's position" regarding literary theoretical positions, (3) the location of an object, a textbook. Fish's point is that only one set of circumstances is in operation at any one time though the questioner may shift the circumstances in order to clarify the question to the listener. 306-07.

\textsuperscript{74} Fish 305, 326.
too far into the future of the life of the literary work of art – the work beyond the eyes of the composer-as-reader. For poets seem to contradict these theoretical propositions in their presenting a poem as a description of objects in the world like any other, because they seem to present their writing as their reading of what already exists in their comprehension of the world-as-a-poem.

To understand a poem, the person who picks up the work binds him or herself to the composer and the demands of an integral understanding of the nature of the composition. What happens in the case where the poet does read too carefully? By this I mean, what happens when the poet tries to sit on a chair that is not only wobbly but out of focus so that the observer is unable to decipher the way to “the chair in the room”?

If, let us say, the poet reads the general position of “the chair” but does not give us a readable map to it, just how do we test that this is the case or not – that the way has not been clearly defined or that we are just clumsy at map-reading? This may occur when the reader’s encounter gives rise to questions, such as “what is this about?” or “what does it mean?” it is not the observer-reader’s problem at all. It may be a reflection of the composer’s encounter with gaps in understanding the creative schema and devising an interpretation. It seems to me that lacuna in understanding a work, on the part of the observer, sometimes has to do with the composer not realising the readers within the work. Readers-outside-the-work would be the population about which observer-readers (including the composer, in this case) may only speculate. If the composer only intends the work to be read by himself or herself, then the work may become the most difficult of its kind to read since the observer will need to know all the information about the
composer in order to understand the work. However, it appears that if a composer is primarily concerned with readers-inside-the-work, then the work has a greater likelihood of being understood by observers-outside, where readers-inside provide companion readership to those outside – readers-inside acting as virtual fylgjur, guides to the world-as-a-poem, so to speak.

Do areas of indeterminacy as found in Ingarden’s work of art therefore sit better with the composer-poet (the reader of the readers-inside) as a tool rather than as a way to explain the observer-reader’s response? Ingarden’s observer is useful in explaining not only the observer’s encounter alone with the literary work but as the twin face of the mirror that makes up both the composer’s encounter and the observer-reader’s meetings with the work. This is plainly so if the composer’s encounters with objects of the imagination (gleaned intuitively or empirically or both together) are as real as the encounter by the reader with the physical object of the literary work. Are the properties of the two objects (the composer’s and the observer’s) the same in their relation to actual or real objects in the world? Both objects have a quasi-historical / temporal place with limited attributes and heightened or emphasised limited variations.

Skulvádi Úlfr’s efficacy as a literary text is made real by its appearance as evoking differences and simultaneously accepting the unfamiliar as familiar. Likewise, text and composer-reader – perhaps, supra-text and poet – confront each other as object and subject. The appearance of a division between the two (supra-text and poet) is an experience that belongs to the composer-as-reader. In thinking the thoughts of another, that is, playing the rôle of reader-inside-the-text, the composer’s individuality temporarily recedes into the
background, since it is supplanted by thoughts that now become the theme on which attention is focussed. As composers read, artificial divisions occur, because composers take as a theme for ourselves something that we are not. Consequently, when reading, composers naturally operate on different levels. For although composers may appear to be thinking the thoughts of someone else – ourselves reading – what we are will not disappear completely but merely remain a more or less powerful virtual force.

Thus, the composer's reading of the objects with which a poem may be created appears from two levels – the actual virtual-reader and the actual thematic-reader comprising the whole encounter with the objects. Indeed, we can only make someone else's thoughts into an absorbing theme for ourselves, provided the virtual background of our own way of thinking about remembering can adapt to it. Every text we read draws a different boundary within our way of remembering, so that the virtual background (an actual me) will take on a different form according to the theme of the text concerned. This is inevitable if only for the fact that the relationship between an actual theme and a virtual background is what makes it possible for the unfamiliar to be understood.  

75 Although speaking about the observer-reader, compare this with Wolfgang Iser's comment: "Far more instructive will be an analysis of what actually happens when one is reading a text, for that is when the text begins to unfold its potential; it is in the reader that the text comes to life, and this is true even when the 'meaning' has become so historical that it is no longer relevant to us." The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response (Der Akt des Lesens. Theorie ästhetischer Wirkung 1976, trans. Johns Hopkins UP, 1978) (London: Routledge, 1978) 19.
Let us review what is happening in the construction in Skulvádi Úlfur. As the composer-reader, I am creating Skulvádi Úlfur as a legend of the poetic ‘inner life’ and the steps taken to command the workings of the process. The music by which it would be carried was the first and most important part of that process. The work recreates the distance, the lacuna that exists between the poet’s intuitive life and the outer physical world. It is a coming to terms with the distance and the relationship between the intuitive world and the creation of the work.

The placement of a contemporary poem in the voice and forms of work written over a 500-year period, translated around 1600 and further translated into contemporary English are testaments to the necessity of the creation of distance in the poem. There is no way of getting out of or away from the points of distance and the necessity of making connections between these points. This is a statement of the distance between the intuitive terrain and myself.

The distance is composed of the intuitive imagery and the wording of the text or legend. Bringing that imagery to life in the poem is an attempt to bridge the gap. My aim in communicating the creation to an audience is to close this gap and, in opening communication with the audience, to close that between the work and myself, and between the observer-reader and myself.
In order to achieve this, I must first emulate the terrain – imitate the gap – by creating for a contemporary reader an historical distance between the observer and the wording of the intuitive images. The forms of Viking poetry are used to define the poet's illusive world and to create the illusion of a time beyond the physical time of the contemporary reader (setting up the illusion of time in the actual creative work itself). As I had to confront the work – the world of the intuitive – to understand the book, likewise the observer-reader must come to the work with me. The reader is asked, as I was in responding to the intuitive landscape, to take a leap of faith: "Let me begin again // from where the story leaps," says Dagazar in the concluding lines of the first lay of the epic.

The relationships of both the creation and reading in the gap employ a poetic legend or poetic style that is removed in time, setting, and in form from my contemporary audience. The removal simulates the first level of distancing the composer-reader's perspective regarding the experience of the intuitive life. This removal brings the reader into sympathy in a physical sense with the poet's perspective of the inner life – in the re-creation of the distance between that of the contemporary reader (my actual world) and the work (the virtual reality of my intuitive terrain). Also, this puts in front of observer-readers a work from which we must at once stand closer in order to see it because of the distance placed between readers and the elements of the work (its historical settings). It is a distance set up, as it were, by events that fix the work far from a usual contemporary reading.

How I was to read the significance of the concrete events of 1972, 1983 and 1985 would have a tremendous bearing on my reading of 'equally real' events that had nothing to do with the concretely tangible and yet were part of events within the plane of the concrete.
It is only by reading *Skulváði Úlfr* that these ‘equally real’ events can be fully understood. In brief, they possess the nature of existing within the plane of the concrete but not of it. Their primary nature is visual, yet at every turn they elude the eye and capture every other sense except the tactile.

Every artistic work, according to Ingarden, has a “schematic creation.” Any work of art is determined by a characteristic feature which makes it a *work of art* and not, say, a mechanical tool. The creative work is made up of physical qualities as well as qualities that are not actual, but have the capacity to become *real* and do so when an observer outside the creative work renders it *concrete*. The language that Ingarden uses to describe the relationship between physical qualities (in the case of a poem, the page and the appearance and construction of words on it) and the response of an observer are useful points to explain the relationship between my intuitive experience and the construction of *Skulváði Úlfr* for the listener-reader.

In constructing *Skulváði Úlfr*, I have treated my intuitive experiences as a series of physical qualities in much the same way that Ingarden treats the constituents of the literary work of art, plus two additional aspects. Developing on Aristotle’s *Poetics*, Ingarden identified four layers that constitute the literary work of art. These are: (1) sound, (2) the meaning of propositions or quasi-judgements (judgements about matters that do not directly affect the physical world of the reader in the immediate sense), (3) schematised aspects or events happening in a sequence as determined by the series of sentence structure, and (4) representations of actual objects save that these objects have limited verifiable information,
the gaps filled in by each reader according to the reader’s comprehension of the representations.

In *Skulváði Úlfr* two additional propositions are posed. The first is this. If the objects in the literary work of art are propositions of the concrete world but not in it in the same way that a chair stands in a room in the actual world, but in the world in the sense that they exist in the same intangible way that a memory of the chair exists in the actual world, then the objects in a literary work are as definitive, independent as a memory and subject to a set of responses if not all these responses at once. It is the variation in responses that creates levels of indeterminacy in the reading of the work and not the incapacity of the literary work ever to be fulfilled with different occasions of the reading of it.

The second proposition is that the comprehension of a literary work as one rife with lacune belongs in the first instance and primarily so to the territory of the composer of the work rather than to that of the observer-reader. After all, though two readers may disagree about the meaning of a work, the first reader may agree, after being convinced by the second, that a particular poem may be understood in more than one light. This, however, does not necessarily make the first reader change his or her mind about an initial understanding of that poem. As much as two people may argue about the recollection of an event, each will adhere to his or her recollection, the memory of the event. In the outcome, the memory of the event will override the reality of the actual event, as a considered matter, even though the event may have been documented by other independent witnesses. It is the inner life that appears to dominate reality and not proof of the actual world outside us.
It seems to me that if there is indeterminacy operating in a literary work, it lies with the composer of the work. The literary composer may use indeterminacy as a tool to make assessments about the actual world by posing sets of objects that are part of the actual world but are recorded as not in it. It is in this way that a literary work may be constructed to induce a reader to a particular response at least at its first level of reading, the initial recognition of the work on the printed page or as a live or recorded performance. If "cognition is composed of heterogeneous but closely connected processes," as Ingarden states, these processes are akin to the experience of memory around which the actual world is composed for us experientially. The gap that exists is that between the correlation between the actual and the imaginative world or the intangible world of memory.

Ingarden considers the idea that when we perceive an actual object - say a sphere - we receive/perceive it in its fulfilled and unfulfilled aspects.76 It is constantly changing as well. When we perceive a literary work of art, though we read of objects as if they were actual, they belong to "ideal" objects, that is, those that appear to us to have their unfulfilled aspects as part of their portrayal. These objects do not change because there is no background to distract us. We are not distracted from the fictional world of a poem save we get up to make a cup of tea. In the same way, however, it seems to me, we may leave an actual conversation or beautiful scenery and also get up to make a cup of tea. And for all intents and purposes of our actual world, we pick up again in the conversation or

76 Ingarden, *The Literary Work of Art* 269-94.
resume our view of the scenery irrespective of what happened in between when we got up and returned to the conversation.

We work out the story of a literary work much as we work out the sequence of events in the actual world, notwithstanding the fact that we can tell that one is fictional and the other is not. We may change our minds about reported events of the actual world from one moment to the other, but the way we think through the sequence of events that we believe to be true or not remains the same. We tend to apply similar logical thought to fictional as well as ‘real’ activities which does not exclude examining the illogical. It is for this reason that we are able to consider our positions in regard to a hypothetical proposition.

As the world waits in readiness – holding its “thus-appearance” – for us to observe it, so do a set of words in a book, a view across the valley, or someone waiting for us to return from the kitchen with a cup of tea as he or she waits to complete the utterances about to be made when we got up to prepare tea. These are moments “held in readiness” as is the intuitive world or a schema of sounds for a literary composer. It is the thus-appearance that the composer describes. The poet does not create all-appearances at once, as much as the actual world does not to any observer.

In *Skulváði Úlfr* the additional levels added to Ingarden’s strata-schematic perform where the aesthetic of encounter with my imaginative terrain properly belongs. Here the value-system of the terrain are as ‘facts’ revealed about a world as a world in the story of a book is held-in-readiness. They are not facts in the sense as we understand physical information
about the world, but rather take the form of how we think about information in the world. The objects of the imaginative terrain partake of the quality of facts in that quasi-temporal sense in which we consider an aesthetic object. They present themselves as ‘a sword held upside-down’ or ‘as if we found an old worn suit cut in half, right down the middle’ or ‘as if we sat down to eat a meal without utensils when we entirely expected to use a knife and fork’ to complete the meal. As the observer, we feel the need to right the sword or repair the suit, fill in the rest of the action required to complete the picture. Aesthetic understanding requires a wholeness, desires to see or complete the whole picture.

*Skulvádi Úlfr* attempts to map this gap between thus-appearance and all-appearance and its nature, to illustrate this space between the world of memory and the imaginative and that of the actual world. In order to understand how this works, it is important to remember that the readers for whom *Skulvádi Úlfr* is written are as much part of appearances as Dagazar, Oþýla, Skulvádi Úlfr, the giants and the caves of Kerrigarðr are figures in the poem.

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77 Iser also challenges Ingarden’s ambiguity regarding the relationship between the observer and a literary work of art on two points with which I agree, that (1) “what is open to doubt is whether each reader’s individual concretization can be subjected to criteria of adequacy of inadequacy” and (2) that this is partly due to Ingarden’s “referring to a one-way incline from text to reader and not to a two-way relationship.” Iser 171, 173.
'Musical Chairs'

Though the completed manuscript is embedded with a structure that tries to recount the story of the difficulties in reading the imaginative territory, readers may enter Skulváði Úlfr with relative ease. We can enter the levels of its terrain by any number of musical windows or levels of sound and imagery depending on where we sit and what view we take from "the chair in the room." We might prefer, for example, to consider Skulváði’s meeting with Amarr by looking through one of his sheets of gap-holed papers or from the window of his tall house. We might like to read as Modorr does with Skulváði’s “sound-maps,” by over-writing what is already written. Each object in the poem (or “chair in the room”) has a window to it in the poem which is framed by its individual combination of poetic lays using Viking poetry and story-telling techniques of Arawakan and Cherokee tales. (I explain the variety of these techniques in Chapter 4.) It is important first to clarify where it is that the composer-reader and the observer-reader coincide in a reading of Skulváði Úlfr.

On a mundane level, Skulváði Úlfr may be read as an epic of the History of the Kerrigash, the poem's first most accessible level – that of plot (see Chapter 1, 228-31). This is a thematic reading. As a story of people and society, it covers the wholesale rape of an entire Cherokee village by Viking raiders, murder, war and more bloody war, torture, madness and death, dangerous flirtation, obsessive passion, the abuse of drugs, spying, revenge, loyalty and love, reluctant visionaries, the rôle of poets and craftspeople, subversion among the priest classes, benevolent dictators, and megalomaniacs. The virtual readings (the ‘shield-poems’ of the imaginative terrain) accompanying these thematic readings, however,
are far more complex and risk-taking – the thematic mirror of this risk-taking borne by the narrative of the lives of the rulers of Kerrigarðr.

As the reading of a virtual landscape, the poem may be read as a series of commands addressing the imaginative terrain. Book I is then the longing to command the gilded prize – the objects of the intuitive stratum. Book II is about fear of attaining the prize, the lack of command over fear. Book III tells the story of the need for command over the physical demands of the terrain, over its seemingly tangible aspects. Book IV tells the story of the need to command the intangible aspects of the terrain, the emotional face of the terrain. Book V may be read as a story of command over reading the signs of the terrain. Book VI is about commanding claims on the terrain. And Book VII is the battle to sustain the terrain.

_Skulváði Úlfr_ may also be read as a story about the levels of attainment in the aim to reach some goal or goal post in the imaginative terrain. In this case, the stories told are as follows: Book I, the terrain at a distance; Book II, the terrain too-close. Book III is about establishing perspective, bringing the distant terrain close enough (but not too close) to be read clearly. Book IV is the experience of over-enthusiasm, the terrain too close to bear. Book V is about the terrain as a landscape of restraint, the ‘close’ held _at_ a distance; Book VI, the ‘close’ _as_ a distance; and in Book VII the terrain is only as close as a mirror and, therefore, _at_ a distance. In this reading, Books I to VII are parts of a composite mirror, and as a whole, an inversion of the search for the gilded prize of the first reading.
If we follow the idea of the Books as a mirror, they may be read as a series of alternating perceptions. Here, Book I is a mirror in darkness; Book II places the reader in the mirror, a place of fractured light or the observer piercing the past and future of others staring into the mirror. Book III is once more the world of darkness, the landscape of caverns; Book IV, the illumination of caves by the light of the desirous nature of perception; Book V, the darkness of the self reflected by desirous light. Book VI is about transparency, the perception of light as sound piercing the body or in-lightenment. Book VII tells the story of the combination of solid dark and glamorous light or stepping through the mirror.

In a fourth type of reading, the terrain might function like a muse. Book I will be the assault on the muse; Book II, besieging the muse; Book III, gifts of the muse; Book IV, how to avoid the muse; Book V, stalking the muse; Book VI, finding the lair of the muse; Book VII, defending the muse found.

In a fifth type of reading, Skulváði Úlf is a story about movement – the kind of movement taken to command my way through the unknown territory of the imagination. In this case each main author acts out the rôle belonging to the composer's journey. In Book I Dagazar attempts to rule by thrusting blindly into the unknown. Heyeoahkah assesses the thrust of rulership in Book II. In Book III Obyla manoeuvres the techniques of two different rulers – Kerrigash Logram and Ximacan Cebanex – and encourages the young Prince Kerrigan to give her room to master swordmaking in order to identify what is valuable in the terrain, what lies beneath the crush of thrust. In Book IV Kerrigan Iron Hand pursues the significance of what the terrain holds from him in the present and hides him from as he tries to thrust into the future. Wandering unexpectedly beneath the crust
of the terrain reveals marvellous levels to Kerrigan when he fails to use the physical energy
of thrust to make stone 'speak' in Book V. Book VI may be read as Skulváðí as heir to the
drive to bring the future into the present – to bring what is held in the future of the terrain
into grasp, into the present. In Book VII, movement is external to Skulváðí as she is thrust
into the future-become-present. At the same time, the nature of thrust is modified as
Skulváðí reins in movement to protect the future-become-present.

Defining the techniques of the poetic process is one of the most difficult tasks to elucidate.
Identifying such a process often becomes tied to its difficulties of definition as much as it
can clarify methods of definition. Because the gaps are survived by and survive within
*virtual* events, we bring the gaps into actuality and make them *real* events. The epic poem
gives conscious recognition to a place where the Kerrigash are given life, from where, as it
were, they *lay in pause*. They are created out of a need to give sound to the interval and to
make the silence created by the pause meaningful.

The characters grow from a drive to make a place for heartfelt loss, the ecstasy of discovery
and the yearning for the best possibilities. They are brought to bear on the order of the
layers through which my inspirations appear on the page, keeping in mind the distance
between "the unapparent sense" that invented the work and the external world to which I
have brought it. This relationship is a distinct aspect of *Skulváðí Úlfr*, one which is
maintained throughout the work by the selection of methods of presentation and
preservation of its images: the layers of interpreters, the use of annotations, headings, sub-
headings and sub-sub-headings, the use of the *measure* of each line, the illustrations, the
printing of the text on textured ivory-coloured paper rather than on plain white paper.\textsuperscript{78}

Yet, Kerrigarðr is brought alive in the work by somewhat simple and straightforward means, by placing myself as the reader's reader with a sack of questions: What happens next? What do I see next? What holds me before the future? What is the legend of the emergent map? How does it draw its lines? What comprises its perimeters? What is its music?

\textsuperscript{78} I discuss the material presentation of Skulváði Úlfr in Chapters 5 and 6.
CHAPTER 4
THE AURAL LEVELS OF THE TERRAIN OF \textit{Lacunæ}

FROM GROUND UP & FINDING FORM AND THE ILLUSION OF AUTHENTICITY

\begin{quote}
\texttt{I shall weave you \quad (to worry them)}
\texttt{not from one tale but two (I say).}
\texttt{And yet, be warned, \quad they work as one –}
\texttt{as the skald's staves}
\texttt{hold two lines with one sound.}
\end{quote}

"Nolli and Ahuacatl," Heyeobkkah's Tales (II:1, 41)

In order to define the illusive yet palpable terrain of my imaginative territory, I needed a form strong in the aural and visual - the features that dominate the intuitive terrain. Accentual and syllabic alliterative poetry came as a natural sound for the world of Kerrigarðr with the emergence of the character of Dagazar, Rogaland earl-poet, priest-chieftain and member of the dispossessed Norwegian eleventh-century aristocracy.

Viking poetry is the ideal vehicle for the intuitive imagery and sounds of Skulvadi Úlfr.

Citing Norwegian scholar, Hallvard Lie, Hallberg writes:

Genuine skaldic verse strives for tension, desires resistance for its own sake; it wants to force the listener into states of psychic frustration from which he suspensefully seeks escape, finally to reward him with the joy of solution and release by letting
that which was fractured and torn asunder at last converge and fuse consciously into
the logical whole that is the sober, factual content of the stanza.79

*Skulváði Úlfr* employs all the main forms of Old Norse poetry and known variations on
them. It creates some new stanzaic styles and gives form to measures still obscure to
scholars of Old Norse, in Books II Part 1, III Part 2, V Parts 1 and 2, and VII Part 2. All
the Books could be considered as written by skaldic poets because the poetry is not only
accentual but also syllabic – the syllabic form being the distinguishing feature of Viking
alliterative poetry over Celtic, Anglo-Saxon and Germanic alliterative poetry.

In the literature of Old Scandinavia we meet with something unique in mediaeval
Europe: a great and rich literature composed before the thirteenth century: clear
incisive prose, and poetry whose stormy music can deal fittingly with the tales of
gods and heroes; and a remarkable clarity of vision, showing itself in understanding
of human strength and weakness and full awareness of the greatness of the issues
involved.80

Poems such as *Völuspá* have been considered exemplary in form as well as in terms of a
style that reflects an order beyond that of its literary form – that of historical order as set
out by its author through the composition of the poem:

What the *völsa* has to tell us does not concern a static, immutable vision, but rather
an evolving historical process. And she does not tell it in random fashion. She
selects, omitting certain details, emphasizing others, lucidly organising her material
as she proceeds. From this fact arise the two questions to which we must address
ourselves. According to what criteria, what dynamic principle, does she depict the
evolution of the history of the universe? And by what techniques does she present
this picture in all its mutability? This is tantamount to saying that the plan adopted
for the composition of the poem is of fundamental importance for understanding its
meaning, and indeed this is precisely my justification for accepting the authority of
the one manuscript version of the text (that is, the *Codex Regius*).81

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79 Hallvard Lie, “Natur” og “Unatur” i skaldekunsten (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1957) cited by
Hallberg 20.
80 Ellis vii.
Despite its containment in style, Old Norse poetry still holds much in its content that cannot be pinned down. In “surveying the evidence as a whole,” Ellis notes, in relation to burial practices in particular, “there is nothing to justify us in connecting any one custom rigidly to any one belief.” This appears so, not only because the existing manuscripts cannot be treated as a complete collection, but because the poems’ imagery is largely unexplained, couched as it is in periphrastic language and its time/space referential points. This fuzzy area has led to the focus by scholars of Old Norse poetry on trying to determine the “historical” from the “mythological” and from the “literary.”

Ursula Dronke focuses on the role of mythology and religion in order to place the poems of the Elder Edda, offering insightful ideas provided by a study of Eddic poetry as a source for the history of Germanic religion. Clunies Ross proposes a cross-disciplinary approach where she would compare “individual notations in individual works... with other notations and relating these literary levels of expression to what the historians and anthropologists can tell us of the society as a whole.” Applying a literary/anthropological methodology to Old Norse mythology, Clunies Ross reviews the divisive impact of New Criticism in the mid-twentieth century on the study of Norse texts. One aspect of her point of view (although specific to mythological texts and the modern reader) is useful in describing my position on the use of Old Norse poetic forms in Skulváði Úlfur. She

82 Ellis 61.
83 See, for example, Clunies Ross and Lindow.
84 Ursula Dronke, Myth and fiction in early Norse lands (Brookfield: Variorum, 1996).
explains that she tries “to present the idea that Norse mythology, as an entity recoverable from the extant texts, is an artefact of the human imagination which is and always has been in process of reinterpretation and reformulation.”

Studies in the measure and layers of Viking poetry provide me with information regarding rhythm and timing, important elements of Skulvádi Úlfr in terms of placing the composition within the poem’s notations of form and intuitive discourse. As the poem uses imaginative layers bringing their own tone to bear upon the workings of the fictional context, the use of rhythm and timing are brought to bear on the fictional events placed in time with real historical background and foreground. In discovering this rhythm, I also unearth ways in which structure departs from literary history, spaces that are not covered by logic or over which neither historical documentation nor the logic of the actual world seems to have any hold.

While the following shows that the forms of Viking poetry used in Skulvádi Úlfr are various and complex, it should be borne in mind that the writing of the poem began as a way to bring the characters as speaking parts from my imaginative terrain. As a work that found life from historical gaps, Skulvádi Úlfr demanded a voice much like a restless ghost requiring proper requiem. Its sounds evolved slowly into patterns that I later identified with some of the existing forms of Viking poetry. Revisions were often assisted by referring to existing forms as much as restricted by them. In the latter case, the variety of

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85 Clunies Ross, “Medieval Norse Mythological Texts and Modern Readers” 19.
86 Kristjánsson 33-36.
forms encouraged my creation of new ones. In all cases, the syllabic rhythm of the voice was identified first, the half-lines and full-lines second, and the stanzaic form last. It was in this way that three new Eddic forms (discussed later in this chapter) were created. With over 100 variations to the standard skáldic style and with Eddic styles unrestricted by stanzaic length for the most part, it took little contrivance to fit the forms that emerged with the writing of Skulváði Úlfr into the framework of an authentic-seeming work of Viking poetry. In practice, skáldic or court metre may have as many as ninety variations based on emphases on rhyme, changes to the number of syllables and lines, the linking of the syntax of sections of the poem, elision, repetition, and alliterative pairing in conjunction with meaning.87

Writing accentual stress and syllabic poetry is much like composing music, with its systematic use of alliteration, variations of stresses, and "quick" and "slow" or "short" and "long" syllables. The means and meaning of the sum of the work lie in the ability of the composer to capture the tone of measure. It is an art form of syllabic sound and structure, varying its tones with internal rhymes, the caesura as important as the balance of stressed and unstressed sounds.

Eddic & skáldic measure

The style most often used in the Books is Eddic poetry. It is an area that is subject to its own unanswered questions about origin, purpose and meaning. Kristjánsson writes: "we

87 Snorri's Edda 165-220.
know nothing about the creators of eddaic poetry, and there has been much discussion—and controversy—about when and where the poets lived.... The oldest recording we have are fragments quoted in Snorri's Edda from the 1220s." 88 Peter Hallberg notes: "It is not known how Eddic poetry was presented to an audience, that is, whether it was spoken or possibly sung or chanted. The poems themselves reveal scarcely any clues in that respect." 89 "The two most vexed problems of eddic scholarship have from the earliest times remained dating and the provenance of the poems," explains Joseph Harris. 90 And some scholars continue to define Eddic poetry by listing its qualities by its characteristics that are not found in skaldic poetry and vice versa. 91

Scholars of Old Norse literature concur that skaldic poems but not Eddic poems are attributable to named poets. 92 The reason for this may be tied to the dating of the manuscripts and the lack of the evidence of the original writings. All of the extant Eddic poetry manuscripts identified as "mythological" are written in the third-person voice.

88 "The great majority of scaldic poems are attributed to named poets; none of the eddic poetry is." Kristjánsson 83.

"Eddic poems are timeless; they are ascribed to no named authors, and only painstaking research may show when or where they were composed, when and where some of the events which may have ultimately inspired them took place." E. O. G. Turville-Petre, Scaldic Poetry (Oxford: Oxford UP-Clarendon, 1976) xvi.

89 "Most of them have been classified either as mál or kvida. The latter noun is related to the verb kveða, which, to be sure, may sometimes refer to some kind of song, but usually means 'to tell,' 'to recite (a poem or stanza),' or simply 'to say.' It is not possible to come to a definite conclusion on the basis of this word." Hallberg 17.

Sec Kari Ellen Gade's The structure of Old Norse Dróttkvætt poetry (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995) where she argues that "phonetic realization" and metre suggests that skaldic poetry "could not have been sung or chanted."

90 Harris 93.

91 For example, see Turville-Petre: "Since I cannot define scaldic poetry precisely, I must content myself with mentioning some of the characteristics which it does not share with Eddic poetry. These characteristics are both in subject and in form." Scaldic Poetry xvi.

92 For example: Kristjánsson and Turville-Petre.
However, Eddic poems written after Christian Conversion in Viking Scandinavia, such as *Sölvarljóð* (Songs of the Sun) now only preserved in seventeenth-century manuscripts, used not only a combination of metres but of voices. *Skulváði Úlfur* takes up this gap by presenting its poems as a direct translation from the original writings and presents the Eddic poems with their authors’ names, albeit borne by the translator’s choice in this matter at times.

The Eddic sections of *Skulváði Úlfur* use three main traditional forms. The first is *fornyrðislag* or epic metre also called old story and old lore metre – the continuous story. The second is *ljóðakátt* or song metre also called magic or chant metre – the non-epic style. Song metre is the form most used in the epic poem, a form described as “the most irregular of Norse measures,” where “nothing comparable to this is known from other Germanic poetry, and its origins are altogether obscure.” The third is *malakátt* or speech metre, with a first-person narrator, a type that Heinz Klingenberg might categorise as “didactic.” The other forms used include gnomic (*Skulváði’s Verse-maps, V:2, 119-21*) and epigrammatic measures (*Iva in “The Rule of The Grain,” V:1, 112-14* and *Siswoyo in “Wolffem-law,” VI:2, 141-42*). A traditional variation (by the addition of a repetitive full line) on song metre, *galdralag* or incantation metre, is also used in Books V, VI and VII in relation to the Húlðræc, Síswoyo and Skulváði.

Distinctions in the form of Eddic poetry are two-fold – by structure and by meaning or intended purpose of the poem. Eddic poems have been classified as heroic lays, epic

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93 Turville-Petre, *Scaldic Poetry* xvi.
mythological lays and non-epic mythological lays; the latter, an “enumerative type” that may be broken down into eight sub-categories based on types, length and structure, setting of the lay.94 However, all these forms can be found in one story if we regard a set of sequences as a continuous story. Hallberg argues that the use of stanzas in Scandinavian Eddic verse is influenced first by skáldic eight-line stanzas but that, ultimately, stanza structure is only secondary to Eddic forms, where the lays may vary in the number of lines in each stanza within one work such as Atlavikíða. The core Book, Book IV of Skulváði Úlfr, in particular explores the freedom in using irregular Eddic stanzas. However, stanzaic division of any kind distinguishes Scandinavian from Germanic and Anglo-Saxon alliterative poetry in which such divisions were rare as was the emphasis on the syllabic.95

Relying on the work of Edward Sievers’ research on Germanic versification, W. J. Sedgefield noted that with Anglo-Saxon poetry, the standard unified form was stress-accent or word accent and sentence-accent where the quality and length of syllables were important but not the quantity of syllables. Furthermore, he adds:

By the end of the eleventh century the traditional versification and poetical language no longer appealed to the ordinary people, and exact knowledge of their technique was practically extinct except in monasteries. The use of compound nouns and adjectives had now nearly disappeared.... Secondary stress consequently ceased to play a part in the verse.96

It is difficult to fix the form in which Eddic poems may have come to those who wrote them down in the thirteenth century onwards. Why transcribers of the poems added prose

95 Hallberg 15.
introductions, for instance, to most of the older heroic poems in the Codex Regius is unclear since the poems were already largely narrative in structure – or perhaps it is because of this that they lent themselves to narrative extensions. The prose may also have been part of the original work. Kristjánsson suggests that the addition of prose introductions was to account for the poems being regarded as remnants of lost verse, hence inviting the addition of continuity links, or perhaps this was due to the dissolution of the verse-form in favour of the growth of preferred prose forms.\(^97\)

Attempts to classify Eddic poems according to their likely occasion, narrative point of view, or their purpose can lead to confusion in categorising. For example, consider the case of ljoðaháttr and galdralag, found respectively in Hávamál and Skírnismál of the Elder or Poetic Edda. Formally, the two styles differ by the addition of one or a pair of full-lines at the end of a stanza. Where paired full-lines occur, the second works as a variant on the previous full-line. However, there may also be variations to the arrangement of the lines preceding the final full line or lines. The quotation opening this section of Chapter 4 is an example of galdrlag.

In identifying ljoðaháttr, the common ground seems to be that we refer to it as “song metre,” “magic metre.” However, Hallberg calls ljoðaháttr “song” or “chant” metre, while he classifies galdralag as “magic song” from galdr meaning “sorcery,” “magic formula.” Faulkes translates Snorri Sturluson’s reference as “incantation metre.”\(^98\) I will refer to

\(^{97}\) Kristjánsson 48.

\(^{98}\) See Hallberg 12-14 and Snorri’s Edda 220.
ljóðaháttr as song metre and galdralag as incantation metre, although I find that I fall into similar difficulty with classification where “song metre” and “incantation metre” overlap in Skulváði Úlfr. It is clear, however, that Síswoy usually interrupts in incantation metre. If anything is striking about Viking use of sound it is that it invites a sense of song and chant. All attempts to define its structure and purpose hint at the nature of the spoken or singing voice – an emphasis on the music in the language, at least.

The introduction of conversation into a poem naturally varies the structure of the stanza, a new stanza likely to begin with a change in speaker. Here, the voice of the speaker may shift the syllabic count of the line from epic metre to speech metre in the same poem as in For Scímis (Skirnir’s Journey). Even in a first-person narration, so-called inconsistencies within an apparently set form will appear. Hávamál (Words of the High One) is a good example of the secondary role of consistent stanza form. It uses song metre with variations in single and double full-lines following paired half-lines. There are also variations often dictated by rhyme and rhythm, a pattern used with a certain amount of vigour in Books III, IV and VI (“The Medicine Charms of the Valley of Butterflies”) of Skulváði Úlfr. The opening stanzas of Hávamál read:

Gáttir allar, áðr gangi fram,  
um scoðaz scyli,  
um scygnaz scyli;  
þvíát övíst er at vita, þivar óvinir  
sitía á fleti fyrir.

Gefendr heilr! gestr er inn kominn,  
hvar scal sitia siá?  
meþkc er bráðr, sá er á bröndom scal  
síns um freista frama.

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99 Hans Kuhn, Edda (vol. 1) 17.
Terry translates these stanzas, maintaining stress but without emphasis on syllabic count, as:

At every doorway what you have to do
is look around you
and look out;
ever forget: no matter where you are
you might find a foe.

Hail to hosts! A guest is in the hall,
where shall he sit down?
To please him, quickly give him a place
in front of the blazing fire. 100

Whatever outer garment for the structure of lines – the stanzas – is used, certain fundamental levels of terrain, as it were, operate in both Eddic and skaldic poetry. The area of measuring stanzaic structure and meaning in skaldic poetry is a controversial one best summed up by Roberta Frank:

Skaldicists today are relatively skeptical about their chances of getting anything right; along with the rest of the twentieth century, we have discovered human ignorance.... Not even the terra firma of meter feels solid any more.... Our science is weak; we find ourselves in a condition of intellectual instability, unable to make valid distinctions between acceptable and unacceptable interpretations, still less to define the kenning or date the verse.101

Frank notes that answers to the understanding of the function of Viking poetry might lie in contemporary cross-cultural studies. Citing A. Kagame’s *La poésie dynastique au Rwanda* (Brussels: Institut Royal Colonial Belge, 1951) she suggests that parallels can be

100 Terry 11.
found in southern African panegyric poetry. She argues for more attention to be paid to the “close analogue to skaldic ofljóst” (meaning “over-light”) among the Ruanda. She believes that an understanding of oral culture, of “oral phenomena such as the disambiguations of two-tone African talking drums, may eventually help us to rephrase the ‘origin of the kenning’ question as posed by traditional scholarship.”\(^{102}\)

Despite the continuing controversy and the possible places where we might find clues to understanding Viking poetry, there are certain patterns that are evident. First, as John Lindow puts it in perspective:

Although kennings are widespread throughout Germanic verse, it is only in skaldic poetry that one finds kennings with mythological content, based on mythology and requiring some acquaintance with myth and legend to be comprehensible. Myth forms the subject matter of many eddic poems, but only in skaldic diction has it become embedded in the mode of expression. A skald could fashion kennings from myth and legend, however, and his audience could comprehend them without believing them to be true or sacred. Such an attitude is implied by the continuation, virtually unchanged except for a lull during and after the conversion [to Christianity], of the kenning system of skaldic poetry well into the Christian period (Noreen 1922; de Vries 1934c; cf. Kuhn 1942:133-140; de Vries 1956-57), culminating in Snorra Edda, a handbook of poetics designed to save skaldic poetry not from the church but from the changing poetic fashions of the day.\(^{103}\)

Second, the use of alliterative stress in the poetry is unique. The patterns point to emphases on objects rather than on what the objects do – on individual things or persons and groups of things or persons rather than on the details of the action they take. This would certainly account for the powerful elements which dominate the poetry: descriptive

103 Lindow 27.
language, the importance of 'voice,' the presence of memorable figures, and the tendency to move quickly through what we might call action-scenes in a narrative.

Generally, strong stress is present on names (including pronouns), adjectives, participles and infinitives. Secondary or weak stresses may be on verbs (in the indicative, subjunctive and imperative). However, verbs are always secondary to the first class of strongly stressed words. Pronouns may take a strong or weak stress depending on the presence of absence of more strongly stressed words. Prepositions may also be weak or strong, the former when coming before a noun, the latter being the case when following noun as, for example, when functioning as an adverb. Demonstrative pronouns are always weak as are verbal prefixes. Although, in skaldic poetry, end-rhyme, internal rhyme, full- and half-rhymes are a distinctive feature, they may appear on rare instances in Eddic poems. The regularity of the use of these rhymes, however, is less so in the earliest examples of skaldic poems.

Take the construction of the opening lay of Skulváði Úlfr, for example. Written in speech metre, the line needed to follow three main rules of measure: (1) the syllabic count is between five and seven (as much as eight syllables but rarely so) per half-line, (2) one stressed syllable in the second half-line must alliterate with one in the first half-line, (3) each half-line must have only 2 stressed syllables. The first line began as:

\[
This \text{ is a tale of dread of dragon's breath}
\]

But it is unbalanced with six syllables in the first half-line, and four in the second half. The effect of this lack of balance is to weaken the second half-line even though it appears that
"dragon" as the word of first syntactic emphasis should be strong. There is a sense that there is an empty space, wider than the overt caesura, lessening the impact of the second half-line. That line was revised to:

*This is a tale of dread, by dragon's breath ruled*

Again it is not quite right because the last sound in the second half-line is too long and again steals the impact of "dragon's breath" with six syllables in the first half and five in the second, even though the pair of lines appears more balanced than the previous draft. The main point of syntax and meaning I had to address here was where was it that I wanted to point the reader – to the obvious ("a tale") or to the sense of ominous presence ("this...dread"); to keep the work at a distance as a tale or story outside the reader or as an ever present event bringing the reader into the telling. It was from here that a word capturing action and alliterating with the short voiced sounds ("this," "dread," "dragon's," "breath") emerged – "sped" – drawing preference of strong over weak emphasis from "dread."

By working with the dictates of the meaning of the form, the use of an alliterative vowel stress was added ("sped" with "dread"). Here the *caesura* remains true to its function as an aural rather than purely visual one, an essential feature to remember in Viking poetry where no sight gags are permissible. With this in mind, the further revised line became:

*This is a tale of dread sped by dragon's breath*

The revision brings movement to "breath," and ties it to "dread" in the first half-line. Now the power of that mid-line break is more fully understood and not only this but the
elements of each stress. Below is an example, from Dagazar's encounter with the monster of storms, showing the stanza-form of speech metre (applied in court poetry and Eddic poems) using a shifting accentual rhythm that was created for Book I. The effect is a grave and ominous tone (bold italics on strong-stressed words).

Here the monster rode ridged against the roaring sky.

It ploughed as reddened giants, made splinters of our prows,
Týr's mantle swept to shreds beneath its swirling charge.

We bared our breasts with gaps for these new secret spears
that tripped our deeds, made traitors, ripped triumph from our grasps,
stalking us from Vinland to Niflheimr, Land of Death.

"The Dragon's Battle with Loki's Sons" (1:1, 9)

I used six sets of paired half-lines as the norm for each stanza; the use of six-syllable lines revealing Dagazar's hand as a skáld proficient in dróttkvætt or court metre. All throughout his poems Dagazar shows something of his skáldic taste – by his choice of a normal number of lines, with kennings, and with props or linking staves in two successive lines or throughout the whole stanza, such as can be heard in the following example of epic metre (in this case, through the length of stressed vowels). Speech metre is, generally, stanzaically structured like epic metre.

Epic metre consists of eight half-lines stanzas composed of four to five syllables per half-line or line with caesura. It evokes a climax-striving tone. It is clearer here to see how the action of the scene is achieved by the reading voice it requires (even if read 'in silence' it alters our breathing) rather than on a lengthy scene using many verbs to describe action in the scene. It is certainly my hope, in any case, that when the observer-reader speaks or "sings" the poem that it might alter his or her physical reality in some way.
In that cruel cast, caught without elm-staves,
we clasped our dead-born — Angrbodó’s clay.
Fenris-wolf fed us to the Etin Bride,
Mother of Wolves, Mountain of Grief.

On her back was Utgard bolted —
Fort of Shift-shapers, the Dragon’s Net,
Modsonir’s Borg, Utgard-loki’s hold —
where hill-ogres rode with Yimisi’s kind.

“The Siege of Garmr’s Teeth” (I:2, 15-16)

Song metre normally has two symmetrical half-lines of epic metre; each half-line followed
by two full-lines; full-lines being those without caesura and without any definite accentual
or syllabic structure. It is also found with one full-line following the first or the last set of
half-lines. It is the most variable form.

So Kerrigan called for a great feast
for widows and orphans
of Kerrigash House and Ximaca House
and gave huge stores of grain
to Xima-priests who healed his warriors.

He granted the priests, who would share their herb
with the gods of Kerrigarðr
twice as much as others,
and wrote the names of the missing or dead
upon the spaces on the face
of the Dragonping Stone.

“The Gifts To Stiffen The Pain” (IV:3, 96)

The first of Heyeoahkah’s tales (II:2) and “Hel’s Level Place” (V:2) employ the Eddic style
that is often classified as “mythological,” that is, telling a story and referring to events that
might be called mythical or extraordinary, or in other words, untestable. We can also say
that the form used in these lays is a regular song metre.
When wood-trolls stoked Hel's frost and ash,
pyres blown on Wolffem tones
howled to make right harried deeds of night.
Then, The Great Wind's magic reigned.

For this was a time when gales dressed beasts
to brave flames of fear.
Women ruled the day and at night won hearts
of wind gods, storm-bred, bold.

"Novaini and The Wind-wolf" (II:2, 41-42)

Variations in Skulváði Úlfðr occur in stanza length and in the placement of refrain lines (particularly experimenting with song and incantation metres). Síswo is reported as mainly speaking in incantation metre or in this epigrammatic measure, in Book VI:

You must wait for winding ways,
lines of cargo lifting,
leaves holding seidr-law.

"Wolffem-law" (VI:2, 141)

Kerrigan's Reminder

The Books beg classification as heroic lays, focussing as they all do on the history of a king, queen or prince – an honourable person of power. Claiming to be an historical account, none of the lays of Skulváði Úlfðr can strictly be regarded as mythological. Gwen Terrane's annotation overwrites any mythological-seeming references with a fact. It is the portrayal of the most dramatically changed character, King Kerrigan Iron Hand, from which a new stanza form emerged in Book V. This appears in the scene where he confronts the signs on Dragonþing Stone and wonders how to read them (V:1, 107-12), not unlike a poet-traveller searching for the formula in signs. This form comprises three paired half-lines of epic
metre and a fourth full-line of no fixed syllabic pattern with emphasis on syntactically
important words only:

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*a king stalled on strident kingdoms,
 victory wearied and burdened with crowns,
what do you say Dragonwing Stone?
Why do your sigils stand exalted before my pall?

"Death-dressed Answers (or The Sigils of The Stone)" (V:1, 107)

This form bears resemblance to a skáldic metre called *greppaminni* (poets’ reminder). Let
us call it *Kerrigan’s reminder*. In Kerrigan’s reminder the interrogatives normally fall in the
latter half of the stanza, sometimes only as rhetorical phrases, in contrast to that used in
*greppaminni*:

```
Hverr fremr hildi barra?
Hverr er målingum ferri?
Hverr gerir höpp at stærri?
Hverr kann aud at thverra?
Veldr hertogi hialdri,
hann er first blikurmanni,
hann á höpp at sýnni,
han vélir blik spannar.
```

Who wages harsh war? Who is far from niggardly? Who achieves greater success?
Who knows how to diminish wealth [be generous with gold]? The duke brings
about war, he is furthest from being a miser, he has clearer success, he cheats the
light of the palm [gives away gold].

*Kerrigan’s reminder* uses longer sentences at the beginning of each stanza and shorter ones
to conclude it. This ‘reversal’ of the traditional *greppaminni* emphasises the difficulty
posed by the questioning, giving more weight, as it were, to the complexity of his
questions.

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104 Snorri’s *Edda* 190-91.
Treasure Metre

In “Kataxha Tkatsi” (III:2, 72-73) I experiment with another new form. Each four-lined stanza comprises two opening and closing lines of speech metre. The speech metre lines enclose two full-lines of varying length where at least one syllabic stress (bold italics) alliterates to pair each set of full-lines. It may even be seen to hold some of the skaldic hadarlag measure (the meaning of its title unknown) with internal rhymes and half-rhymes (in the opening and speech metre closing lines) sometimes ending in a trochee as Turville-Petre’s analysis shows in the example of its use in Eyrbyggja Saga XLIV. The way to read this measure is still under consideration: “with two full stresses and one subsidiary stress, or with three full stresses” and varying per line. Such doubts about the reading of this form are important in reading the following: how does Óðýla read Cebanex’s Ximacan landscape which is so different from that of Kerrigarðr. She is at least aware that here sounds are under a control which is peculiar to Cebanex and the beasts of the hills.

On the jagua-guarded peak of the Dread Black Hills
rose Kataxha Tkatsi —
Shining Lake of The Sun —
home of Xima’s casik, Cebanex Grand Chief.

From Skadi’s winding trail through the narrow pass —
spread the summit-home’s final route.
Here the black-green guarded
forests of shrill-scream beasts that Cebanex commanded.

“Kataxha Tkatsi” (III:2, 72)

105 “The origin of the name is not known, but the first known example dates from the early eleventh century. It was used by Þormóðr Trefilsson in the poem Hrafnsmál (Words of the Raven)…” Turville-Petre, Scaldic Poetry xxxiv-xxxv.
106 Turville-Petre, Scaldic Poetry xxxv.
We might call this new form *treasure metre*, because the enclosed full-lines always describe a place or character which holds an aspect of something valuable that is hidden. In this sense, the name for the metric form takes its title from the poem in which it first appears and from its purpose as well as its structure of lines (as is the case of *Grottasöngr*, discussed below in conjunction with the third new form *Týr-ring song metre*).

**Sound-images, substitution-images and the kenning**

The basic measure of skálds was *dróttkvætt* (*dróttkvætt hætt*) or court metre, each stanza composed of eight six-syllabic lines with specific alliteration patterns. *Skulvádi Úlfr* adheres strictly to the syllabic structure of skáldic measure, with some exceptions in sections of Books III and IV. But, in a sense, the variations keep the poem in beat with Old Norse poetry which shows variations in practice that even Snorri Sturluson's treatise on skáldic diction could not ignore. An example is a poem such as Eyvindr Skáldspillir's "Hákonarmál" which immediately defies strict skáldic definition, as difficult to fix as that can be. It does not use the basic strict eight-lined, six-syllabic line of court metre that normally identifies skáldic verse, and it tells a story. It is held that, strictly speaking, skáldic poetry does not tell a narrative in the contemporary sense, giving details of events, but alludes to them. The events alluded to have been generally regarded as mythological. However, if the audience knows the hidden features of the story held in the imagery of a skáldic allusion, it seems that this might not preclude consideration of the form as narrative. Surely, it tells a story but of a denser nature.
A skáld assumed that the listeners already knew the background to the poem because they knew the history of the subjects in the poem. This is used to full effect in Skulvádi Úlfr in the sense that as we work our way through the Books, it gradually becomes less and less important to consult the translator’s annotations. As we progress through the Books, the necessity to go beyond the words encapsulated in each kenning diminishes. The reader becomes a contemporary Viking reader, knowing the background to the specificity of the allusions. This is quite different from the cumulative knowledge, say, that you achieve after reading the first half of a novel. In a novel, the reader is always being given new information and the plot must be spelt out from its last step to the present page. In skáldic poetry, the reader must recognise from a single set of words – the kenning – the stage and tone of the plot as well as the preferences or personal style of the poet.

The existence of kenningar or kennings is the most distinctive form of Viking poetry that sets it apart from all other forms of poetry. In other cultures where they were used, such as in Celtic poetry, it has been found that complete kennings are a rarity. Snorri’s Edda was a useful reference to explain how real and imaginary characters within the story are given substance in Skulvádi Úlfr. Substitution-word systems, names and their referents, are important to the context of the poem. Within its ‘historical’ context, the poem makes the most of substitution-names (ókennt heiti or ókennt nafn), pronouns (fornófn) and their sub-categories (víðrkenningar and sannkenningar), and periphrases (kenningar). The

107 Turville-Petre, Scaldic Poetry xlv-lix.
108 In víðrkenningar a person is described by a second element (another person) giving an accurate or true description of the person being identified. In a heiti víðrkenningar, an inanimate object is used to convey the same accuracy about a person. Sannkenningar perform the same function except to heighten the descriptive qualities alluded to by drawing on emotive qualities normally using an adjectival phrase, noun or adverb to do this. Kenningar are like extended wild-cards where
highly dramatic effects of Viking poems are built on these multi-tiered periphrases, on substitution poetic names and on entire series of pictures built up from nominal adjectives and the music of alliteration.

Specialised list-poems of substitution-words or *pulur* were created in the twelfth century as a resource for poets and comprise a greater part of Snorri's *Edda*. The kennings can be one- or up to four-layered. The heiti are usually single-word substitution-names, e.g. *dis* or *bride* for “woman” (the complex and untranslatable *dis* also meaning “woman with supernatural powers”), “riders” for “seafarers,” “hail” for “arrows.” Rarely used in Eddic poems, they are used regularly in *Skulvádi Úlfr*. The density and wild-card quality provided by the kenning as well as its capacity to draw the most distant and the closest intuitive images into one space is the only form that seemed fully capable of sustaining the worlds of *Skulvádi Úlfr*.

Below is an example of the use of poetic names and kennings from “Dórrsdrapa” (a story about Dórr’s journey to Giant Land) cited by Snorri in *Skáldskaparmál* (square brackets are as they occur in Faulkes’ translation).

The sea-thread’s [Midgard serpent’s] father [Loki] set out to urge the feller [Thor] of flight-ledge-gods’ [giants’] life-net from home. Lopt was proficient at lying. The not very trustworthy trier [Loki] of the mind of war-thunder-Gaut [Thor] said that green paths led to Geirrod’s wall-steed [house].

oppositional elements may be combined to convey true or ironic descriptions based on entire narratives/mythologies of either the things or persons being described or the object being used to describe them. *Heiti* and *fornófi* appear to function in the same manner according to Snorri’s *Edda*. Snorri’s *Edda* 83.
An example comparable to the above, from *Skulváði Úlfr*, might be "The Forskarlars' Last Stand: Part Two" (VI:1, 134). Sometimes, in *Skulváði Úlfr* I help the twentieth-century reader more than a Viking skáld might have, for example, Skulváði's voice in "The Forskarlars' Last Stand: Prologue" (VI:1, 132). However, Síswoy’s voice is more difficult to manoeuvre, as when Skulváði quotes her song of The Hísrita & Týringar (VII:2, 177-78).

These are examples of *keïir* (substitution names): Kerrigarðr is "The Garth"; King Kerrigan Iron Hand is "The Fearless," Skulváði is "The Wolf" or "The Flame-Haired." It is a simple or literal kenning to call Skulváði "Frieda's Daughter" or "The Varg of Hoods" and to call Kerrigan "The Troll-Slayer."¹¹⁰ A double kenning is to refer to the forests called The Moving Wood "The Disirs' Howe," and to the glassy eye of a corpse "Hæglid's mirror."

An extended kenning is to refer to The Wolffem Clan as "Skuld's War Tooth," to Skulváði as "Kvasir's Cup of Kerrigan's Treasures" or "Stave-Pool's Weaver" and to say that Kerrigan is "Grimmðokk's Steed-flyer" or "Modorr's Wave-book," or that the lake-home of water giants is the "Xima-shadow of Viglid's prize." When I refer to the net of vines in which Hæglid was found strangled as "Hæglid's Shrimp-home's Vest" the following pictures are folded into that name: the person Hæglid, the actions that led to his death, the history of the Sinking Lakes in which his body was found. In the story of Nadlan The Rus’

¹¹⁰ The distinctions, "simple," "double" and "extended" kenning are taken from Turville-Petre. He also distinguishes between halï-kennings, complete and incomplete or "abbreviated" kennings; complete kennings having "a basic word and a determinant," while abbreviated kennings are shortened forms, for example "hand" or "arm" for "woman" or "wife." Scaldic Poetry lii.
(V:3, 127-31), the culminating four-tiered kenning, “Togrul Beg’s Flight-bright Slayer” refers to Nadlan’s defeat of Togrul Beg’s guards through her talent as an archer or “whizzer-stormer.” To substantiate this supposed historical background on her, Nadlan is also called “Gusir’s Terror” and “Turkoman-feller” in that sequence.

The instances of skaldic verse, in the strict sense, appear in Books I, II, IV and V. Book I Part 2, “He’yeya’s Enchantments,” written in Dagazar’s name, is composed in drottkvætt with some of its licence in variations. In contemporaneity of style and subject-matter, this section of poems would be historically consistent with the erotic poems of skálds such as the tenth-century Icelander, Kormák Ögmundarson, son of a Norwegian chieftain from Oslo. Like Ögmundarson’s poems, these would not have been influenced by chivalry which was yet to be established in Europe, but by the elemental, the humanly particular and a belief in fate.¹¹¹

The above drottkvætt might also be seen to fit in stylistically with the “ancient lay of the Völsungs”:

Hyeoahkah recites a skaldic refrain in her heroic poem to Prince Viglid (“The Victor’s Burden,” II:3, 57, 58). The style of the poem recited by Kerrigan Iron Hand at his recrowning feast (IV:4, 103) seems in keeping with what Kristjánsson describes as the “younger lay” (that is, mid-eleventh century and later). According to Kristjánsson, this later saga style, such as Völsunga saga, attributed to Snorri Sturluson, dealt with “single events or single parts of the legends known from older days,” reinterpreting ancient pieces of work with a “novel” style. This style is characterised by “pomp and circumstance in names and diction, ringing and rhetorical” as Kristjánsson shows in the following example:

Kristjánsson 53. See also Turville-Petre, Scaldic Poetry 45-50.
Kristjánsson 54-55.
It was in days of yore
when eagles screamed,
sacred waters fell
from Himinfjöll
– and Borghildr
had given birth
in Brálundr to Helgi
the great-hearted.

(from Helgakvida Hundingsbana I (the first lay of Helgi Hundingsbani or “younger lay of the Völsungs”))

The “younger lay” appears to be inclusive and selective and gives no details (except through the meanings of the names listed) of the legend or history behind the names as found in an “ancient lay” (prior to the mid-eleventh century). Though what has been said of the lay in the Scandinavian context may not be true of the Ximacan context, the background of the initiator of the Books of Skulvádi Úlfr is Norwegian. An “ancient lay” in Skulvádi Úlfr would be those written by Dagazar himself between 1050 and 1090 and those recounted by Heyeoahkah in twelfth-century Kerrigarðr. The mysterious ‘reply’ from Dragonþing Stone to Kerrigan Iron Hand is also written in dróttkvætt (“Xim’ler’e,” V:1, 110).

There are other forms explored in the epic, such as, tœglag or tœgdþþúllag for the very reason that it is a type which is called into question regarding categorisation by form and meaning. Even its title is regarded by E. O. G. Turville-Petre as “a name of uncertain form and meaning” and its earliest dating and provenance in question. It is described in
Snorri’s *Edda* as “journey-poem metre” and the extract used to illustrate the form here and by Turville-Petre in *Scaldic Poetry* seem to have little to do with “journeying,” at least in a literal sense. Perhaps *tægdráupalag* refers to “journeying in the mind” as conjured up by the speaker of the lines as an invitation for listeners to journey with the speaker. Book II may be regarded as an example of *tægdráupalag* by style and by attitude of the speaker. Turville-Petre regards a poem to Canute the Great (c.1028) as the earliest example rather than that cited by Snorri and attributed to Bragi the Old (ninth century).

The men of Agðir, very bold in battle, feared the coming of the warrior ... (?)

It will be noticed that each of these lines has four syllables, like those of the strict *Fornsiríslag* [epic metre]. The odd lines have two alliterating syllables, like those of the *Dróttkvætt* [court metre], and the even lines open with the *höfundstafr* [main stave]. The odd lines have half-rhyme and the even full rhyme. Having so few syllables, on which so many demands are made, the form is difficult to manipulate and there are few examples so nearly perfect as the one quoted.\(^\text{114}\)

This poem used epic metre with the basic rule of four syllables per half-line with a tight system of rhymes. In Book II Part I, I have constructed *tægdráupalag* as paired half-lines, with full-lines comprising odd and some even lines using two alliterating syllables as in *dróttkvætt* or court metre. The full-lines may also have half-rhyme and even lines full-rhyme. The form I have used in “Nolli and Ahuacatl” (II:1, 38-41) has at least two sets of paired epic metre half-lines per stanza. Full-lines are varied in number and placement and act like odd lines of *tægdráupalag*, with alliteration on opening stressed syllables, half-rhyme

\(^{114}\) Turville-Petre, *Scaldic Poetry* (xxxv-xxxvi) and see Snorri’s *Edda* (205-07) regarding *tægdráupalag*. I also find inconsistencies between the description of verse-forms and examples in Snorri’s *Edda* as do Turville-Petre and Clunies Ross in her book *Skaldskaparmál*. I refer to examples provided particularly by Turville-Petre to bear out some examples of Snorri’s explanation of the verse-forms.
and full-rhyme. In addition, it is the paired epic metre half-lines that use the main stave (not necessarily on the opening stressed syllable in this case). The main stave or hofúðstær is the alliterating syllable carried into the succeeding line and used once and sometimes twice there. Lines outside the main stave alliterate within themselves as in song and incantation metres. (Instances of the use of the main stave in paired and succeeding lines are underlined in the example below.)

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reyja’s nights gather Disablód feasts
Brides wear boar-charms.

Girls paint their eyes — cloak in skin-capes.

Weary warriors challenge shadows
between Sanguatec and Máperula.
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Our circles close the cold Black Hills —
its forests of monstrous green,
claim Óðinn’s prize of black day light.

Late into night the Disir’s Feast
will lead Freyr’s double —
Bride of Screaming Chariots.
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We eat the flesh of beasts and bird.
When horns of mead —
three full years set —
brace appetites with Xima fruit
bringing the bitter-sweet
quickly to our lips.
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"Nolli and Ahuacatl" (II:1, 38-39)

The story-teller, Heyeoahkah, speaks for the audience while admonishing them at the same time (for not appreciating her various skills as story-teller) at a feast setting. The form also has a variant style to its succeeding lines. The poem is taken, in the context of its measure as a type of drápa, as addressed naturally to the ruling king, Hauskuld One Arm, in whose presence it is told while it also operates as a prologue to Dagazar Kerrigansson’s story.
(II:2) and to Viglid’s (II:3). “The Victor’s Burden” about Prince Viglid, however, would
more properly fit into the mode of drápa described below.

Fornaldarsögur fragments and short sequences

In Parts 1 and 2 of Book VI brief fornaldrarsögur (sagas of ancient times) is used. This form,
though it appeared later than the poetry it incorporated, would contain “solitary verses,
verse sequences, even whole poems.” There is no reason to believe that this was not an
ancient story-telling technique of which we have records that date at earliest around 1200,
such as the Icelandic sagas. In Of Wolffem Born (II:2), however, historical references are
couched in a largely mythologised context created by the story-teller’s voice,
Heyeoahkah’s. Here Gwen Terrane’s hand is virtually absent save for her introduction to
the Tales. In any event, Terrane’s hand is far too evident at other times in Skulvádi Úlfur for
us to determine that “A Seal of Quills,” “Huldra’s Frowe,” “Wolffem-law” and “Amulets
to Pierce your Breast” did or did not exist, as it does there, in the original form in which
Terrane found it.

So it was that the Warring Alf achieved two things,
aiding Kerrigan’s manoeuvres. The Council agreed to

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115 See Kristjánsson 214, 222.

For example, Gísla saga, Völsunga saga and Kormáks saga.

“The term fornaldrsögur, literally ‘tales of ancient times,’ ‘tales of antiquity,’ is now often rendered
‘heroic sagas’ in English. Their full title, fornaldrarsögur Nordurlanda, is taken from the first
complete edition of these tales, published by Carl Christian Rafn in 1829-30. Here the term
‘antiquity’ is used in a specific sense, of the period before the colonisation of Iceland and before
the time of Haraldr Fairhaired. Historic times can be said to start with Haraldr, while before his
day we have the prehistoric or folklore age of Norway.” Kristjánsson 341.

“The greater part of Völsunga saga is a summary of the heroic poems recorded – with interspersed
prose passages – in the latter part of the Codex Regius (pp. 55ff.).” Kristjánsson 348.
find the Dreamer alive and the King's reputation was sealed (now that his defeating warriors at Dragonfang Council, killing bórr's prey and felling giants was as easy as taming hawks). But it was to me that the Council turned for answers about the Witch, for Sikalu's songs were well known.

Riding storms, I said:

\[\text{In my youth I hid with Logram's men to find the ways they hid from me.}\]
\[\text{While they fought the rims for fresh, planed sands, they would recite tales of a fearsome dis.}\]

"A Seal of Quills" (VI:1, 136)

Within the larger framework of the Eddic and skaldic, there are sub-sections of long and short sequences in Skulváði Úlfr. The long poem has a pattern of refrains in honour of an important person (the drápa). Examples of this can be found in Book II Part 3 – Heyeoahkah's story of Viglid; in Book VI – Síswyo's lay of Kerrigan's ride to Grimmdök; and Book VII – Modlog's sequence in honour of Skulváði. "The Victor's Burden" (II:3, 57-58) is a drápa to Viglid, with a drottkvætt praising the Prince as the refrain. Helga's lays (IV:1-3, 82-100) are not strictly drápa in construction since they contain no refrain though they are written in honour of a king, Kerrigan Iron Hand.

The short poem, without refrain, to a person of lesser importance is the flokkr, for example, "Amarr" (VII:1, 172-74). "The Maker of Masks or The Purpose of Nawa Coins" (VII:3, 190-92) is a flokkr written by Skulváði about Arita, Mask-maker. This is a sequence that seems set apart from the main action of the epic poem as do most of such sub-sections in varying degrees of distance from the main plot. "Sole-bridge and Cover" (VII:4, 193-95), a flokkr to Modlog presumably written by Skulváði to her faithful guard, sits within the larger narrative of the epic. We do not need to know what Modlog feels or does in order to understand the action as much as his characterisation at this point of the narrative.
R. I. Page places *flokkr* in the category of plain-speaking poems (*Bersoglisvísur*) which tell a simple chronological story, such as those in Book VII written by Skulváði about her journey through Kjatsls and beyond the Garden of Black Stone.¹¹⁶ “Skulváði and The Hísrita [a Fragment]” is a plain-speaking poem giving a chronological account of a night spent with the Spider Clan living south of Kerrigarðr.

**Týring-song Metre**

The third new stanzaic form created in *Skulváði Úlfr* (Book VII) is one I will call *Týring-song*. It is an unusual and specialised form related to the Gróttsong or Song of Grótti (*Gróttsöngr*), an ancient lay telling a story with the theme of poetic justice with far-reaching natural consequences. This type of lay takes its name from the millstone in the story called “Grótti” that could grind out whatever its grinder ordered it to do. The grinder, King Froði, set his two female slaves, Fenia and Menia, on a schedule without rest or sleep to grind out nothing but gold. To avenge themselves against Froði for the hard labour he meted out, the slaves sang a poem, named after the sound made by the grinder (the Grotti's song) at the end of which Froði was attacked and killed by an army lead by naval king, Mysing. Mysing, having plundered Froði's kingdom, loaded Grotti and the slaves on to this ships and ordered them to grind nothing but salt. Before greedy Mysing knew it, his ships were overloaded with salt and sank, the millstone sucking the sea into its

centre, turning the sea into its salty state. Of all the forms explored, that used in “Skulváði’s Lay of Síswoy’s Gröttasong of The Hísrita & Tyringar” (VII:2, 177-79) has a distinct modern feel to it.

Before we parted at Low Hill plains
Síswoy said these words:
Týringar giants time the sun.
The sky light scales their backs.
They are fire-balls fielding shades –
heat-framed limbs, frozen light.

Its structure looks somewhat like that of kvíðubátr (story metre) if not too closely so. Kviðubátr is believed to be a skáldic style developed from the Eddic form, fornýðislag or epic metre. Compare “Síswoy’s Gröttasong” with the following extract from Lee Hollander’s translation of Sonatorrek, a poem composed in the late tenth century by skáld, warrior and lover of magic lore, Egill Skallagrímsson who is credited with “some of the great poems of the Poetic Edda.” Distressed to the point of contemplating suicide, Skallagrímsson was inspired to write Sonatorrek, with the help of his daughter, after the sudden loss of his sons at sea. In a real sense writing the poem saved Skallagrímsson’s life. The examples below show the first three stanzas of Sonatorrek. Hollander’s translation reflects the Old Norse syllabic pattern whereas Turville-Petre’s translation is freer. Hollander notes, regarding the translation of the third stanza, that it “presents great difficulties, and the translation is based on what seemed the most plausible conjecture.”

117 Snorri’s Edda 107-09. Olrik notes that the first reference to the Gröttasong occurs in Norwegian poet, Eyvind skaldaspillir’s Håkonarmál dated c. 960 (446-71).

118 Hollander, The Skalds 90-91. Note that square brackets are mine and that they enclose text transcribed from Hollander’s footnotes to his translation.
Turville-Petre also acknowledges gaps in *Sonatorrek* from the manuscripts where the poem can be found. Hollander's translation reads:

**SONATORREK**  
(THE IRREPARABLE LOSS OF HIS SONS)

1. Tardily takes  
   my tongue to move,  
   and to stir  
   the steelyard-of-song [ability to create poetry]:  
   hopeless is 't  
   about Odin's-theft [poetry],  
   hard to draw  
   from the heart's-fastness!

2. Hard to budge  
   't is the heavy care  
   causes that –  
   from the thoughts'-abode  
   the welcome-find-  
   of Frigg's-husband [Óðinn],  
   brought erstwhile  
   from etin-home,

3. since my son  
   on sea-skerry  
   was cut short,  
   the shapely one:  
   down below  
   by the loved one's barrow  
   throbs the blood-  
   of the thurse's-neck [the sea].

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119 Gabriel Turville-Petre, “The Sonatorrek,” *Iceland and the Mediaeval World*, ed. Gabriel Turville-Petre and John Stanley Martin (Melbourne: The Organising Committee for Publishing a Volume in Honour of Professor Maxwell, 1974) 33-55. It is unclear whether or not Snorri Sturluson was the author of the saga in which *Sonatorrek* appears, *Egils Saga*, but it is generally held that Egill wrote the poetry in the saga. The first strophe of *Sonatorrek* can be found in the following manuscripts: the early-mid 14th century *Módrvaallabók*; paper manuscripts of the seventeenth century and related to the Wölfenbüttel manuscript which has a gap after the first strophe; strophes 23 and 24 in Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*; the whole text in *Egils Saga* written in the seventeenth century. Turville-Petre translates the title of the poem as “Grievous loss of his sons” and surmises that “from the chronology of the Saga, it would appear that it was composed c. 960 or a little later, after Egill's best days had passed.” 36.

Turville-Petre states: “It is plain that the text is, in part, corrupt; some strophes may be in the wrong order, and some not yet fully understood.”

The translation reads:

1. It is very hard for me to
   stir my tongue or the steel-yard of the song-weigher;
   prospects of the theft of
   Óðinn are not hopeful now,
   nor is it easily drawn from
   the hiding place of thought.

2. The joyful find of the kinsmen
   of Frigg, brought long ago from
   the world of giants, is not
   easily driven from the home of
   thought, and cruel grief causes
   this.

3. Blameless when it came to life
   on the ship of the dwarf . . . ;
   the wounds of the giant’s neck
   roar down below the boat-shed
   door of Náinn.

Here is the Old Norse text of the first stanza:

1. Mjok erum tregt
   tungu at hroera
   eðr loptvæi
   ljóðpundara;
   era nú værlegt
   um Viðris þýfi,
   né hógdrægt
   úr hugar fylgni

Gabriel Turville-Petre’s translation feels somewhat stilted and as much as Lee Hollander’s translation seems ‘unnatural’ it is my preferred of the two because it maintains the integrity of the sound patterns of the original. (Turville-Petre graciously acknowledges Hollander’s

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121 Turville-Petre, “The Sonatorrek” 40.
122 Turville-Petre, “The Sonatorrek” 42-43.
skillful rendering in “the steelyard of the song.”) *Kviðuhátr* half-lines are bound by alliterating pairs, each of two feet and with no internal rhyme. Normally, odd lines have only three syllables (one unstressed, two stressed); its even half-lines have the normal four to five syllabic half-line of epic metre. The Eddic poem, *Atlakviða*, also includes instances of this 3-syllable-line style; for example, “sverða full” (“full of swords”).

My *grottasongr* was not constructed consciously from *kviðuhátr*, but from imagining the voice of Síswoyo and as that of my ‘stranger’ guiding me through the Hisrita scene. I followed the pattern that developed, revising and editing for consistency within the new form as it emerged, and comparing it in its final draft first to *grottasongr* and then to *kviðuhátr*. In the *Tyring-song*, the nature of the world is changed but not immediately. The epic metre pair occurs in the odd lines, affecting the first half only of the second odd line (plain italics, below). The second half of that second half-line is the only double-stressed three-syllabic line (plain italics underlined). The three-syllabic pairs are in the even lines (shown in bold). In addition, the single-stressed syllabic count affects the first half-line of the first even line and both half-lines of the second even line (underlined). There are two full-stresses per line and every pair is joined by alliteration. The quick-moving and breathless effect is possible because of the use of syntax-and-syllabic stress punctuated, as it were, by *caesura*. (The numbers following each half-line indicate the number of syllables in that half-line.)


“Skulváði’s Lay of Síswoyo’s Grottasong of The Hisrita & Tyringar” (VII:2, 178)
Cherokee diction

The initial idea to include, more overtly, East Cherokee chant or shamanic rhythms became subsumed within the Old Norse rhythms, but Cherokee sounds may still be found beneath the metres. Although none of such incantatory lines were consciously consulted before writing the drafts of the Books, later research turned up parallels that might be used to evidence the influence of the Wolffem (the Cherokee Clan) in the Books. For example, it is not impossible to imagine the following being said by the charismatic and feared Siswyo – identified by Gwen Terrane as a descendant of the Mesoamerican Toltecs, while the context of the epic poem itself links her to Wolffem practice. We can imagine Siswyo thinking the following while she struck Águdrol with an uncurable disease by merely glancing at him:

Now! Listen!
Red Panther, You have just come to make one radiant shadow.
Ha! Quickly!
Ha! Quickly you have just come to hear it.
(I will be hearing it.)
We have just come to elbow them aside.
(They are not to find it out.)
They are to be covered with a Great Black Loneliness.
They are not be trailed and found.
(We just interred them over there in the mud.)
Ha! The Clan Districts are not to be able to revile me about!
Gw?l Gw?l Gw?l Gw?l  

124 Kilpatrick and Kilpatrick raise the point that this chant entitled “To turn one aside,” may not have been one used to turn someone else aside but to turn one from harm and therefore a “protection charm.” 97. This ambiguity can also be read in the sequence in *Skulváði Úlfr*, “Amulets to Pierce your Breast” (VI:2, 142-43) because, according to Skulváði, Águdrol’s death is attributed to his inability to accept a cure for the mysterious illness apparently caused by Siswyo’s “glance.”
The tone and the occurrence of one expression – “Ha!” – from this free translation of a Cherokee chant may be found in the epic. The expression is used by Skulvâdi in “A Seal of Quills” (VI:1, 136) when she reports her first meeting with Síswoy. Here, the gap from the “bird between the square pools” which returned unresolved in “Skuld’s Gift From The Pool” (III:3, 81) found its form in my giving meaning to the three tattoos worn by Síswoy: “Ha!” representing “the eye of the pool” or the focus of breath, the instrument of oral poetry. It is also one of only two references to a mark on someone’s head recorded in the epic poem; the other was the reference to Dagazar’s lightning-marked crown in “The Siege of Garmr’s Teeth” (I:2, 15). In the latter, the visual inspiration found form in its aural representation. (I will address the place of the visual line in the composition of Skulvâdi Úlfr in Chapter 5.)

My research into stories relating to Cherokee and Arawakan and Taino cosmology did allow me room to refer to information that I could use to relate coincidences between Viking and Cherokee lore. For example, one of these connections is made through reference to hidden populations – little people and giants – treated as members of other tribes or kingdoms in the poem. The work of James Mooney was useful in placing Hogrum, the Sweet-tongued giant (II:2, 46, 49) at least in the East Cherokee mythological history as a Slant-eyed giant or Tsul’kâlû, “a great giant, with long slanting eyes” and “who owned all the game in the mountains.” It is not too difficult to imagine the attack of

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126 Mooney 338.
Manir’s men and the founding of the Wolffem clan as part of the lore of The Spirit Defenders of Nikwasi – a story of how “a powerful unknown tribe invaded the country of the southeast, killing people and destroying settlements wherever they went” and how the invaded people were saved by the “Immortals” or “Nunne’hi” who defeated this unknown enemy. And, according to “Indian custom” some of the attackers were spared in order to “carry back the news of defeat.”127 In keeping with this gap, He’yeya, evoking the secret world of the shaman, reminds Dagazar of her power over him in the erotic poems “He’yeya’s Enchantments” (1:4, 28):

‘Look beyond. Leap the sand
for the Nunne-hi lights.
See the waves flapping white
beneath the wyrding breeze.
The ocean barks on shores
that you can surely leap
if you first wash your home
before you feed the beast.’

Ultimately, the selection of what might be used to ground the story through referential material was always dictated by the collection of intuitive images with which I grappled – my search to find a form in which they could be explained and brought under control in the creative work. Exploring existing and new forms allowed me to create new rules of structure as in the creation of a new symphonic refrain, for the music of the poems is the primary element of their construction. It also opened doors to the elemental worlds of the Norse and North American and Mesoamerican Indian that were equally important in creating the illusion of setting in Skulvádi Úlfr. The reference to “Nunne-hi,” for example,
fixing the above stanza to historical illusion added to the intuitive image and is also carried by the translator's hand where her margin annotation explains "Nunne-hi" as "fairies or little people; recorded by explorers as being said by the Cherokee to inhabit a ridge below Yellow Hill near the Oconaluftee River in Swain County."128

RE-INVENTING MUSPELLSHEIMR

With the focus on the music of Viking metre and the intuitive images finding their home in gaps in recorded history and legend, the epic poem became gradually set in its form. The uniqueness of the form and its emerging new metres became firmly established as those of the Kerrigash – descendants of Cherokee, Arawak and Viking. The language-set established by Dagazar Kerrigansson with Dagazar's Dreams had indeed set the tone of the poem and marked its development every step beyond the opening stanza. In addition, the plot had determined this for me rather early in the piece. The restraining forces for the survivors washed up on the shores of Ximayaca are language and customs common the majority of survivors. Although the three Cherokee women appear to stay apart from their captors at first, it must be remembered that they are also descendants of Vikings as children of earlier Viking raiders led by Manir.

128 This 'address' was inspired by Mooney 333: "Little People" or Yą́ńwi Tsundjí' – "little fellows, hardly reaching up to a man's knee, but well shaped and handsome." "Only a few years ago two hunters from Raventown, going behind the high fall near the head of Oconaluftee on the East Cherokee reservation, found there a cave with fresh footprints of the Little People all over the floor."
With my aim not only to make the text meaningful but also to keep a sense of physical discovery, the growth of the lays narrowed the gap between the historical rim and centre of the City of Kerrigarðr by extending the landscape outward from the city centre. The choice of a larger world in which to wrap Kerrigarðr and its neighbours was one that needed to satisfy three main conditions in keeping with the nature of retrieving the ‘facts’ from the imaginative terrain. First, it should be a place where the threat of breakages in the smaller events upon the whole event fixes us to the possibility of a finite number of encounters. Second, it should be one that poses threat to those coming into it from outside. Third, it should be part of the historical lacunae that surround the history of the invaders, so to speak, a place such as Muspell or Muspellsheimr, Land of Fire Giants.

Snorri’s Edda gives the only complete reference to the Land of Fire Giants, in Gylfaginning. His reference attempts to contextualise the mythological lay, Völspa:

... ‘But first there was the world in the southern region called Muspell. It is bright and hot. That area is flaming and burning and it is impassable for those that are foreigners there and are not native to it. There is one called Surt that is stationed there at the frontier to defend the land. He has a flaming sword and at the end of the world he will go and wage war and defeat all gods and burn the whole world with fire. Thus it says in Völspa:

Surt travels from the south with the stick-destroyer [fire].
Shines from his sword the sun of the gods of the slain.
Rock cliffs crash and troll-wives are abroad, heroes tread
the roads of Hel and heaven splits.129

I placed the cave-system that the epic poem navigated, from its inception as “Beah Wolf,” in the second most mysterious world of the Norsemen, Hel. The poem appears to go

129 Snorri’s Edda 9-10.
against the geography of the idea of Hel in Viking poetry where Hel, the land of ice and mist and of the dead, lies northward (presumably from Scandinavia). However, taking Sturluson's "roads of Hel" to regard Hel as extendable by a system of connections, Skulvádí Úlfr places Hel in the heart of the Land of Fire Giants. Here the cold of underground rivers and mists are formed by heat meeting cold to create an equally real Hel. Yet, this may not entirely contradict the Eddic placement of Hel where firewalls are shown – perhaps those of the flaming Bifrost or the Rainbow Bridge? – by the evidence of Skirnir's Journey, to be part of the formula for a journey to Hel. In this respect, Bifrost or the Flaming Bridge also called Trembling Way is treated in the epic poem as a geographical trade route connected to the island's cave-system called "Hel" by the shipwrecked Norsemen.

The world of Old Norse cosmology and geography has been best described as built on a shifting tri-plate system and it is very unclear how travel between these plates or levels might be negotiated. On the top plate was Ásgarðr where the Æsir lived and Val-hall where dead warriors played wargames on the plain of Vigrid in preparation for the great battle at the end of their world. The Vanir also lived here in Vanaheimr along with the light elves in Alfheimr. On the middle plate was Miðgarðr where ordinary human beings lived. In the vast oceans around the lands here was coiled the world serpent or Jormungandr. It seems that Jotunheimr, the land of giants (where Útgardaloki lived), was in close proximity to Miðgarðr in mountains eastward possibly separated by a body of water. Sharing the space with humans (which I take to mean "Northmen") were the dark elves or dwarfs living in the subterranean caves of Nidavellir and Swartalfheimr. On the third level was the world of the dead, Niflheimr, said to be "nine days," "down" and
northward from Miðgarðr. The capital of Niflheimr, Hel, had suburbs, so to speak, referred to as Niflhel or Niflheimr (Misty Hel). However, Muspellsheimr is not given a place in the three-planed system. If there are supposed to be nine worlds, Muspellsheimr would be this ninth, but where would it be in relation to the other eight worlds (given that Hel and its suburbs constituted one world) is a question that Crossley-Holland poses.

Suggesting that an advisable approach to the illogical world of the Norsemen is that “it is best simply to bear in mind that the Norsemen themselves were rather vague and unconcerned about more exact geography,” Crossley-Holland explains, for example:

We know from the eddic poem Vafthrudnismal that the River Iving, which never iced over, constituted the boundary between Asgard, the world of the gods and Jotunheim, the world of giants; in a number of myths, moreover, gods and giants made an overland journey direct from Asgard to Jotunheim without passing through Midgard. How can they have done so? It would seem physically impossible unless we tilt the Asgard- and Midgard-levels so that, at one point, they actually touch each other! This kind of problem demonstrates the limitations of logic in trying to define precisely where the worlds stood in relation to one another.

Muspellsheimr is an unstable place characterised by heat, storms and the sheer threat of extinction by war and natural means (as each attempt seems when I return to the intuitive terrain to retrieve its imagery and meanings). On the mundane levels of the poem, Muspellsheimr is the ancient territory lost by legendary King Wodan to the Vanir (giants) or Ásatekr (Mexica tribes) from the east. The exploration of the Mexica tribes grew out of the character of Síswoyo who acted as the central companion reader of this aspect of the imaginative terrain.

130 Crossley-Holland xxi.
Nicholson documents the Aztecs as people who migrated from the northwest calling themselves “Áztlan,” where Aztecs means “people of Áztlan.” It is held that after a period of wandering they came to the Mexico basin and settled there at a place called Chapoltepec around 1250. Their first ruler Tlatoani (1376) claimed direct Toltec heritage, maybe to align himself with the dominant Toltecs at the time. A complex political manoeuvring led to a Triple Alliance by usurping princes who expanded south and east. It is out of those intrigues that the most well-known ruler grew, Motecuhzoma (1440-1569).

In the Mesoamerican context of the poem, gaps in what we may regard as the history of the Toltecs presented themselves for use in expanding Muspellsheimr as a real place in the southern hemisphere. Toltecs were the dominant society in northern Mesoamerica during the 2nd Intermediate or Early Post-classical Period, AD 900-1200. Their capital city was Tollan. They conquered the Mayans who, it is still agreed, formed the most complex and advanced writing systems in pre-Columbian Mesoamerica. Mayan records show practice and understanding of the zero for which they had a sign. They used dot numerals, dating, historical material, astronomical observations, solar, lunar and stalae recordings, and calendars. It is believed that they lasted from 2000 BC until AD 1520s when all remained, after their overrule by the Toltecs, were petty chiefdoms, small town states and old great city centres abandoned to the jungle. Yet, “the Toltec dynastic lists, migration legends, and

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other 'histories' handed down by the Aztecs are so confused that experts in these materials have been unable to resolve many basic conflicts.\textsuperscript{132}

It is this gap that allowed me to place Siswyo's "Seal of Quills" as \textit{historical evidence} of her existence. When Dagazar's fleet arrives on the shores Ximayaca, the \textit{fiction} places the extension of the Vanir, as "Áztlan Vanir," as having retracted to parts of Mesoamerica and Ximayaca. Ximayaca is largely abandoned by them save for the Ximacan population who has learnt to live with the Vanir as a weakening threat. However, the Vanir of King Wodan's days are still alive as a threat in the memories of the Vikings. The Áztlan Vanir, then, become the vital link between the Vikings and Arawakans on Ximayaca – in \textit{fiction}, \textit{historicity} and \textit{composition} of the \textit{meanings of the inhabitants} of Muspellsheimr.

The development of the re-invention of the area covered by Muspellsheimr gave me room to extend the 'real world' of Kerrigrdr. This world view gave me space to find form for places from and to which the intuitive terrain extended. The situation of Muspellsheimr in Old Norse cosmology was used to present the intuitive terrain from three points of view in one. On the first plane or level is taking my position there as a \textit{listener}, as from the seats of 'musical chairs.' From the second level I \textit{look} from my seated positions as through musical windows. From the third I can see the angle between the music and the visual, that is, the slant of the angles of the terrain. Here, the position of Muspellsheimr with the mental world of the Kerrigash presents the Land of Fire Giants in relation to their universe.

There are 24 references to either Muspell or Muspellsheimr in *Skulváði Úlfr* (not including annotation references). Book I is the Book with the greatest number of references, 10 in all, and there with four references in Part 1. There are no references in Books II Parts 1, 2 and 3; none in Book III Part 2 or in Book IV Parts 1 and 2. No mention of Muspell or Muspellsheimr occurs in Book V Part 3, in Book VI Part 1, or in Book VII Parts 1 and 4. The first reference occurs in opening sequence, “The Ailing Realm” (I:1, 4) and introduces the black guardian or overlord, “Surt, with swords of flames.” The second brings the legend into the experience of the present moment, naming “Muspellsheimr” as the territory into which Dagazar’s fleet has been driven, a place “where flame-haired thurses // thrive in nine folds of Hel” (“Vast Glittering Wastes,” I:1, 7).

According to the narrative of the poem, the Vikings’ arrival brings ageing warlords of the Vanir out of hiding as well as disrupt the peace established centuries before between competing bands of Vanir (for example, Ximacans and Náþros’ clans) who travelled across the Pacific into the Americas. It was straightforward enough to bring the Land of Fire Giants into the context of an actual geographic location. It is in the south, that is, in the southern hemisphere. It was clearly difficult terrain and perhaps contradictory and largely untameable: “No runes yet made // could bend this place” (“Between Lýr’s Fjórðr and The Disír’s Land,” I:3, 23).

The heart of this strange terrain would also be a place that draws out from new arrivants to its surface their most unexpected reactions – their hidden brjóst or heart-fire – tied up with the dualism of the erotic (“He’yeya’s Enchantments,” I:4). However, it is among the
ruins of brjöst that King Kerrigan Iron Hand learns to better read his terrain ("Iva’s Lay of The Verse-maps of Skulvāði Ulfr," V:2, 119-121).

Within the plot of the epic poem I could take the characters to these outer edges – to the lip of the rim, so to speak – have them report their adventures outward from the centre of the City of Kerrigarðr and the known lands of the Ximacans. Doing this meant re-inventing the Land of Fire Giants as an actual geographical place in the southern hemisphere as a way to explain the reality of my intuitive world in both its other-worldness and its proximity as a concrete experience.

With this approach, I was also faced with tackling the markings of the intuitive territory in the context of its higher-order images. I needed to find a fixative or consistent map within the mythic and runic culture of Viking poetry and American Indian incantatory puzzles. The fire giants of Skulvāði Úlfr’s Muspellsheimr had become “Ring-guards,” and following their trail would be far more difficult that I imagined.
Reading the Topography of Kerrigardr

We have been discussing ways in which the construction of Skulváði Úlfr attempts to command the imaginative line-of-ear using skáldic lines of stress. A complementary element in the attempt to gain some command over the imaginative terrain is that of the line-of-sight. It is through acts of effective lines-of-sight that the poem is ultimately held together (to create a genuine forg(er)ing of that ancient document that we need to read carefully) by means of five types of illustrations or five types of reading.

Let us think for the moment of the whole document of Skulváði Úlfr as an artefact or found object from the poetic imagination where I can plot the 'fiction' and the history together as a map in a fixed time and place – as an artefact of the poetic imagination. Mapping involves the naming and characterising of features – creating a picture. In the actual world, a map has the quality of immutability in each given exhibition of its drawing, in the sense that each individual map is an artefact binding a specific time and place while, of course, the concrete object – the markings and paper – are not bound entirely by time.
and space since we can carry away the map and re-read it on subsequent occasions. We may also modify the map when we re-interpret it or by the various occasions of our looking at it based on new information. This new information may take the form of additional facts from the actual world. These facts for all intents and purposes appear to fill gaps of the original map's world. We may then speculate on the accuracy of the original map and its spaces as they become written on with the new information. On the drawn map - the lands under the direct rule of Skulváði Úlfr - that is, the areas that have been conquered - are clearly labelled. However, those areas that are reported by Siswyo and Amarr to exist, for example, remain in-legend while still in-map. These are the places which house signs of "transparency." We have no detailed map of this hidden terrain (as we do for the City of Kerrigarðr, the Sinking Lakes, Garmr's Teeth and Útgarðsborg) even after the rulers are reported to have visited them and when we might expect that these areas would now become part of the known world as such. It often appears that the character of the rulers and authors participate in keeping the deepest levels of the landscape portrayed as "Kerrigarðr and Neighbouring Territories" hidden from each other.

To explain mapping of lines-of-ear and lines-of-sight in the epic, it is helpful to look to Merleau-Ponty and Richard Wollheim. Contemplating lines of vision and thinking about such "lines," Merleau-Ponty noted that what we often take for granted, when we are not thinking about it, is this: the "enigma" of seeing and being seen has a physicality that does not bear out in the way we regard "seeing" or "vision."

Since things and my body are made of the same stuff, vision must somehow take place in them; their manifest visibility must be repeated in the body by a secret visibility. 'Nature is on the inside', says Cézanne. Quality, light, colour, depth, which are there before us, are there only because they awaken an echo in our body and because the body welcomes them.
Things have an internal equivalent in me; they arouse in me a carnal formula of their presence. Why shouldn’t these [correspondences] in their turn give rise to some [external] visible shape in which anyone else would recognize those motifs which support his own inspection of the world? Thus there appears a ‘visible’ of the second power, a carnal essence or icon of the first. It is not a faded copy, a trompe-l’oeil, or another thing. The animals painted on the walls of Lascaux are not there in the same way as the fissures and limestone formations. But they are not elsewhere. Pushed forward here, held back there, held up by the wall’s mass they use so adroitly, they spread around the wall without ever breaking from their elusive moorings in it. I would be at great pains to say where is the painting I am looking at. For I do not look at it as I do at a thing; I do not fix it in its place. My gaze wanders in it as in the halos of Being. It is more accurate to say that I see according to it, or with it, than I see it.\footnote{M. Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind,” \textit{Aesthetics}, ed. Harold Osborne, Oxford Readings in Philosophy, ser. ed. G. J. Warnock (London: Oxford UP, 1972) 59-60. Square brackets are the author’s.}

It is also useful to think of the lines-of-sight in Skulváði Úlfr as (con)figurations; somewhat like Richard Wollheim trying to rationalise the concept of drawing and reading two-dimensional graphite-on-white-paper lines. Although we may argue that we need the use of our eyes to draw pictures, “this would not establish that we could use the eyes in order to come to know what we had drawn.”\footnote{Richard Wollheim, “On Drawing an Object,” \textit{Aesthetics}, ed. Harold Osborne, Oxford Readings in Philosophy, ser. ed. G. J. Warnock (London: Oxford UP, 1972) 130.} We suspect that there is more than accurate physical vision that brings a picture alive. Wollheim raises interesting questions about the relationship between drawing a picture, as a representation of a visual experience, and the reading of that picture.

But once we reject the notion of an ideal mode of representation, and content ourselves with the existent and admittedly imperfect modes, how can we avoid the objection that arose a moment ago, that we cannot hope to find amongst these modes adequate criteria of our visual experiences, since any drawing is bound to contain contours, whereas there are no contours to be found in the visual field?\footnote{Wollheim 136.}
The “contour” is the interesting double-feature of two-dimensional drawing, the implicit and explicit form that belongs to real edges as well as to those we read that do not seem to belong to the physical object of the two-dimensional drawing.

Yet it cannot be right to think of it as a mere coincidence that we should use the same word to refer both to the lines in a drawing and to the edges of perceived objects. ‘Contour’ is not in this context a homonym. There is a reason for this double usage, and the reason surely is this: that though the contours in a drawing aren’t themselves edges, when we look at a drawing as a representation, we see the contours as edges. But implicit in this explanation is, I feel, a way of meeting the more general objection that is holding us up: namely, that a drawing couldn’t be the criterion of a visual experience, because drawings and visual experiences are so very unalike. For in making this judgement of dissimilarity, the objector is presumably contrasting visual experiences with two-dimensional configurations of lines and stokes [sic]. Now to do so might seem in order, since this is certainly what drawings are. But though this is what they are, this is not the only way in which they can be seen.136

In understanding the mapping or construction of the lines-of-sight of Skulváði Úlfr, it may be best to consider the view of the composer-as-reader as a reader of contours and “not-seeing” as Merleau-Ponty describes his experience of the walls of Lascaux. It is perhaps this double-edged-seeing which holds the imaginative terrain to the real poetic space explored in the poem.

In order to explain how this works in the poem, a few things need to be taken into account. First, the ‘real’ history of Kerrigarðr is composed of the physical world – the book labelled “Skulváði Úlfr.” Because it is a physical world littered with indefinite spaces, the reader is forever coming to meetings with the gaps on which the book is composed. Second, the poem maps the ways through which these spaces work on shifting levels of sound and the reason why the reader is able to ascertain an aesthetic object at all.

136 Wollheim 137.
The lacunae encountered in the poem might not be explained, even partially, without effective acts of line-of-sight (because the lacunae, by their nature, belong to indeterminate levels of definition).

It is in explaining how to read Skulváði Úlfr as its composer-reader that I can best show how the delineation of the nature of the images from the lacunae between my actual world and the world of the poem evolved. Aspects of the intuitive terrain can be brought into the actual world (although they can never be like the actual world, that is, in the same way that a memory is constructed as the actual world is, spatially and actual-temporal.) However, they can seem to act in the way that the actual world does. When we remember an incident, we ‘know’ the duration of the experience remembered is different from that of the time-span of the real event; that the act of remembering may take more or less time and can be repeated. We attempt to recognise – give meaning to and judge the function of the remembered objects – as we do regarding objects in the actual world. We often, in fact, attempt to glean more meaning from the remembered objects than we did in the actual event on which the memory is based.

Though the experience of a remembered incident remains as temporal as an experience of it, it is part of a terrain such as that sought after in virtual reality games, following an in-built logic, that is, a logic peculiar to the memory. The logic of the imaginative terrain is temporal-continual, revealing itself in visits. It is not unlike what happens when we pick up a book and put it down to read it later, picking it up again and starting from the gap where we left off. Often we take up the same surrounding activity – the seat in the garden in the afternoon with a cup of tea, with our favourite CD playing in the background, and
we like to do this alone. We enjoy being the sole eyewitness. It might be said that a reader (like someone shifting focus from the actual to remembered experience) requires gaps so that he or she may participate in a memory or in the text of a creative work.

More so, the nature of the gaps is consistent with how we read memory and as such constitutes part of how a reader reads the actual world or sees it like Merleau-Ponty. If the actual world is constantly renewing itself, that is, we forget before we remember (remembering implies forgetting as a prior given), then lacunae are part and parcel of the natural occurrence of objects in the world in this sense. Gap precedes knowledge and, as well, succeeds it. Becoming aware, remembering connections, confirms our existence and the existence of things we remember. We would be bored without gaps. In the case of the act of reading, a creative work would be no more than an instruction manual if it did not require us to participate in the gap-nature of our re-constitution of the actual world through remembering. In the case of the instruction-manual scenario, one person may read it well and impart this to other listeners who need not miss any of the impact of the written material – lose any hidden meanings in the original document (provided it is clearly written). The work, then, might be said to ‘exist’ only for the composer-reader and then only as a work borrowed from the inventor of the instrument for which the manual was written.

To extend Ingarden’s argument, I would say that it is not so much that a physical work of art would not exist at all as an aesthetic object if no observer concretised it, but that no observer could do so without the existence of lacunae, without that “secret visibility.” No observer can make a work real if there are no gaps between it and the observer-reader or
The composer-reader. The work might not exist for some readers since the work can never be read by everyone. In such a case, nothing is lost, profoundly, that would make the work less than it ever could be given that its existence relies on at least one reader, the composer. It appears that such gaps are a requirement to the making and the meaning of the creative work and it is this scenario of gap-reading on which the line-of-sight of Skulváði Úlfr is composed.

THE DETERMINATION OF MAPS

Creating the labels for the contours of the Map of Kerrigarðr and other illustrations in the epic poem involved identifying the individual features of the spaces which illuminate the voices of the poem, that is, give the voices focus, not necessarily explain them. These labels, as such, are what keep the observer-reader from ‘falling off the edges’ of the lines-of-sight and lines-of-ear.

Skulváði Úlfr has over 80 individual original illustrations, some appearing in the poem as composite illustrations or image-sets. As word-image-sets or whole-word images, there are over 50. (See “Appendix” at the end of the Companion Reader). After experimenting with spaces for initial capital letters, section-divider uncopyrighted pictures (abandoning the latter and finally deciding to use the symbol, “◊,” at the end of each Book), I was faced with gaps in the story-line of Kerrigan Iron Hand in Book V. I turned towards the hunt for the gap rather than the chase for the rim of the historical plot. In posing the ensuing
questions, I found the means to doing so by placing myself on Kerrigan’s position before the Dragonbing Stone – on “the chair in the room.” It was with Kerrigan’s eyes, that I could see the blank spaces in the terrain more clearly. This process not only helped to develop Kerrigan’s character but took the plot further than I had realised it could go. Kerrigan’s questions addressed to the Dragonbing rune stone are mine as the reader facing the need to command answers from the intuitive terrain: “what do you say // Dragonbing Stone?”

Although many images were already used in Books I to IV, they had served as information translated into words. From Book V onward, however, the images themselves entered the story – or rather, I saw them for the first time as part of the ‘real Kerrigarðr.’ It was at this point that I realised that the images from the intuitive terrain, recorded as line drawings, could be used as is in the poem. I returned to the previous books and included nine image-sets in total. However, Book V alone has seven image-sets; Book VI, 12; and Book VII, 24.

It was when I realised that the gap between myself and my understanding of the intuitive terrain could be closed by looking closer at the contours of the terrain, that I was able complete the full geographic map of the island of Ximayaca. In that space between the silent place where Beah Wolf and the creature at the square pools stood, I began to read the creation of the “Map of Kerrigarðr and Neighbouring Territories.”
It was with the writing of Book V that the contours and landmarks on the surface of the physical landscape began to appear in detail and not fully so until the completion of Book VII. The above images are the two versions of the unlabelled Map that preceded the final copy which now appears on page 206.
The act of mapping the geographic setting for the poem involved further detailing superimposed on the map to bring it to life. From following the line-of-sight presented by the illustrations of the images, the detailed landscape of the island through particular in-sets was uncovered.

The in-sets within the final Map are: The City of Kerrigarðr, Four-caverns Peak (including Dragonþing Stone and Dagazar's grave), Shining Lake Peak, Xima's Ridge, the hill where the Fort of Margrnon sits, Grimmðókk, Kjatsls, Black Stone Giants' lands, the Sinking Islands, Gild-rac Plateau. For example, Skulváði must build the Fort of Margrnon in order to find the way to Hel and only gets through Hel to Gild-rac with the help of guides, Síswo and Amarr, who both own special tools with which to travel to elusive places. She was unable to reach these planes with the help of mundane "slaves" at Four-caverns Peak.

The Map offers clear landmarks north of "The Edge of The World." South of that "Edge," only guides within the contours of the text may take us via the sub-terrain of in-sets beyond the Edge to places of "secret visibility." The ways to these in-sets are rife with false and true-way markers along a trembling roadway. In addition, as a flat or two-dimensional drawing, the Map offers clear markers above the Edge of The World and obscure-seeming signs below the Edge, the difference between those-signs-above and those-below forcing the observer-reader to read differently. The in-sets or those-above The Edge of The World perform the rôle of ways to get to the sub-terrain, ways that are not obvious nor easy to chart. Those-below appear to take more of their characteristics from the 'doubly-seen contour.'
Naming each cave, mountain, hidden river and valley *fixed* these places to the landscape of the Map, growing in narrative importance as the *text of the map* extended itself. In discovering the *map of the text* and vice versa, another set of readings was to be embarked on – that of the sub-text of the story revealed in the form of the contours raised by *scripted narratives from the intuitive terrain*.

**POST-MODERNIST RUNES: THE 'FOLDED SCRIPTS' OF KERRIGARDR**

As an historical document, *Skulvádi Úlfr* stands against a specific view of James Graham-Campbell that “the Vikings were illiterate until they became good Catholics and learned the Roman alphabet” while holding to his general view that “nobody knows exactly when or where the runic characters were invented.” The latter statement at least allows for the possibility that through their travels the Vikings had knowledge of runes and the likelihood, no matter how much so to a limited population, of some literary skill.

Two sets of scripts of Pre-Christian Scandinavia, the Danish *futhark* and the Swedo-Norwegian *futhark* went through various changes and maintained many inconsistencies (for example, no characters for the modern English equivalent of *d, g* and *p*, two symbols for *a* to reflect its phonetic variations, no symbols for *e* and *ø*). Post-Viking rune-masters
"invented new symbols to fill up these gaps," although the Vikings proper "remained content with sixteen letters."^{137}

By the beginning of the Viking Age the Scandinavian rune-masters had developed an alphabet quite distinct from those of other Germanic peoples, such as the Anglo-Saxons, the Frisians and the Continental Germans. It had sixteen letters, and from the values of its first six characters is called the \textit{futhark} \[ f \hat{f} h \hat{u} t \hat{N} h a K r \]. Even within Scandinavia there was no standard form of the letters, and the different inscriptions vary a good deal. The Vikings used two main types of runes, with numbers of lesser or local variants. One type is called the Common or Danish \textit{futhark} (although it also occurs outside Denmark), and the other is the short-twig or Swedo-Norwegian \textit{futhark} (although again it is not confined to those countries).

Hidden by caves of meaning, runes used by the Vikings remain a subject of fascination. Whether or not they developed from borrowed scripts of Latin, Greek or Northern Italic origin or were first written by the Goths (prior to first century AD), speculation continues about their meanings.^{139} It is in making the most of the hidden element of Viking runes that I bring to \textit{Skulvādi Úlfr} a way to expressing the gap-lines and 'secret' aspects of the construction of the poem.

The word ‘rune’ suggests not merely a form of writing, the angular characters of the old Germanic script long since discarded, but a whole world of mystery and magic: strange symbols scratched into ancient tools and weapons now lying idle in some museum show-case; names of warriors, secret spells, even snatches of songs, appearing on objects as diverse as minute silver coins and towering stone crosses, scattered in the unlikeliest places from Yugoslavia to Orkney, from Greenland to Greece. The word itself means ‘mystery’ and ‘secret’ in early English and its related

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^{137} "When the carver wanted to represent \( d \), he had to use \( e \) instead; for \( g \) he used \( k \); for \( p \) he used \( b \); and he had to manage as best he could when it came to vowels. Thus the Danish King Gormr (Gorm) appears on his memorial stone as \( kurmR \), and the Danish King Svein (Swein) is \( suin \). Moreover, since the spelling practice allowed a rune-master to omit \( n \) when it came before a consonant, a man called Thormundr appears in runic spelling as \( thurmutR \). From this it will be seen that runic inscriptions are not easy to read, and there is a good deal of dispute about the meanings of some of them." Page, "Rune-masters and Skalds," Graham-Campbell, \textit{The Viking World} 157.

^{138} Page, "Rune-masters and Skalds" 156-57.

^{139} Regarding the invention of runic characters Page explains: "It was several centuries before the Viking period and probably somewhere near the Roman Empire, since many of the letters of the early inscriptions resemble those of the Roman alphabet; although, because they were developed for cutting on wood, they have their own characteristic shapes." "Rune-masters and Skalds" 156.
languages. When Bishop Wulfila translated the Bible into fourth-century Gothic, he
rendered St Mark's 'the mystery of the kingdom of God' (iv. 11) as 'runa þudangardjos guþs'. When the chieftains and wise counsellors of Anglo-Saxon
England gathered in conclave, men called their secret deliberations 'runes', as does the
poet of the Old English *Wanderer* in a line weighty with wisdom and secrecy:

Swa cwæð snottor on mode, gæst him sundor sæt rune.
Thus spoke the wise man in his heart as he sat apart in secret musing.¹⁴²

The images used in the poem are, for want of a more accurate description, *post-modernist runes*.¹⁴¹ The use of runic scripts in the epic poem makes the most of the significance of
the Old Norse -rúna meaning "whisperer."¹⁴² As scripts in the poem, they are of
contemporary construction. And, like Viking runes, they are clear-cut and simple-lined.¹⁴³
Kerrigash runes require special reading, imposing an architecture of form that challenges
the eye by their simplicity. They impose a structure which challenges our expectation of
how to arrive from one edge of the text to the other. They are available to everyone and to
no one. They are a set of signs that constantly defy attention, yet demand attentiveness.

In the poem, they require vigilant interpretative skills. The poem's translator does not

¹⁴¹ I am grateful to visual artist, Dr Diana Wood-Conroy, who used the phrase “post-modernist
rune” to describe Skulvadi Ûlfr in a conversation with me at a postgraduate colloquium at the
Faculty of Creative Arts, University of Wollongong, in March 1998.
¹⁴² “-rúna f. whisperer, see eyra-rúna.” “rúnar f. pl. 1. secrets (Vsp. [Völauspa] 60, Vm.
[Vafniríðnishí] 42,48, perhaps also Háv. [Hátumáld] 111). 2. secret or confidential conversation (Sg.
3. runes (as magical symbols and letters: Háv. 80, etc., Grp. [Gripissa] 17, Dr. [Ísgríðningsl],
Am. [Atlamál] 4, etc., Rp. [Rõgðfalla] 36, etc., Fi. [Fjálsvinsmund] 26 conj.).” Beatrice La Farge and
John Tucker, *Glossary to the Poetic Edda*: based on Hans Kuhn’s “Kurzes Wörterbuch,”
Skandinavistische Arbeiten; Bd. 15 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1992) 218.
¹⁴³ It has been found that fragments of painted rune stones, such as those from Köping church,
Öland, Sweden, show that “the chief colours used were red, brown, blue and black, and the
traditional colour for the letters themselves was red.... Presumably the runes were painted too, but
no colouring remains.” Page, “Rune-masters and Skalds” 158.
offer us any clues to the origin of the scripts in the same way that contemporary analysis finds the greater part of runic markings inexplicable. That they are magical in some way is largely avoided in the poem by the translator, though the authors of the Books indicate that runes may be used for divination. How they were devised by so-called rune-masters historically (how these were trained and how regarded), who and what proportion of the population could read the runes remain hidden from contemporary study of Viking runes and likewise in the epic poem.

The few examples of original Kerrigash text reflect the limitations in placing original runic sources as historical documents rather than reflecting volume of available material, such as has been found on rune stones in Sweden. If anything, in respect of the available material, the markings in the epic bear out the brevity of and sense of incompleteness – the historical lacunae – in existing examples of the material:

The total collection of Swedish rune stone is outstandingly rich, in the true sense of the word. We have a couple of thousand monuments of this kind from the viking age.... Even in my great delight in these monuments I cannot deny that they suffer from certain weaknesses, looked at as historical sources. In the first place, the inscriptions are extremely brief. As private documents, memorial inscriptions carved in stone in honour of dead relatives, they are sources necessarily limited both in substance and volume. Moreover, it is impossible to arrive at a precise date for them.

.... The name of England appears nearly as often in runic inscriptions as that of Greece. On several occasions, however, the countries visited in the west are not defined by name. All that is said about the dead chieftain Spjut [Södemanlands runinskrifter 106 (ed. Erik Bract och Elias Wessén)], for example, is that ‘he had been in the west, township taken and attacked’ (pl. 3):

SaR vestarla
um veRit hafbi
borg um brutna
ok um barda

On the one hand, for the large part in fact, the runic scripts in *Skulváði Úlfr* constantly dodge interpretation for a character such as Kerrigan Iron Hand. Skulváði herself never gives away what she knows, being more full of questions than answers. The rival priestess, Íva, does not give away much either but she offers hints at answers in her search for the right questions. We have the feeling that Íva only pretends to know more than she implies. She can read the future in grains of sand, but can make neither head nor tail of them when Kerrigan consults her about the signs on Dragonþing Stone or about Skulváði's Verse-maps. Íva remarks that only those who have been able to travel to where these runes have been interpreted, as the Wolffem high priestesses have, could give Kerrigan any clues to what is heavily guarded and deeply hidden. She knows this much: that their key lies in their rhythm or the staves on which they stand. She appears to understand the surface of Kerrigan's reading of The Stone but adds to his confusion by her manner of explanation, in a sense mimicking the nature of what is kept obscure to her by the Wolffem Clan.

The line-of-sight in the poem therefore follows the contours of the poem's gap-nature. For example, it is as a result of his inability to see a logical progression of markings with meanings that Kerrigan travels to the 'under world' of his given text. In this way he is prompted to breach the rim of forbidden lands outside of Kerrigardr and reaches the first level place of Hel where heat sweats – where pure thought becomes fluid. Here he comes face to face with events that defy physical laws as we know them in ordinary experience. And when Kerrigan is offered the hidden runes, by the Hrimnir, he can only write them into his physical body. He literally carves them into his chest so deeply that in wounding himself fatally the signs become obscured by his blood. Furthermore, as he lies dying at Four-caverns Peak, he is unable to vocalise the sounds and meanings of the signs. They
remain *in-secret* – our evidence of them being Skulváði’s reading of them presented as a fragment recorded by her hand.

In keeping with this “secret visibility,” the post-modernist runes from the imaginative terrain are revealed to the reader of *Skulváði Úlf* as fragment illustrations, encouraging the reader to participate in Kerrigan’s *line-of-sight* or composition of his revelatory experience of the runes in “Hnitbjorg’s Steeds” (VI:4, 153-58). Any attempt to read the signs of the imaginative terrain is a risk-taking venture (borne out in Kerrigan’s characterisation). Comprehending a text is always only partial at any given moment; in Merleau-Ponty’s words: “my gaze wanders.” In another sense (and, perhaps, because of this quality of the “gaze”) the line-of-sight of the markings cannot be misread by the individual reader no matter how difficult the ways to comprehending them may appear to be a requirement for seeing them, because the markings always appear as *themselves*. They are accessible, if painfully so and without recourse to sharing them in full with another reader, as in Kerrigan’s case, except to say “Look at this.”

The runes to be found in the poem, then, consist of illustrations of five types or, more accurately, they describe five ways of reading. They offer five ways of a *secret reading*. The first type is like that of sliding photographs of actual places. This type 1 view is what might be called a prehensive or outside type – the kind of experience we anticipate before we enter a work. The *world* of the book already exists between the covers of the book before we open it (if we take it that this *world* already exists for at least one reader, the composer). When we open the book we experience the world of the book as we read the schema of sentences and sound-images. We are often surprised by what we encounter
there. We might say "This is incredible" or "I don't believe it" but eagerly read on for confirmation that the schema is part of our actual world after all. This is also the world of the book that we remember as the broad picture, the general landscape. We are often looking panaramically, as an outside observer, not part of the population of characters. We tend to be looking back at the scenes. An example of a record or rune of such view is the Map of Kerrigarðr and Neighbouring Territories.

The second, type 2, is a closer view – the present type. We are at any given moment inside the present-time of the picture and we can turn to see what is behind and before us. An author describes a scene or object, and we play the rôle of characters within that scene with whom we may converse about the scene or object. Examples of these include the first four warriors whom Oðýla has to face (III:1, 68), Flame, the jewelled sword forged for Skulváði by the Húlðrac (VII:1, 167) and the Meeting Hall within the Fort of Margrnon (VII:4, 193).

The third, type 3, takes us inside the view – the inside type. Here we are as solitary individuals, similar to the first type of view but now we are so close that we can feel the particles of air and participate in events that are unusual. Here our sensory perception is not limited to its usual rôle in the actual world. We can smell colour, see through levels of solid matter, know what people look like before we converse with them. Particularly, our eyes can achieve telescopic focus. As well, our vulnerability is heightened here. For, although one main sensory aspect is always missing – touch – we can return from the world of the creative work feeling physically hurt or threatened. Our bodies seem to respond to what we have seen or heard or smelt, with a racing pulse, dryness of mouth or sore limbs.
The runes of the inside type include: the Path of Three Staves (IV:2, 95), Amarr’s Shifting Stone (VII:1, 175), the grid-series of Bifrost Bridge and the “key” of The Shifting Stone in operation (VII:5, 204). These images all perform through contours of transparency.

The fourth type consists of actual-objects and scripts – the actual-object (or script) type. In the type 4 view, the objects and scripts are classified together because they are the only drawings that sit closest to the visual edge of the contour of the drawing while the others seem to sit on the visual edge of visual experience (to return to Wollheim’s distinction). The signs are used to corroborate the evidence of the intuitive terrain in much the same way that rune stones have been used to corroborate the evidence of Medieval historians.¹⁴⁵

The actual-object types in Skulváði Úlfir have been recorded from ‘actual’ objects retrieved from the intuitive terrain or they are linearly defined markings from sequences of the second type (looking inside the picture).

The actual-object type therefore consists of two sub-categories: scripts and pictorial images. The actual scripts are markings recorded by characters who venture outside the safe ground of Kerrigarðr, for example, Úllr’s Book of Broken Words (I:4, 29), the page from Skulváði’s Book of Verse-maps (V:2, 115), the Hrimnir’s Runes (VI:3, 151), and Kerrigan’s Wall of Shields (VII:5, 198).

¹⁴⁵ “Two of the runic stones found at Hedeby (Schleswig, Germany), not far from the present Danish frontier, illustrate the value of runic evidence to clarify and corroborate the testimony of medieval historians, in this case Adam of Bremen, who wrote in the later eleventh century.” Elliott, Runes 31.
The pictorial images are uninterpretable markings on gravestones such as the three stone-rubbings from Dagazar’s burial ring of stones (I:1, 4; I:2, 18; I:5, 35), Útgardrloki’s Claw (II:3, 56), Síswoy’s amulets (VI:2, 143) and the images of open-skulled dogs illustrating Skulváði as the Hound-tamer (VII:5, 197). The set of circles holding “a cipher to the map of cave-systems of Hel” (V:1, 109) said to be recorded on the Dragonbing rune stone almost calls for a sub-category of its own. It appears to work as an actual thing as well as a potentially readable script. It is the only image that overtly invites a mathematical construct by its architecture and identification or label as “a cipher.”

Gwen Terrane reads for us by interpreting the foreign scripts or giving us an English translation with the etymology for Kerrigash scripts. In constructing Terrane’s hand for these sequences I used La Farge and Tucker’s Glossary to the Poetic Edda (1992) for “Old Norse,” “Goth,” “Old High German” translations (based on Hans Kuhn’s Kurzes Wörterbuch, which I also consulted) to explain the northern influence on Kerrigash writing. I also used Sasse, Horne and Dixon’s Cassell’s New Compact German Dictionary, Craigie’s Icelandic-English dictionary and de Vries’ Altnerdisches etymologisches Wörterbuch. Matteson’s The Piro (Arawakan) Language provided the basis for information with which Terrane credits her sources, Catalquéz and Almordozar, for translations of the Ximacan or Arawakan. My Notebooks provided the reference material for the untranslatable scripts or sound-maps as the basis for all these readings.

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Jan de Vries, Altnerdisches etymologisches Wörterbuch, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1977)
The fifth type of reading may not be a separate type at all but a composite of the above four – the composite type. Only two images fit type 5. These point to a most peculiar type of reading. These are in *Of Wolffem Born* (II:2) and *The Carnival of Slaves* (VII:3). In *Of Wolffem Born*, the scenes that are described in “Novaini and The Wind-wolf” are actually illustrated in Book IV as the city plan of Kerrigarðr. And, even then, not all the illustrated aspects of the city plan were preserved within the story-line of “Novaini and The Wind-wolf” which was its original home. The aspects not included in the story of Novaini were the city-wall structure which stood in the backdrop of the scene:

*There rose a white stone, a strange wyrding hoop,*  
*floating from a fearsome height.*  
*Soon, a longhouse sailed from breaks in the sky,*  
*from clouds that caught the rains.*

“Novaini and The Wind-wolf” (II:2, 42)

In *The Carnival of Slaves* the enigmatic stranger calling himself “Eyes of The Moth” comes upon Skulváði unexpectedly and is treated by her as a threat. However, he tantalisingly promises to meet her again. The *image-in-negative* of the wings of a moth (VII:3, 185) is from the sub-text of “Skulváði and The Hírsita [a Fragment]” but is not recorded in that section as part of the story (the section reflecting this in its sub-title – “a Fragment”).

Eyes of the Moth regards his landscape as one of change from which he takes the most difficult name. This is a name which he carries while he searches for new faces, though he admits that he has not yet found any “new faces” since he has been looking for them in old places. He challenges Skulváði to read the purpose of his rôle in her text. He is the *moth in the text*; he has the ability to undermine the threads of the text in his alluring but
subversive rôle. As well, in order to read as Eyes of the Moth does, an observer would need to read with eyes for the moth, that is, with our gaze fixed as it were to a fluttering black moth with a pair of white circles ("eyes") on the upper side of each wing. Looking at the fluttering moth in a dark room we see what appears to be winking or blinking eyes. The combination of the line-of-sight of the illustrations and the images imposed by lines of words – two ways of seeing – are essential to a reading of Skulváði Úlfur.

The type 5 reading, then, is concerned with two-ways-of-seeing rather than a specific image or sets of images, if we read, as Eyes of The Moth recommends: "with eyes for the moth." The images seem to be about how we transpose images which do not fit or help us at one level of the text by placing them into other levels of the text where they fill in the gaps between panoramic seeing (type 1) and unreadable script (type 4). We might get to a point in our reading of the creative work where an image is left behind, as it were, and taken up again later to explain and extend our reading of the first to fourth ways of reading.

On the other hand, some signs are available to all. These are known runic images, that is, signs used in the community (contemporary with the Viking-influenced Kerrigash culture of the epic poem) for the purposes of written communication and divination. Scholars offer convincing reasons on both sides of the argument as to whether or not runes were a borrowed script from south-east Europe or were different enough from similar scripts in their uses by the Scandinavians to be treated as unique in purpose. The greater part of the evidence of Viking poetry in Sweden, for example, is available only from runic inscriptions.
In *Skulváði Úlf* Dagazar is the main instigator, you might say, of the inclusion of Viking runes. As a community priest-leader and poet of political power, he is the one who carries a bag of runes. It is through his experience that the importance of Týr is first made in “Dragon’s Breath” (1:1) during the storm journey to the island of Ximayaca. He also establishes a point of view in keeping with the pagan and shamanistic in Old Norse poetry, an element found in poems of the *Elder Edda*, such as *Völuspá*, and in contrast to those of the sagas, such as the witch-ride in *Njál’s saga* which is dominated by Christian rather than Viking concepts.¹⁴⁷

It is in *Kerrigarðr* (1:3) where the naming of the terrain first begins that the basic type 4 signs are declared. In this Book, Dagazar first throws runes to hold the community of survivors together. He chooses the eight signs signifying sudden change and breakage as explained in Gwen Terrane’s annotation to that stanza.

_I called the wrecked,_ 
crossed Hágl’s Eight —
_runes for the lost_ 
on the woodland’s edge,
_eight signs circled_ 
in the gritty sand;
_eight oaths to Hágl_ 
at the Stumbling-block:

_The dragon-seed — hail,_ 
_the breast-breaker — need,_
_the sole-winter — ice,_ 
_the thurs’ sword — thorn,_
_the eagle’s claw — hunt,_ 
_the stave of worlds — yew,_
_the godi’s curse — elk,_ 
_the bolt and bow — sun._

(“Hágl’s Eight,” 1:3, 20)

After the survivors find safe ground he is asked by the wealthy Danelander, Gerða, to cast and read runes in order to help her come to terms with her grief. He throws the signs of

Freyr's Eight, those signifying the hope of fertility. However, with the cloud of breakage still hanging over him, Dagazar first reads them as his own script. Then he misinterprets them before he finally contrives an explanation to draw the group closer together through Gerða by instructing her to make a stone ring to bring the community into a physical gathering place ("Gerða's Dowry (or Freyr's Eight)," I:3, 21-23).

In relating the Old Norse runes to the original illustrations in the epic, it was a matter of seeing which images clearly, and without contrivance, could be considered part of the runic tradition of the Viking-influenced Kerrigash. Beneath the variety and complexity of images that are treated as part of the original script of the Kerrigash are three basic signs from the Elder Futhark of Germanic runes and which continued in the Swedo-Norwegian script. There are: Naudr (Old English – Nyð) [†], Týr (Old English – Tiw) (↑) and Hágl or Hagall (Old English – Hægl) [N]. These signs were used because they could not be confused with images from the intuitive terrain, that is, the intuitive images could only be read, in the context of the poem, as these particular runes. Read as Kerrigash runes within the poem, they were then used to advance the story and develop the characterisation of Dagazar in Dagazar's Dreams and Kerrigardr for example, incorporating the mythology behind the meanings of the historical runes into the historical frame of the poem.

From "Kerrigan's Wall of Shields" (left to right): Nauðr † – Shield No. 3; Hágl N – Shield No. 4; Týr ↑ – Shield No. 6 (VII:5; 198)
The first, Naudr, signifies need or necessity, restriction, constraint; the second, Týr, the focus of the mental warrior, judgement, glory, the god of war Týr; Hágl, the seemingly destructive working towards transformation; the “layered nature of hailstone.”¹⁴⁸ (Book I Part 2 treats the complete set of runes in groups of eight as Dagazar attempts to read the new terrain of his shipwreck.) The choice of these three runic signs became the focus of the establishing signs of the poem, so to speak, and as images that are tied up with the essential characterisation of Dagazar and the inheritance that he passes on.

Naudr was read as the unmistakable marking from an image used to construct Dagazar’s character in preparation for his naming Kerrigadr and the setting up of its laws. Naudr is Shield No. 3 (Constraint). Týr was composed from the intuitive image based on Xim’le’re. This sign also affects the characterisation of Kerrigan Iron Hand as well as that of Skulvádi Úlfr. It was translated as “Týr,” based on the pre-runic symbol of this letter, a northward-pointing, double-headed vertical arrow. The marking used in the poem is the original intuitive image as shown (V:2, 121). Týr is shown in its Etruscan version,¹⁴⁹ but crowned by a moon or disc (a recurring image in Books II and III) on Shield No. 6 (Flood). Hágl was determined from the recurring images of ladders and going to ground – ladders formed, we might say, from connecting signs of both or either Naudr and Hágl, to create a ladder. Hágl is represented on Shield No. 4 (Ladder). It is the most commonly

recurring script in the poem, most clearly shown in the illustration of “Directions to the secret ladder into the belly of Modsognirsborg” (V:2, 124).

In addition to establishing the Old Norse cultural connection in order to make the work a believable historical document, evidence from Arawakan language was used to extend the identification of the runes as peculiar to Kerrigash culture evolved from Viking and Arawakan culture. The translator’s voice, through her margin annotations, was used to show the connections between the two scripts, the combination of which act as evidence of a unique Kerrigash script. As a translation from “ON.” – “Obscure Norse language” – that the fictional translator reports to be the language of the ‘original document,’ this language remains a secret language throughout the Books. Illustrations ‘confirm’ their ‘existence’. But this is a language that the reader never sees in total, since the contemporary reader is presented with the translation as a whole document and snippets of the ‘original text.’

Other connections were made before coming to a decision on the final scripts that could be shown as part of the “History of Kerrigarðr.” The context of the development of a Cherokee script was also taken into account. In this case this illusion of historicity played a marginal rôle – one well in the margins. It was taken into account that the Kerrigash script may be interpreted as a basis for Sequoyah’s Cherokee syllabary. The Cherokee or TsaLaGi alphabet is composed on a complex system of Cherokee phonetics. The characters comprise cursive and angular forms. Below is a sample of the Cherokee character (left column) with the name of the character (right column).
The range of characters, for illustrative purposes, is shown below (made available through the Native American Culture Library on the Internet). The first row shows the characters when you type lower-case letters of the English alphabet (on a standard English computer keyboard). The second row shows Cherokee characters when you type the upper-case letters; the third row, the number keys 1-0; the fourth row, the shifted number keys.

Below are the seven characters of Sequoyah’s syllabary meaning “Cherokee Nation” pronounced Tsa-la-gi-bi A-yi-li – as they appear on the Cherokee seven-pointed star seal adopted by Act of the Cherokee National Council and approved in 1871. (The seal was

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150 These characters are taken from a public domain, unregistered language computer program TsaLaGi.zip entitled “TsaLaGi (English/Cherokee Dictionary)” made available on the Internet by Ama Wehali (Water Eagle) for Smoke Signal Broadcasting, Annapolis, Maryland, USA. Native American Culture Library within the Living History Forum. Compuserve. 6 Jun. 1996.
used on Cherokee documentation until the dissolution of the Constitution of the
Cherokee Nation West when the U. S. State of Oklahoma gained statehood.)\textsuperscript{151}

\textbf{GW\textsuperscript{A} DBE}

The combination of \textit{lines-of-sight} and \textit{lines-of-ear} in \textit{Skulvádi Úlf\textsuperscript{r}} was to create a pairing
that would lead to a sense of rulership over sound-images in the construction of the text of
the poem. In all instances, re-creating the sound-images, like retrieving a memory, was
closely linked to the drawing of characters or player-readers. In the final outcome, if I
could stay in-character as I read with Dagazar or Heyeoahkah, for example, then I could
turn to see what they saw and respond as they responded particularly to the importance of
light or illumination of \textit{signs} in the poem. Eventually, to complete the journey, I had to
learn with these player-readers of the terrain, as they learned, how to travel from one place
to another, from one sign to another in this \textit{world of contours}.

\textsuperscript{151} Muriel Wright, "Seal of The Cherokee Nation," \textit{The Chronicles of Oklahoma}, vol. XXXIV
(Summer 1956).
CHAPTER 6
RULERSHIP OVER THE TERRAIN OF LACUNÆ

CASTING THE IMAGE

\[ Gild-rac \textit{whistles} \quad \textit{every weeping branch}, \]
\[ \textit{clears the forest as a book} \]
\[ \textit{opening difficult words.} \]

"Wolffem-law" (VI:2, 141)

In the introduction to \textit{Skáldskaparmál} (The Language of Poetry), Snorri's \textit{Edda} illustrates the use of images in skáldic poetry by relating the story of a conversation, at one of Óðinn's banquets, between a magician named Ægir or Hlér (also regarded as a sea deity) and the poet, Bragi.

Then spoke Ægir: 'In how many ways do you vary the vocabulary of poetry, and how many categories are there in poetry?'
Then spoke Bragi: 'There are two categories into which all poetry is divided.'
Ægir asked: 'Which two?'
Bragi said: 'Language and verse-forms.'
'What choice of language is used in poetry?'
'There are three categories in the language of poetry.'
'What are they?'
'To call everything by its name; the second category is the one called substitution; and the third category of language is what is called kenning [description], and this category is constructed in this way, that we speak of Odin or Thor or Tyr or one of the Æsir or elves, in such a way that with each of those I mention, I add a term for the attribute of another As or make mention of one or other of his deeds.'\textsuperscript{152}

\textsuperscript{152} Snorri's \textit{Edda} 64.
In *Skulváði Úlftr*, cast as a fictional history about a Viking incursion onto the coast of the Americas, these three categories of naming help me to ground the work within its historical frame of Viking and Spanish expansion across the Atlantic. The categories are giving (1) a name to a sound/image, (2) a substitution name for the image, and (3) a periphrastic name for the image. I create names for images and layers of images from a manifold of sounds in order to compose the world of Kerrigarðr embraced by history. Casting each sound/image in a rôle is a way of creating a narrative from these images and sounds.

As a twentieth-century contemporary composition, names in *Skulváði Úlftr* are used in the context of identifying virtual objects or intuitive objects, that is, objects that are as real as “the chair in the room,” such as Kerrigan’s Wall of Shields comprising nine shields (VII:4, 198).153 The poem also takes on board wider propositions of the literal in naming with regard to the complex periphrastic systems (kennings) by using common substitution-words and periphrases, original ones as well as some from Snorri’s *Skáldskauparmál* to maintain the historical frame of the epic. However, the poem disregards the historical hierarchy of naming (gods over men or the element of earth over that of air or religious ideals) in preference of a dominant use by all characters of the power of objects of mind or memory to create substantive worlds where no walls exist.

Furthermore, the names encountered in *Skulváði Úlftr* draw on the epic’s virtual cultural

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153 Even though the number “nine” is consistent with the occurrence of numbers in Viking shamanistic practice, the number of Shields in *Skulváði Úlftr* was not chosen either arbitrarily or by research but based on the number of warriors in the tactical defence line as shown in the illustration of the Defenders of the Fort of Margrnon, exactly as they appeared in and were recorded from the original intuitive image.
historical context as the narrative proceeds, so that, by the end of the work, names encountered there would be furthest from interpretations of Snorri's diction and closest to the historical reality forged for the Kerrigash through the creation of the authors of the Books. Only the margins of the poem would continue to reflect its historical literary setting – the occasions of these diminishing as the language of the text moves further and further away from the grasp of Gwen Terrane and the interpretable markers of her historical setting. In this sense, Skáldskaparmál provides a reference in the margins of the epic poem as the virtual historical translator's reference; the use of Latinate impositions of figurative language only in keeping with the voice of the translator as a character-player within the fiction.\

Casting Skulváði Úlfr's images of lacunae in rôles is initially an activity of recognition. This works in the poem in keeping with the contemporaneity of its publication as well as in my contemporary context. Within the context of skaldic poetry Skulváði Úlfr follows the position that the listener/reader recognises the subject of the poem. To this end, creating the poem as a sixteenth-century translation of a document that dates from approximately 1050 to 1500 serves two main functions. The first is to allow the translator room to play

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154 Clunies Ross does not regard Latinate influences, namely, translatio or the transfer of meaning associated with tropes, as wholly influential on Snorri's work which she regards as "of its time." Clunies Ross argues for Snorri's highly structural approach ultimately bound by concrete meanings of native pagan Scandinavian thinking based on the logic of the concrete nature of Viking mythology (for example, attention to the actual composition of materials named or to their place in items of lapidary rather than mainly to their metaphorical Latinate understanding regarding use of language in and its relationship to the world of actual Medieval Europe). "It seems that Snorri is arguing here [re the kenning-type 'fire of the sea' or 'fire of the sea-god Ægir' describing inanimate objects through animate determinants for example] that the construed sense of this and other kenning-types he exemplifies has literal rather than metaphorical applicability when it is placed in the context of the belief-system of pre-Christian Scandinavia." Skáldskaparmál 142.
her rôle as companion reader and, the second, to allow the listener-reader to sit in my place, as the composer of the poem, and to work at comprehending the distant elements of the work. The combination of levels of readings through the structures grounding the poem (translator, authors, their audiences) provides substantial layers for the reader to be set up to know the subject of the poem. Also, the use of the images puts *Skulvádi Úlfr* in sympathy with its publication setting, within the Late Medieval/early Renaissance context of the purpose of the fable or *fabula*:

The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* defines *imago* as convergence of forms, “formae cum forma cum quandam similitudine conlatio” (IV.xlix.62) [the comparison of one figure with another, implying a certain resemblance between them]. Invention of an *imago* is *imaginatio*, the invention of a true or credible illustration in narrative, discourse, and argument. The *imaginæ* as persons, objects and actions bring before the mind's eye an *imaginaria visio*, as Matthew Vendôme calls it. The procedure is amplified to include the entire *fabula* in narrative: “Fabula est oratio ficta verisimili dispositione imaginem exhibens veritatis” [Fable is fictional discourse showing forth by credible arrangement an Image of truth]. The relation between *fabula*, dream, and truth acquired authority in Macrobius' commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis*. There was thus a bridge between rhetorical and ecclesiastical usage which allowed for greater freedom in glossing, interpretation, and original invention.

Within my contemporary setting, the way in which the poem’s figures are substantiated from the imaginative terrain might best be explained through some aspects of Roman Ingarden’s *The Literary Work of Art*. The poem operates on the level of the “object stratum” defined in Ingarden’s phenomenological aesthetics as the levels of schema of *actual-seeming objects* – the kinds of objects which comprise the literary work: the manifold of sounds, words, sentences. Since a symbolic or an allegorical figure remains itself in its representation in a literary work, it remains as a symbol and not an *objectivity* or like an object in the physical world. Ingarden’s explanation of the different rôle of the symbol is

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155 Kelly 29. Translations of the Latin in square brackets are Kelly’s.
useful here (albeit in search of the metaphysical determinant object):

The symbol is only a means. The concern is not with it, itself; but with what it symbolises; only in retrospect can the symbol attain a certain meaning, provided that what is symbolized is significant. The rôle of the symbol, however, is exhausted in its function, and everything else that may appear in it but that plays no rôle in its symbolizing function is quite irrelevant – in contrast to the situation we find in the object stratum and its function of revealing metaphysical qualities.\(^{156}\)

I depart from Ingarden at the point of treating the figures of the epic as “intentional objects” in the strict sense that the schema of Skulvádi Úlfr are not contrived to seem strange but that they are. I would think that all objects are intentional in some way and are not altogether unlike the way that Ingarden’s artistic object is an intended/created world by its author. In the same way, all objects are intended as a consequence of their natural growth, as is a tree, or are created by human hands or by human memory. In this sense I would not differentiate, as Ingarden does, between real objects in the actual world and artistic or “ideal” objects on the basis of intentionality. In both the cases of the tree and the artistic object, the outcome is not a guaranteed success. Yet I agree that there is something peculiar about objects in an artistic work that sets them apart from those in the actual world, but this I think is attributable to their non-physical status. I would therefore agree with Iser that it is problematic to speak of intentionality as a defining quality of the objects in a literary work.\(^{157}\)

As a figure, Kerrigarðr, may be said, at its simplest, to be a representation of the unknown territory of the imagination. Although, “representation” is not a very accurate word to

\(^{156}\) Ingarden, *The Literary Work of Art* 300.
\(^{157}\) Iser 170-79.
describe the place of Kerrigarðr in the poem. Kerrigarðr is not an allegorical figure, nor is
it meant to be a metaphor. The terrain of Kerrigarðr works, in its compositional nature, as
a metonym, a meta-name, as do its individual features and its inhabitants, “shift[ing] from
one element in a sequence to another, or one element in a context to another.”

“Kerrigarðr” does not mean something else, except as we might say one word means so-
and-so in another language. In this respect, “Kerrigarðr” means “Home of The Coffer
Keepers” as Terrane translates it in her margins (I:3, 23). It is not meant to imply some
other meaning. Ingarden puts it this way:

By converting the potential stock of a nominal word meaning into an actual stock,
the full word meaning is indeed modified, but the modification is based on a
enrichment of the actual contents of its material content. A modification of its
formal content may also accompany it.

If this conversion of a potential stock into an actual one [or the conversion from
the imaginative object to the object in the work of art] occurs in such a way that
each of the newly actualized elements of, first of all, the material content finds its
own “expression,” i.e., is “clothed” in a corresponding word or manifold of words,
then the newly actualized stock appears “explicitly” in the meaning of the given
expression.

The object stratum has every quality that a physical object has in its effect on us, but it also
has other special and profound qualities. We respond to real-seeming schema of objects in a
work of art in much the same way we do with regard to objects in the world. They have
the same “fulfilled” (immediately seen) and “unfulfilled” (unseen) aspects. The schema of
objects in a literary work or “objectivities” (to use Ingarden’s word) differ from concrete
objects in one main respect. We can stabilise aspects of objectivities whereas concrete

64.
159 Ingarden, *The Literary Work of Art* 88.
objects are continually subject to change. By treating Kerrigarðr as a set of objectivities, I can ground its history by suspending it between the historical hinges in a state of unchange. Within the whole work, that is, the reader’s encounter with the work as a whole, Kerrigarðr will appear larger than life.

But how can I claim to place an immutable Kerrigarðr (as an Ingardian-type constituted object) in an actual historical world and still declare Kerrigarðr an explicit or concrete object if I also say that immutable objects are opposite, in one sense at least, to concrete objects? If we think of how the two worlds are cast – the historical frame and the fictional Kerrigarðr – it is possible to see how they do not contradict each other.

By setting the poem as a fictional history within an historical world where indeterminate spaces abound, I have brought Kerrigarðr into the actual world which acts more like the schematised literary object rather than like a concrete object, with its immutable sets of historical artefacts. At the same time, Kerrigarðr composed structurally as a metonymic object, a shifting element, is even more like the concrete historical world setting of the poem with its gaps in factual information. In its likeness to the concrete historical setting of the poem, Kerrigarðr also partakes of the definitive or determinate characteristics of the actual world. This likeness allows me to draw Kerrigarðr into the historical setting that, as a concrete object, holds the double quality of changeable and determinate contours. It gives me an opportunity to demonstrate the specific aspects with which the intuitive pictures – the object strata comprising Kerrigarðr – leap the gap from sound to the page in a certain determinate way.
Working with the names of the pictures – from substitution-names to extended kennings – I can cast the image (within the indeterminate features of the ‘fictional history’) in determinate rôles. Also, the determinate parts of the picture can make that claim of definition in their nature because the actualisation (the reader’s as well as the composer’s experience) of these objectivities connects without gaps (unlike the edges of the historical setting). This largely has to do with the fact that the imaginative pictures occur in space and time much as Ingarden’s “ideal objects” seem to exist – immutably, “not subject to change.” The basis of this immutability may well lie in the way in which we picture the object stratum when we experience a work of art, a consideration that remained a puzzle for Ingarden (bold italics mine):

We are speaking here of real and ideal objects only as of something which in itself is ontically autonomous and at the same time ontically independent of any cognitive act directed at it. If someone were unwilling to agree to the ontic autonomy of ideal objects, he would still have to distinguish them from real objects if only because the latter originate at some point in time, exist for a certain time, possibly change in the course of their existence, and finally cease to exist. None of this can be said of ideal objects. In connection with their timelessness, ideal objects are not subject to change, though it is thus far not clear what the basis of their immutability is. Real objects, on the contrary, undoubtedly can change – precisely as we have claimed – and actually do change, although it is again questionable whether they must always essentially change.

It seems to me that the unchanging quality of objectivities acts in the same way as when we recall a memory or when we participate with objects in our imagination.

It was during my first attempt at composition that I was faced with the dilemma of recording the imaginative experience, a time when I could only conclude that I was a

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failure at any kind of composition. I had composed a short musical piece that I could repeat again and again with my fingers on the piano keyboard. But the music would not leave my head, that is, make the leap from sound in my head into scores on a page. While I played, the notes were alive in my head. But when I attempted to record these notes, it seemed that they ceased to exist. Because of this I could not take the composition-attempt further than the point where I realised that I could not record it. Today, only the memory-picture of my fingers on the keyboard remain; the sounds on the margins of memory have all but ceased to exist in my head.

It was not until the genesis of Skulváði Úlfr that the possibility of mapping the sounds in my head (from which images such as the world of Kerrigarðr and its neighbouring territories spring) became apparent. The attempts to record the sounds grew largely from a compulsion to face the apparent confusion that occupied the gap between the sound in my head and the page empty of recorded notes. It dawned on me after the first few lines of the poem made it to the page that I had not been a failure at composition but that what I had failed at was in saying to myself I can picture it.

For example, if we hear Vivaldi’s Four Seasons, we say quite naturally, if we are impressed with the performance of it in some way, “I can picture that” often meaning “I can feel that.” We often close our eyes when we make such a connection with the work, in order to see it or picture it more clearly. If we are asked to say what it was about the piece that we could feel/picture, we will often begin our response by relating it descriptively to an experience which we link to a particular series of sounds. We refer to an image, a visual image of some kind, because the language we use is that of metonymy – “substituting the
name of an attribute or adjunct for that of the thing meant,"\textsuperscript{162} in order to elaborate and extend our naming of the picture we saw. We say the music transports us to a certain place, into the company of a certain person. We go through the act of \textit{picturing it}.

We end up accumulating a series of meta-names to replace the image of the sound, eventually. We take away with us the experience of the names as a catalogue, if you like, that can be put away and retrieved, so that we tend to respond in a very similar manner to \textit{Four Seasons} each time we hear it. We seem to \textit{prepare} ourselves to hear it after the first time; we participate in the \textit{prehensile} aspects of the work of art. Albeit, we may respond to one aspect more strongly than another in the music when we hear it again, that is, we highlight a different meta-name in the files of the work's object stratum.

In the \textit{Skulvádi Úlfr} I not only realised that I could picture the sounds of the verse from the unexplored imaginative territory but that I could bring the contours of the picture, as is, into the physical or actual world of the page. Not only this, but I found that the pictures could remain in the context of my picturing them. I did not have to create them as symbols, but could keep the objects encountered there in their original context, weaving them into the historical fiction point-by-point to meet the historical setting of Viking and Spanish history and the records of myths in Viking poetry found in the \textit{Elder Edda}. In a sense, this way of treating the objects was to make them function like historical artefacts.

\textit{Skulvádi Úlfr} then is a record, a map, of the \textit{picture of these sounds}. Within the quasi-historical framework of The History of Kerrigarðr, if 'I can picture its sounds' I need not

\textsuperscript{162} The Concise Oxford Dictionary definition of "metonymy," 7\textsuperscript{th} ed.
do much else but name them. Or do I?

Once you have learned what something is called – the word or phrase for it – you are prepared to begin putting the word to various uses such as describing the thing, praising it, cursing it, or requesting it. The meaning of the term is realised in such linguistic acts. Thus its meaning is not simply the thing it names or stands for. It is rather what you do with the word or phrase, what sort of linguistic action you take with it, after you have found out that it is what the thing is called.163

In this way I should therefore be able to describe places, characters, even actions using meta-names if I also think of meta-naming as the explanation of a legend such as we find in an atlas of maps; each meta-name labelling the extent of the picture of the imaginative terrain. Old Norse poetry, primarily descriptive, lends itself ideally to this approach with kennings and substitution names. Within the narrative of the History of Kerrigarðr, for example, we meet mechanical devices of a strange order such as The Stone of Amarr and the By-ways of Bifrost and we travel to places such as the under-world of Grimmdøkk or the Kjatsl hills. I use these names – “Amarrsotlu,” “Grimmdøkk” – these nominated objectivities as meta-names not only to describe my imaginative world but the process of my attempts to determine its nature as an unknown territory. As well, groups of naming-words used as puzzle-makers in the poem act as meta-names. Three lays specifically set out to do this overtly using the staves or stress-by-alliteration system of the poetry. These are “Xim’le’re” (V:1, 110), “Íva’s Lay of The Verse-maps of Skulváði Úlfr” (V:2, 119) and “Skulváði’s Lay of Síswoy’s Grottason of the Hisrita & Týringar” (VI:2, 177). Each name also acts as a skáldic shield-poem – an image-word set composed from a picture motif (see

163 Virgil C. Aldrich, Philosophy of Art, Foundations of Philosophy, ser. ed. Elizabeth and Monroe Beardsley (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963) 74-75. The function of lines-of-ear and lines-of-sight in Skulváði Úlfr agree in general with Aldrich’s ideas on music and feeling: “I press in favor of the heresy that the content of a musical work is as visual as it is auditory...” 71.
In Skulváði Úlfr I aimed to reduce the number of variables by using names with which to create the narrative in such a way that the variables are built up not only horizontally and vertically (as we normally see at work with the use of metaphors) – as if along edges. They also fold back on each other as a map is folded into a book so that the legend overlaps itself without losing its individual qualities. In this respect, all the main characters within the text and the way they speak exhibit some aspect of shape-changing. For example, this may be found in aspects of naming especially where this supports the illusion of authenticity as in Kerrigan Iron Hand’s list of names (IV:4, 103) which keeps the epic in the tradition of the “naming-custom” dating to the Migration Period where “the name of the son always alliterates with that of the father.” In Skulváði Úlfr, this applies to male and female descendants. Where a name does not alliterate with the direct ancestor’s, this indicates a gap in the genealogical line.

The intervention of shape-changing is also used in the portrayal of the “Vanir giants” (Áztlan-Vanir overlords) as guardians of burial mounds and in those of the unexplained appearance of shamanistic wise-women (Aíta and Síswyo) such as can be found in Grógaldr (The Groa’s Charm). Shape-changing also places the epic comfortably within the belief systems portrayed in the Elder Edda, for example, “the idea of the voluntary journey of the king eastward” (see Kerrigan journeys in Book IV). When Kerrigan makes an involuntary journey in Skulváði Úlfr, he goes west and south, to Grimmðókk.

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164 See Olrik 44.
165 Grógaldr in Svipdagsmál (The Ballad of Svipdag) is part of the Elder Edda.
166 Ellis 194.
Shape-changing is used to convey the rôle of extraordinary light (for Óþýla and Skulváði). It is incorporated in the portrayal of the speaking dead (Dagazar's brother and Kerrigan), the fluidity of solid objects (The Shifting Stone of Amarr and the skin-stone door to Gildrac). Shape-changing and light threw up an interesting if divergent point. As part of a Medieval reading, Gwen Terrane surprisingly makes reference only once to the significance of light-making objects. She draws attention to the difference between the tree of light-rings or Tyrings (VII:2) and the light-box furnace used by the Húlðrac to create Skulváði's sword, "Flame." Perhaps her reticence is due in part to the historical evidence that the lýsigull, an independent light-generating power source owned by Hler or Ægir, was least likely to have appeared in the texts of Viking poems (although it appears in Snorri's Skáldskaparmál and in a prose introduction to Lokasenna).

Shape-changing is present in the ability of the natural and Mœhrn-made landscape to transform its shape (The Path of Three Staves and Bifrost Bridge). The characters use disguise in one form or another, a characteristic aspect of the relationship between the living and the dead found in Old Norse poetry. Some are able to transform their own outward appearance or are able to recognise the changed appearance of objects that assist them in travelling. There is even the suggestion in Book VI Part 1 that Síswoyo has transformational qualities as the Water Bird. In general, however, for all their shape-changing capabilities, all the figures and their environment are treated as quite substantial - as each contour is a formalistic element. Amarr's Shifting Stone is explained as being able

167 "While there may be an Indo-European substrate to the poems of the Elder Edda in which Ægir appears, the motif of his possession of a lýsigull is independent of his association with feasting, and... does not appear in the poetic texts themselves but only in Skáldskaparmál and the Prose Introduction to Lokasenna, which is almost certainly among the last parts of the Regius manuscript to have been written...." Clunies Ross, Skáldskaparmál 143-44.
to operate with other physical structures. What makes it different from ordinary objects is
the ability of some people to see it differently.

Considering shape-changers as part of character portrayal in *Skulváði Úlfr* was an
interesting gap with which to play for two reasons: (1) to provide an understanding of the
ways to travel in *Muspellsheimr* and consequently (2) to provide image-sets as *readable
characters in a script* for an ‘alphabet’ to comprehend the intuitive terrain. Reading and
delineating them went hand in hand with the drafting of the pages of the poem. The stanza
lines themselves offer constant shifts. Just when I thought I was comfortable with a
pattern, it exerted changes with each speaker, with each new terrain. The font (Garamand
Classic Light Italics)\(^{168}\) was chosen because it was the closest to the font style that would
have been used by Rinaldi da Giacomo, a sixteenth-century Venetian publisher. Terrane’s
annotations in the roman version of that script (in 9 pt, two point sizes smaller than the
main body of the poem) give the impression of being a different font style. In the end,
however, whatever Terrane says in the margins is subject to scrutiny. Meanwhile, the
*translated poem* is less so because it is ‘closest’ to the original text (as ‘invisible’ as that is).

The player-readers, once named, also participated in shaping and changing the terrain
through their responses to it. They offer one set of clues as to how to travel through the
text. Some are powerful and very vocal. Some remained silent, such as the Týringar, and
others speak for or about them creating a complicated layering of lines-of-sight. Some
leave trails and others do not. Some seem to be rogue characters, like Eyes of The Moth.
Of specific sets of characters developed, some to a greater extent than others, there are the

main seekers – the Kerrigash, the Cherokee Wolffem and Ximacan chiefs and their heir. We also encounter the warlords’ descendants of an Asiatic empire ascribed in the poem to the Vanir of Old Norse literature who became the Ásatekr or Aztecs or people of Áztlan. The Forskarlar or Waterfall Giants are of unknown origin. The Hísrita form an exclusive tribe referred to as the Spider Clan, origin also unknown. Mœhrn who live in the hidden groves of the Moving Wood along the River Móat and beyond are of unknown origin. The Flame-drows’ messengers, the Húlðrar, are nomadic unknowns who lift text from levels of pure energy in the terrain. We never meet the Flame-drows themselves but one character, Modlog, is reported to have seen them in their guise as “Yoxtpa’ka.” The Týring Giants, the poem suggests, might be the original Mud Men of contemporary Guyanas. The Hrimnir of Grimmðókk are possibly inhabitants of the Peruvian plateaux, but the geography of the land between the southern coast of Kerrigarðr (The Edge of The World) and that of South America leaves this very unclear. Síswoy is the only representative of the ancient Toltecs. Íva of the Ívaldi Clan is a member of an ‘unmapped’ North American tribe. And there are the Sweet-tongued giants and their allied etin-beasts, Áztlan-Vanir allies. Each characterisation extends the narrative of Skulváði Úlfr either into cul-de-sacs that are identified by names or into open roads with no end, much as I experienced the imaginative terrain.

The only reason why the text is not confounded by so many open roads is because those who play out the most individual rôles, within each set of characters, explain at some point how to travel in Muspellsheimr. For example, He’yeya says you “first know where you are” (I:1, 14). The Sweet-tongued giant Hogrum’s portrayal suggests that disguise, a good sense of smell and a honeyed tongue will get you through the most treacherous terrain –
well, almost (II:3, 49). His troll or etin-beast allies use silence and double-crossing.

Cebanex suggests one road is enough if it takes you to the place where the rarest treasures are stored (III:2, 73). Modorr of the Hrímnr uses ruse and the ability to re-write what is already written (VI:3, 149). Incorporating all that she has inherited through the history of Kerrigarðr and her personal contact with groups from hidden landscapes, such as the Húlðrar, Skulvádi Úlfur discovers the secrets of light in order to travel where no one else but she and her mentors, Amarr and Síswo, can travel, in Books V, VI and VII. Síswo commands and waits on tracks to make themselves visible and she never returns to where she has just left. The Ívaldi priestess, Íva, strongly holds to the politics of movement, negotiating ways to return to her position of strength and “reading the fog” (VI:3, 148).

The particular habits of those encountered by Kerrigash travellers, such as Oþyla and Kerrigan, also give us clues to ways to travel in Muspellsheimr – how to travel-the-text, the “unknown terrain.” Mœhrn leave their homes only out of necessity because their means to journeys are through the gap-pages of their untidy books (although their chief engineer, Amarr, will travel to the cliffs called Garmr’s Teeth to take a vacation from his bridge-building work). The Waterfall Giants travel noisily, fully armoured, but they are good listeners (VI:1). Tyrting Giants are speechless and steal light that keeps them trapped. Hísrita always travel cloaked, are taciturn and greet ‘guests’ in military formation. The Húlðrar are always on the move, trading this and negotiating that within the ‘fiction’ of Skulvádi Úlfur.

The appearance of the pages of the book (besides the type of font used) also helped to convey shapes and changing in Skulvádi Úlfur. Each Book opens with a boxed initial capital
and each stanza is constructed using drop capitals outside the left margin of the text. My original intention was to illuminate, by hand, all the initial capitals. This plan eventually gave way to the needs of the text – to convey the importance of space, scriptural markings and texture. In understanding these needs, a reproduction of the cover of this spatial text needed only to be constituted as Rinaldi da Giacomo’s frontispiece that reflects the script of such a publisher. The entire poem is presented on cotton-fibre, ivory-coloured paper as a constant ground, although this constant reminds us without fail that it is not ordinary because it is different from what we expect of a modern printed book that is not classified as an artwork.¹⁶⁹

In drawing the ‘illogical frame’ of shape-changers and other characters into determinate rôles, the imagined objects were consciously cast in the narrative with a strict observation to their rules of narrative. These objects had to observe the sequential order that they offered – the “manifold of words” which held the pictures explicitly while allowing other sequences of pictures to flow through or with them smoothly. I wanted to grasp the most determinate aspects within the lacunae between myself and territories of the intuitive terrain to show the clarity of what I picture of those poetic spaces. I used the patterns from sound-maps and historical and mythological references to distinguish one character

¹⁶⁹ The publication of extracts of Skulvádi Úlfr in literary journals made the importance of the precision of the written text and the consistent caesura even clearer. I found that trying to maintain the appearance of the text to fit in with editors’ formats or, rather, their publishing software, meant sometimes losing initial capitals, drop capitals and the italicised text. The opportunities to publish the extracts proved a good testing ground to stand back from the work. It demonstrated to me that the rôles of the framed letters and italicised text were important to the terrain of the work as a whole, as is the texture (if not the exact colour) of the paper on which it appears in written form. In all cases, the editors made a concerted attempt to distinguish the text in one way or another – italicised text, a hanging first line, bolder or larger font first letters for each stanza. See Scarp 30 (24-27), Four-W 8 (95), Writing Ulster 5 (203-04), Chain 5 (14-16), Sulfur 44 (30-38).
from another, to demonstrate the development of the thinking of individual characters, and to define how these individual characters sounded to each other.

A good example to illustrate how this works is *The Legend of The Son of Nadlan: The Rus'* (V:3, 127-31), a self-contained story about an ancestor of one of the first Vikings to arrive in the land they would name Kerrigarðr.

These are the *sound-images* brought from the imaginative territory to Nadlan: “Nadlan,” “silver,” “husband,” “singing stones,” “Gardril,” “Gardabon,” “Radak,” “Laak,” “rapier toes,” “man-beast.” The images were cast, using the music of song metre, to describe my meeting with a world surprising and familiar as that encountered by the adventurous Varangian, Nadlan: “It was fleeing the Ghuzz // that she found Gladsheimr – / for it seemed to her Óðinn’s plains.”

These are the facts drawn from history in which the sound-images were placed. The Rus’ were Swedish Vikings who used the river systems of Russia to travel beyond the Caspian Sea (at least as far as Samarkand) for raiding and trading. These Vikings also made up the Varangian Guard or *vaeringa-lið* of the Byzantine Empire until the late eleventh century.170 The *Vaering* or Varangian was retained in the east in Constantinople, Miklegard as well as in the west for example by Canute the Great in his “body-guard called *fingalið* in runic Swedish.”171


171 “In *Compendiosa historia regum Daniae*, Sven Aggeson’s Danish chronicle, it is said that King
The Seljuk Sultanate, first of the nomad Turkish empires grew from the Central Asian tribes called the Ghuzz (also, Toghuz or Oghuz) resulting from the influx of these Turkish tribes into Iran and a political climate favourable to them. They were converted from Buddhism to Islam in the tenth century. Between 1040 and 1055 their leader Togrul Beg was protector of the caliph of Baghdad. Daylami mercenaries from south of the Caspian Sea served Turkish armies in the tenth to eleventh centuries; they used short arrows known as hushan or javalduz. The Seljuk “flight arrow” is referred to among Snorri’s lists of poetic names for “arrow” as “flight-bright” and “Gusir’s terror.”

In Norse mythology, Ginnungagap signifies “seeming emptiness.” It is the void between Muspellsheimr (Land of Fire Giants) and Niflheimr (Land of Ice and the Dead). Gladsheimr means “place of joy,” a sanctuary of the Æsir (perhaps an actual haven for the legendary Asiatic King Wodan).

Canut organized a select body of 3000 warriors, ‘which he named Tinglit in his tongue’ – quam suo idiomate Tinglith placuit nuncupari.” Sven B. F. Jansson, Swedish Vikings In England: The Evidence of the Rune Stones, 15 citing M. Cl. Gertz, Scriptores minores historiae Danicae (1917-22) 1, 68.

The Swedo-Central Asian trade connection can be traced back to the 9th century. “While some Swedes made the journey south from Staraya Ladoga into Russia and down to the Black Sea, others followed an even more ambitious route directly east to the lands of the Bulgar tribes, the Khazar nomads and finally to the deserts of Arabia and the seat of the Abbasid caliph at Baghdad.... The Scandinavians may have traveled as family groups rather than as lone merchant expeditions, judging by the numbers of women’s graves that have been found along the route; there is also no reason to rule out the possible presence of female merchants.... Scandinavian merchants must have encountered the caravans that traveled the Silk Road because Chinese silks have been found in graves at Birka in central Sweden. These finds, together with the figure of Buddha that has been found at the pre-Viking Site at Helgö may even allow us to speculate on the extraordinary possibility that Scandinavians themselves may have journeyed all the way to the Chinese court or the Indian subcontinent.” Graham-Campbell, Cultural Atlas of the Viking World 197.

R. I. Page gives a useful, concise summary of trade with Byzantium and the mercenaries of the Jomsviking Saga, Chronicles of the Vikings 97-104.

The narrative is set on the historical rim of the poem and, chronologically, before the founding of Kerrigarðr, but bearing directly on the development of the character of one of Kerrigarðr’s rulers, Kerrigan The Fearless Iron Hand. The poem’s translator tells us: This is a story most likely told for entertainment during Kerrigan’s five-day wedding feast. The tale relates Nadlan’s historical travels placed somewhere between 1030 and 1050. The tale itself gives no indication of who might have composed it. Terrane intimates that it is “a story that may have been told by Íva at Kerrigan’s 5-day wedding feast as a warning about the direction of his rule.”

The Glossary to the Poetic Edda helped me to place meanings/translations for sounds within a voice or set of voices in the poem in the literary context of the Poetic or Elder Edda. The Glossary was used in order to provide a translation of the sound-maps from the imaginative levels. But it was often as helpful in finding possible meanings for sounds as in discovering that an understanding of the language of Old Norse is still filled with gaps of meanings. Words such as “sumbl” (assembly, social gathering) and “berserkr” (one who goes on a rampage, going berserk), “stumbling-block” are Old Norse words for which meanings have been clearly ascertained and whose use in modern English bear out their contemporary inheritance. The significance of the sound-map “mani-men” (11:2, 43) can be traced to “máni” meaning “moon.” Through the use of the single root-word “mani” in the poem, I linked both Viking and Cherokee language and concepts; the Viking, through the linguistic connection; the Cherokee, through the concept of the moon and the rôle of spirit-guides.

The research demonstrated that many Old Norse words found in the Poetic Edda are still
untranslatable and this gave me the freedom to include my own linguistic constructions "as is" from the imaginative landscape, that is, untranslatable sounds from the terrain, such as "Mœhrn" and "Hrógrmóat," the latter related perhaps to Hrogr meaning sanctuary or altar of some kind. It is within the epic poem that the two words ("Mœhrn" and "Hrógrmóat") are explained – the first using the geography of sound (Mœhrn moaned); the second, the name of the sword that leads Skulvâdi to the Mœhrn and their sanctuary on the River Móat. Gwen Terrane provides 'historical information' regarding significant place names.

Tracing the development of the word "Gild-rac" is a good example of how a sound-image developed into a translatable word. Terrane's translation of the "Bookes" ends at Gild-rac. Gild-rac is the landscape into which the characters who survive Kerrigardr's war with the Spanish disappear. Readers first come upon Gild-rac in "Hel's Level Place" (V:2, 123) at the point when the narrative takes its second turn towards explaining the extraordinary or supra-natural. (The first was Dagazar's encounter with Loki's brood in the storm-journey to Ximayaca.) All we can logically ascertain from Kerrigan Iron Hand's journey to Hel's Level Place is that this is the edge of a landscape that is anything but level. One figure steps out of this strange terrain, who identifies himself as "Rónur, First Guardian of the Gild-rac," implying that there may be a second, third or further Guardians.

This word "Gild-rac" was first experienced as a sound and a script that I recorded as "Guildrac," pronounced as if were two words: "Guild rac." A strong stress was on the first syllable. The "u" was decidedly silent. The sense of a group of people or society dominated the significance of the word. A number of alternate spellings were considered: "gildrak," "gild-rak," "Gild rakk." It was in returning to and following the initial script
that led me to a mould for “Gild-rac.” I wanted to keep the first syllabic stress prominent and consciously changed the spelling of the first syllable to “Gild.” However, the removal of the “u” softened the “i.” I added an accent consistent with Old Norse – “i” (pronounced “ee” as in “feel”) – in order to retain the emphasis felt in the first appearance of the word to make it “Gildrac.”

One important step was still to be made in order to place “Gild-rac” in the poem. The decision was to separate the first and second syllables of the word in order to emphasise the first syllable even more. The separation, however, brought the second syllable into prominence. It was at this stage that I went in search of a translation within the context of Old Norse. I wanted to see how, or if at all, a translation into contemporary English could bring “Gild-rac” into the narrative or to see if it would be able to carry the narrative of *Skulváði Úlfr* according to its initial script. In two subsequent visual experiences of a mountainous hold without name or sound (first at a distance, then close up) brought from me the response: “Is this Gild-rac? And who lives there?” The questions ultimately brought Gild-rac into realisation, because whether or not there would be satisfactory answers, the questions brought Gild-rac into existence on the page.

The *Glossary* offered some clues to the rôle in which “Gild-rac” might be cast – how it might be read in the context of the narrative. Here the alternate spellings and the decision to separate the syllables of the initial script considered earlier were helpful in reading the *Glossary*. The word “gildi” signified “recompense, return; payment due, tribute, offerings or compensation.” A related word was “gialda (galt)” meaning “to repay, requite.” An important related phrase was “gefa harán hug” meaning “to prove one’s courage.”
“Drakk” or “dreka” meant “to drink”; “rac” or “rak” (also “reka”), an older form of “vreka” a Goth word “wrickan” meaning “to wreak.” “Reka” meant “to drive” and used in association with “riding horses, driven by or carried by wind and waves,” its reflexive form “rákomk” meaning “I wandered.” In addition, the suffixes “-reki” meant “ruler, doer” or “one who carries out something”; “-rek” meant “dead”; “af-rek,” “outstanding achievements.”

From this I experimented with a few ideas. Perhaps “going to Gild-rac,” could mean “drinking to recompense,” “riding waves of recompense” or the place “to which one is driven to prove one’s courage.” I finally decided that Gild-rac was all these things and that it would inevitably be linked to the main character Skulváði Úlfr who must “go to Gild-rac.” My search to give form to the imaginative terrain was acted out by my stepping into Skulváði’s shoes in her search to find Gild-rac as found in the intuitive image, not the etymological research. The route I was to take would fix me to the form of reading required to make the world of Gild-rac and the work, Skulváði Úlfr, a reality.

KERRIGAN’S WALL OF SHIELDS & THE TRANSLATED SPACE:
A GRAMMAR OF SECRETS

Ultimately, it is within the shield-poem construct of Skulváði Úlfr that clues to the translated space lie. Kerrigan’s Wall of Shields used in the Defence of the Walls of Margrnon (VII:5, 198) offers clues as to how to travel in Muspellsheimr or how to travel-the-text. The Wall appears as a visual periphrase, a legend providing stories of how the terrain is read by the composer-reader and how it may be readable for the observer-reader.
The Shields stand within and outside of the text, that is, they occupy the space of the published translation as well as offer, to someone standing outside the text, the map to the reading of that translation. As shield-poems, they encapsulate the poetic forms used, and stand for the acts of sound and intertwined spaces inherent in those forms. In doing so, the Wall of Shields embodies the textures of the original bond which holds the structure of the poem together – the historical rim and the metric forms, the agreed value. Also, the Wall gives a summary of the partial encounters within the text and provides the whole encounter with the text and the imaginative terrain at one glance.

The Wall of Shields, based on a grammar of secrets, sums up the argument on which the intuitive images and the fictional frame are hinged. The rendering of its components – the individual Shields – is paradoxical in every respect: clearly rendered as two-dimensional drawings yet arcane, closest to the surface of the poem while coming from the deepest level of the work as an ‘original text.’ They are the most mobile and the most fixed. We may increase them in size to understand their detail while we cannot do this with the words of the poem in order to hope to come to a finer reading or deeper understanding of its letters or groups of words. The Shields seem distant or “ancient” even though they are contemporary in construction and date the poem in a real way that the fiction built on historical lacunae contrives to achieve, forming the focal point between the distance of the intuitive images and the proximity of the surface of the pages on which they are recorded. This is true for all the images in the epic. They exhibit a quality which creates a mystery around the poem where the fictional reality does not, even though the fictional-aspect is ‘older’ while the images are ‘contemporary’ (both within the fiction and without it). The images participate in a kind of striptease where, as lines of poetry are read, they are
revealed but not necessarily vice versa and, when so, not to the same degree. As actual-object images, they remain the same while Terrane’s words may offer detours to what cannot be seen by referring to hidden texts. The images stop us in our tracks, halt our reading of the words. They do not invite visual tricks nor offer illusions to allow us to find them more meaningful than they are by our attending to their appearance. The Wall of Shields is based on a grammar of secrets, a *grammatike tekhne* or “art of letters” which sums up my exploration of the intuitive terrain and which maintains the fictional frame. It is a grammar in the original sense of the use of the word *grammar*: to illuminate the comprehension and the dexterity of writers, philosophers and those who worked at the recording of letters.

Gwen Terrane’s margin annotations show connections between her translation and the evidence of original texts, but she does not do this consistently because the actual-object images do not always afford her this ability. Despite this, we feel compelled to accept them because they occupy the same space as her historical annotations and commentary. It is not until the Wall of Shields, however, that she indicates that original material may be read in place of the words or, rather, *for* the collection of words comprising the Books: “Each is a Shield Poem telling a story that summarises significant events in the history of the rulership of Kerrigardr.” In other words, if the essence of *Skulvádi Úlfr* can be measured, it is to be found in the legend to its *object stratum* — in Kerrigan’s Wall of Shields.

The “immutability” of images conjured up in the poem is built on *our regard for the image* (whether as translated text or as actual-object), that is, on the act of looking at them rather than in the possible multitude of our responses. As we regard the text we invariably
annotate that text. We provide our own *companion reader*, companion traveller or annotator. In the poem, for example, Dagazar's companion reader is He'yeya; Viglid's is Líla; for Logram, it is Opyla. The reader who finds meaning in a poem is likely to be attending to the *spatial grammar* consistent with calling upon a companion reader as in recalling a memory. Our ability to make use of our ‘logic’ in calling upon or recalling a memory is perhaps at work when we catch ourselves saying “such and such a poem *touched me*” or “I was *moved by* such-and-such a line.” Levels of difficulty in accessing that logic in order to read a poem may contribute to so-called misinterpretations of poetry and not to gaps in culturally specific information that exist between the composer's text and the observer's reading of it. If the latter were the case, I should never be able to understand *Beowulf* nor *Völuspá*.

When we speak about our comprehension of the grammar of a poem, in the contemporary sense (its linguistic structure) we use the language of the surface of the poem. We speak about linguistic structures and meaning, about the appropriateness or lack of it in sets of images. Sometimes, however, we will venture to say that we feel a certain way or we are moved by a particular image even though we do not say how the linguistic structure makes this so. We rarely admit to the secret grammar, that is, speak openly about the *grammatike* *tekhnē* that we have used to begin to “feel” the poem in this way – that of applying how ‘we remember’ to the ‘way we read.’

The shield-poem construct of *Skulvádi Úlfr* offers us ways to read the basis of the function of reading-as-remembering. The Shields draw attention to our *regard* of the lines and the sounds of the stories they embody. They are, as it were, our final line of defence against
difficulty in establishing command over the text and to readings of the poem; a firewall, battle-wall or *skjaldborg*, if you like. They command us to be readers of *contours*, to read the “History of Kerrigarðr” *in this way*, and to defend our ‘ground’ if we are to overcome difficulty with the terrain *in this way*.

The Shields are identified, from first to ninth as: Loop, Word, Constraint, Ladder, Directions, Flood, Inversion, Black Stone giants, Cipher. Some Shield signs appear to be like real or recognisable objects – Loop, Constraint, Inversion, Black Stone giants – the first, third, seventh and eighth:

![The Shields](image)

The most easily recognisable ways of reading are the ones that we often point to when discussing difficulties with reading, the ones we readily and openly speak about: Loop or circular arguments (for example, see Eco, Jakobson, Bleich), Constraint or restrictive arguments (Riffaterre, Fish, Culler), Inversion or contradictory arguments (Jauss) and Black Stone giants or characters and voices we cannot easily place (Ingarden). These oftentimes comprise overt techniques used by a composer to play with linguistic puzzles as occurs in contemporary “language poetry.” We encounter some of this fixation with the linguistic puzzle through Íva in Book V, while Kerrigan’s response to the Dragonbing Stone’s *dróttkvætt* is one in search of the link between the linguistic connections as well as what is hidden in *his* connections to the text. Often, it is linguistic techniques that occupy us when we theorise about the meaning and significance of a poem.
In Chapter 5, I discussed how the third, fourth and sixth Shields operate as common, secret signs. The second, fourth, sixth, and ninth Shields are related to signs in lacunae, the frames of the grammar of secrets – Word, Ladder, Flood and Cipher:

Word is the place where we always begin. Cipher, or learning how to remember-and-read personal ciphers and the act of deciphering, is the place where we always end, though that "end" is often also the means to acts-of-comprehending and to beginning again. It is the common signs which provide the basic three steps to reading the poem. The initial act is one of constraint. The second level is disruption/transformation or that of the nature of Hágl. Hágl and Nauðr form the act of Ladders or 'going to ground.' Týr is third common step which demands that we focus on how we move through 'new ground,' how we manoeuvre unfamiliar territories of the text.

However, it is the fifth, Directions, which is the central Shield. If we recall, Íva is unable to unearth the 'real significance' of the Verse-maps because she does not seem to have the language to go below the surface of the Verse-maps. In Book VII she attempts to steal one of the Shields. We are not told which Shield, but I suspect that it is the linking shield in the Wall series, No. 5:
Shield No. 5 seems to be a combination of recognisable object and scriptural sign, the place where linguistic argument and the untranslatable meet, where we cross ‘edges of utterance’ to the first door or “musical window” of the intuitive terrain. The combination might, perhaps, be likened to Ebstorf’s world map c. 1235, held in the Newberry Library collection, with its conflation of lines of landscape and lines of rationalisation of the existence and significance of those lines as a description of “the world.” In this sense, *Skulváði Úlfr* offers a conflation of spaces of lines-of-sight and lines-of-ear as a description of the world-as-a-poem.

As a “history of the rulership of Kerrigarðr,” however, the Wall of Shields does not seem to offer a straightforward explanatory series, neither as a tool to facilitate reading the Books consecutively nor as a chronological account of the rulers or authors, even though it is supposed to refer to a “history.” Do they refer to a cycle of events that applies to each ruler? What and where in the “history” are we to find Loop, or where, Flood? If we try to relate them to specific narrative sequences, a consecutive or chronological order seems to make little sense as well. If Loop relates to Dagazar’s rule, Constraint may also be about Dagazar’s history or, perhaps, Logram’s or Viglid’s for that matter. Could Loop refer instead to “The Great Temple of Circled Bones” (V:2, 124) or to “how to make your way into the first layers of the Fort of Margrnon” (VI:4, 196)? But, surely, the Great Temple

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174 Ebstorf’s map is reproduced in Johnson’s *Phantom Islands of the Atlantic* 172.
must relate to Ladder, Shield No. 4; or is it the referent for Cipher? Perhaps, Cipher points to the illustration of circles identified as a “cipher to the map of the cave-systems of Hel” (V:1, 109)? What are we to make of Directions? Examples of “directions” can be found in every Book. However, there is only one reference to a “flood” in the History of Kerrigarðr although there are several references to hurricanes and storm-gods.

The Shields seem to indicate that no order exists that can prepare the composer-reader for encounters with the intuitive terrain. Unlike Riffaterre’s readers, learning competence with ungrammatical and grammatical constructions “under strict guidance” by the composer, the readers of Skulváði Úlfr will find themselves in the presence of guides but never strict guidance. There seems to be more a drawing-out of questions consistent with exploration, such as the ones I have asked above, from the observer-reader in deference of a drawing-out of answers or conclusions. A natural consequence of this questioning would be that in the searching out for answers to the meaning of the Shields and the History of Kerrigarðr, the searching-process will discover itself, that is, the reader will realise Loop to Cipher and perhaps again to Loop, that is, realise acts of comprehending the text entitled “The History of Kerrigarðr.”

Although I have suggested three groupings for the Wall of Shields: (1) arguments on the surface (Loop, Constraint, Inversion, Black Stone giants), (2) secrets below the surface (Word, Ladder, Flood and Cipher) and (3) linking reader (Directions), the name of one Shield sets it apart from the rest. It suggests that a specific place, location or ‘character’ in the text is part of the pattern to reading-clues. This is Shield No. 8, Black Stone giants.

175 Riffaterre 164-66.
The Black Stone-wolves or Black-giants in the *Garden of Black Stone* occupy the darkest place which precedes comprehension or Cipher – where “one tree bloomed // rings of lightning / and still the plain was black” (VII:2, 181). They embody the “thus-appearance” of the *object stratum* of *Skulváði Úlfur*. We hear contradicting rumours about the giants, these foreign enemies, before we meet them. When we see them, through Skulváði's eyes, they are as “warriors frozen,” “speared to their shields” and if they move it is as if “for a thaw from stone.” They occupy themselves with “slavery to rings” of light, to circles of illumination which they both seek and are hidden by their single pursuit to “steal” this light, at least according to the *Hísrita*. Eyes of the Moth warns, however, that they are even more threatening than *Hísrita* rumours make them out to be. Often the ground where specific clues stand is *fixed on breakage*.

Black-giants' job, it seems, is to stay hidden, to provide the lasting questions that keep us wanting to remember and to read for the purpose of continually remembering, continually learning how to de-cipher. It is for this reason that we re-read a text, not, ultimately, to understand the formalities put before us by the composer but to keep alive *acts of comprehending* through questioning, as occurs through the sets of acts of reading presented in each Book through its collection of lays. The spaces occupying and occupied by the *grammatike tekhne* of the Wall of Shields seem to be revealed only through our looking away from the surface of the text and into places which partake of the nature of the *Garden of Black Stone*. The *grammar* these spaces hold is not one be taken in the strictest linguistic sense. Studying the formal aspects of a poem does not seem to reveal our secrets to ourselves. We might discover our secrets where we find what is, in a real sense, a *grammatike tekhne of contours* – the elements or rudiments dictated by poetic space as it
constitutes itself or bears itself out in the language it selects. If anything is to be learnt from the processes of command to be found in Skulváði Úlfr, it is that the means to travel in the land of fire giants and unruly skessa relies entirely on “thinking about remembering.” We are constantly waiting for the next curve in roads of light to provide keys that are capable of extending our landscapes. As with Amarr’s Stone-key “in transparency” or Möhrn’s books when read “in-council,” these roads reveal more spaces the deeper we travel by way of their edges or curves, the provision of which is made possible through the facets of each “road-key’s” components. In occupying a particular space, that is, in making itself visible, Amarr’s Stone-key, for example, creates a greater number of spaces within the gap by which it enters the picture and immediately upon doing so once activated (see Bifrost Bridge illustration, 204). Spatial engineers like Amarr are responsible for allowing us to see how the text performs through contours of transparency.

In applying the Shields to the Books as a whole – the whole encounter with reading – we may choose to travel as we wish, from Flood to Constraint, or from Word to Inversion. We may even have a favourite ruler whom we wish to ‘take across’ the Books with us. We may identify with Viglid The Mad Poet Prince, or with Kerrigan as “Iron Hand” or as “The Fearless.” From whatever direction we wish to travel in the epic and with whichever character, our questions always take us to Skulváði’s final question in Book VII, “Where do I go now?” (205) which may well lead us back to Dagazar’s asking He’yeya in Book I “Where do we go now?” (13) – from Loop to Cipher to Loop and so on. We (reader and companion-traveller) journey from we to I and to we again if we lose our way, in order to re-establish the journey to I, to stepping through the “skin-stone door” where there is only room for one to pass in any single moment. Discovering acts-of-discovering the Cipher is
informed by the most individual or secret encounters.

As readers, we are constantly preparing ourselves for what lies beyond the surface of the text. It is as early as the third lay of Book I that we depart suddenly from the historical rim and plunge into lacunae: “It was here the trouble came – // trails boring travellers’ backs” (8). From there on, the landscape takes a turn to places from which it never fully returns even when we embrace the historical rim once more with the Kerrigash-Spanish war in Book VII. From the first Book, our direction is challenged by “reddened giants,” our “prows” are in “splinters.” We have been set up for submission to “new secret spears” and any hold we believed we had on the text is “ripped” from our “grasps” (1:1, 9).

In Skulvádi Úlfr the Shield images seem to suggest ways to illuminate breakages in the text. As signals to how to read the ‘translation,’ the shield-poem construct of the epic imposes a structure which challenges our expectations of how to arrive from one edge of a poetic text to the other. The runic contours, as a set of signs, constantly defy attention yet demand attentiveness – a kind of uneasy vigilance, precisely because they remain uninterpretable, can only be observed as themselves. It seems to me that it is this regard which is the basis of the “immutability” of Ingarden’s ideal objects. Perhaps we are mesmerised by the clarity of the edges of such contours. It may be this “uneasy vigilance,” this willingness to be mesmerised by edges, such as we appropriate and apply in acts of remembering (in comprehending the experience of poetic images) which maintains the poetic object stratum in its immutable-seeming state.

This state of regard in which we are held by the poetic objects may be a key to the mystery
of so much that is elusive and elliptical in skáldic work which employs breakages not only in sentence structure but in individual words, intertwining words and word-images unexpectedly. As Crossley-Holland has said of Þjóðólfr’s shield-poem: “Like all scaldic poems, Haustlong is allusive and elliptical; no satisfactory translation is possible from a literary viewpoint.” The places leading to discovery of the Cipher may seem as tangible and yet as inaccessible as Kerrigan’s confronting the solid and silent Dragonþing Stone. They may be seemingly unchartable and illusive territories such as that with which Kerrigan is faced at the Path of Three Staves. We may even question our trust in our companion reader, as Skulváði questions Síswoy’s directions at the end of Book VII.

We could say, on one hand, that our joy in reading a poem depends largely on how credible our companion readers are and that our understanding of the poem depends on how well we read the companion reader – how well we comprehend the companion’s directions. On the other hand, our capacity to read beyond where the companion reader is able to take us may require the quality of Amarr’s ability to manoeuvre the humming, Shifting Stone, or to step as Skulváði through the skin-stone door. The Shifting Stone and skin-stone door hold qualities of transparency, of lacunae. Such objects defy physical laws, are unfixed and unfixable, and within themselves sustain the keys to Shields for travelling-the-text.

These qualities of lacunae supply means of access that only open other doors to places like themselves, offering up tests of our vigilance in the tricky terrain of reading as in our thinking about remembering. Readers who find meaning in a poem are likely to be attending to this spatial grammar. When we read a poem (as composer-readers or

176 Crossley-Holland 212.
observer-readers), perhaps we become “Cliff-gazer[s]” – enabled to read landscapes that resemble the actual world but behave like Amarrsotlu:

_to the lazy eye it is faceless._

_At the Cliff-gazer’s command_

_it's facets grow steps – ‘Katzi’s fading tiers,_

enabled to attempt the trembling road for journeys to the most secret and remarkable encounters.
## APPENDIX

### List of Illustrations in the Epic Poem

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