

Section 1

Roots of the Troth:

The History of the Germanic Folks

Chapter I

The Indo-Europeans

The language of the Germanic people, and something of our culture, springs from a much greater stem. The Germanic language, like Celtic, Latin, Greek, Iranian, and Sanskrit (among others), is part of the Indo-European (I-E) language group, all going back to a common root called Proto-Indo-European.

Little is known of the Indo-European homeland; what we do know about it comes from the words that can be reconstructed from their variants in the Indo-European languages. We know that these early forebears lived where there were birch and willow trees; probably also ash, elm, and oak. Among the animals they knew were wolves, bears, lynx, salmon, elk, red deer, hares, otters, beavers, hedgehogs, mice, and perhaps roe deer; they seem to have known eagles, geese, cranes, and ducks, as well. Their domesticated beasts included cows, sheep, horses, pigs, and dogs. As far as their landscape is concerned, they had both mountains (or at least big hills) and large bodies of water. They were probably not a nomadic people, as both the domestication of pigs and the agricultural terms suggest permanent settlement and cultivation of land. The origins of the Indo-European community are still a matter for debate among scholars. However, there is general agreement that the people who lived on the steppes north of the Black Sea between six and four thousand years ago were speaking an Indo-European language, and were the cultural ancestors of the modern European peoples.

It is important to note that the settlement of Europe by the Indo-Europeans resulted in a cultural change, not a racial change. The peoples of Europe, eastern or western, are and have always been a heterogeneous mixture of physical types.

What distinguished the steppe peoples from their western neighbors was their language and culture. Like their western neighbors, the steppe folk derived a large part of their living from hunting, fishing, and farming of grains (wheat and barley) and legumes (beans, peas, and lentils). However, the basis of steppe culture was cattle raising. Cattle were absolutely the heart and soul of their culture. The word **dhenu* ("nourisher") was originally applied to milk cows. Later it was applied to nursing mothers as well. In time it became a name for the immortal spirit which was believed to nurture the soul of the individual. It survived in Avestan (an ancient Iranian language) as *Daena*, which meant "Religion".

The steppe people lived on the upper terraces of the Don, the Volga, and other rivers which drained into the Black Sea. They grew their crops on the lower terraces in summer and pastured their herds there in winter. In the summer the herds grazed on the vast expanses of the open steppe, watched over by groups of young men. These groups were the cultural root of the warrior-societies known to the various Indo-European peoples.

The cattle provided the muscle-power to pull the plows and wagons which the villagers used to grow and transport their crops. Horses became important for transportation only with the invention of the light two-wheeled chariot, about 4400 years ago. Cattle provided the means for migration, as well as the cause. Because the steppe people had developed a way of using the resources of the steppes for nourishment, their numbers increased with each generation. This new way of life was dairy farming. Steppe grasses were far too tough to be plowed; simple wooden plows could not cut through their roots. By raising cattle, then milking them and making butter and cheese, the steppe people found a non-destructive way to use the bounty of the steppes, as well as a way to obtain food from the animals without killing them.

Of course, the herds of cattle also provided meat, leather, horn, and bone for food, clothing, and tools. Sheep and goats provided wool, hides, meat, and horn. Horses were originally raised for meat and hides, but were later used for transportation. The men of the steppes were skilled craftsmen who made their own tools of wood, stone, bone, horn, and bronze. They used these tools to make wagons, chariots, boats, houses, and probably furniture, although no traces of beds or tables have survived. They also made jewelry of gold, silver, copper, and bronze. The women were skilled in spinning, dyeing, and weaving wool. They were also the basketmakers and potters, decorating their pottery with simple geometric patterns of lines and dots.

When the steppe people followed the Danube up into Europe, they found themselves in another world: a land of unlimited forests. They built their villages on islands or river promontories which they turned into islands by digging

ditches. They erected palisades of upright logs for protection, and built log cabins to live in. Whereas the steppe people had lived with entire (extended) families under one roof, in these new houses, each man set up his own household when he married.

In the earlier system, all of the adults of one family had called all the children "son" or "daughter" and all the children had called all the men "father" and all the women "mother". In this system there had been no orphans and no private property, except personal adornments. In the new system, which we still employ, each family, though still part of the greater kinship system, was responsible for bringing up its own children and providing for them. The earlier system of clan and tribe still prevailed for several millenia, each tribe being made up of several clans, each of which claimed descent from a common ancestor. Ancient nations were made up of tribes which had allied with each other for mutual benefit.

The Indo-Europeans were a patrilineal (not to be confused with patriarchal - KHG) society. Descent was traced through the male line. Because life was short and many children died in infancy, a woman's most sacred duty was to provide children, especially sons, to carry on the clan. The steppe people believed that spirits lived on in the tomb and required nourishment. Failure to provide a proper burial and offerings doomed the dead to eternal suffering as a hungry ghost. This belief persisted for millenia among many branches of the Indo-European people, including the Germanic-speakers.

The religion of the Indo-European people has also been much debated. Sweeping and imaginative attempts have been made to reconstruct an original structure by the scholar Georges Dumézil and his followers. However, Dumézil's method has often been criticized severely, as he relied on impressions and sweeping assertions rather than actual information (cf. Page, "Dumézil Revisited", for instance). The structures which he claims to be common to the Indo-European folk cannot be upheld within any individual branch (as will be discussed briefly in the section on the god/esses), and so there is some doubt as to how far they can be taken in regards to the Proto-Indo-Europeans. We do know that there was a cultural emphasis on the number three and on tripartism in general. For instance: the Indo-Europeans had three primary colours - white, red, and black; there are comparative suggestions that at rituals, a constellation of three different types of animal was sacrificed; the number three is the chief number of magic and ritual throughout the Indo-European world.

The hearth was the center of the domestic religion. The head of the family was the priest and his wife the priestess. They made offerings of the hearth fire every day at dawn and dusk. The fire was a living god, which contained the vital spark of the family line. For it to die out was a terrible sin which would cause horrible consequences for the family. The father of the family made offerings to the ancestors every month at the New and Full Moon. He made sacrifices to the powers of the fields in the spring and harvest-tide of every year. All through the year the father and mother of the family made offerings to the minor deities of the household: the powers of the courtyard, the livestock, the trees and groves, all the host of godlets who protected the people from calamity.

The greater gods received their offerings from the priestly families of the clans and tribes. The knowledge of the correct ritual procedures and hymns, the right to conduct sacrifices and receive a portion of the offerings, were the property of particular families and were passed down from father to son. The steppe peoples built no temples. Their sacrifices were made in temporary enclosures, aligned along an east-west axis. The sky gods received offerings on rectangular or square altars facing east; the terrestrial powers received their sacrifices on round altars facing west. The enclosure surrounding the altars was usually rectangular, but occasionally oval. It was made by cutting concentric lines in the soil or turf. Each sacrifice was a recreation of the world. In the mythos of the Indo-Europeans there had been three primal beings: "Man" (*Manu), "Twin" (*Yema), and "Shaper" (*Tvastr). Man, the first priest, had sacrificed Twin, the first king. Shaper, the first artisan, had created the world from the body of Twin. His flesh became the soil, his bones the stones, his breath the wind, his blood the waters, his vital energy fire, his eye the sun, his mind the moon, and his skull the vault of heaven. Whenever a priest sacrificed, he was recreating the primal sacrifice, renewing the cosmic and social order. All those who participated in the sacrifice were acknowledging their common descent and kinship, for it was believed that the first human couple had sprung up from the seed of Twin, spilled on the ground when he died. Each birth was a bringing together of the primal elements, a recreation of Twin. Each death was a recreation of the original dismemberment.

There is reasonably certain linguistic evidence that the Indo-Europeans worshipped a Sky-Father or Bright Father, whose name survives in the Latin Jupiter and Sanskrit Dyaus-pita, and in a more abbreviated form, Greek Zeus and Norse Týr. Dumézil theorizes a double sky-rulership, in which the Bright Father governed human law, social mores, the day, light and summer, while his counterpart, the "Seer", represented cosmic law, ancestral custom, the powers of magic, of night, and of darkness; the possibility of this set-up is spoken of further under "Tiw". The Indo-Europeans probably knew a Storm Lord, the god who brought the life-giving rain and snows, who was also been the warrior god who protected the herds and the people from enemies. The great enemy of the Storm Lord was the "Dragon". This was a terrible serpent-like creature who swooped down out of the sky during stormy weather and devastated the land before being bested by the Storm Lord. To any resident of the American prairies, the "dragon" is instantly recognisable as a tornado: it was only when the Indo-Europeans left the steppes and moved into areas with less violent weather that the "dragon" developed into a mythical beast.

Other important celestial deities included the Sun Goddess, the daughter of the Bright Father; the Dawn Goddess; and the Twins. The Divine Twins were the sons of the Bright One also. The Twins were originally the Morning and Evening Stars, which were regarded as two separate entities. The Moon was an unusual deity, for he died and was reborn every

month. He was envisioned as taking the shape of a white bull, and being sacrificed at the full of every moon and reborn as a white calf two weeks later. His semen was the dew which was gathered by bees to make honey, from which the vision-giving mead was derived. The sacred mushroom also sprang up from his seed.

The terrestrial powers were even more numerous than the sky deities. Every grove and spring had its protecting powers. The two most important powers were the Lord of Water and the Moisture Mother. The Lord of Water was god of the waters beneath the earth. The Moisture Mother was the goddess of the fertile well-watered soils upon which the crops and the grasses depended for life. One version of the Moisture Mother was the goddess Danu, "River". She was the goddess of the river which still bears her name, the Don. She was regarded as the ancestress of many Indo-European tribes: the Danaans of India, the Danaoi of Greece, the Tuatha de Danaan of Ireland, and the Danes of Denmark. Many rivers still bear her name, including the Danube, the "Holy River".

The Indo-Europeans had an alcoholic drink for ritual (and perhaps other) use, called *medhu, probably very similar to the fermented honey mead of Northern Europe. They were familiar with both verse-riddles and chanted magic: for instance, one Old Norse riddle (set to Heiðrekr by Óðinn in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*) has analogies throughout the Indo-European world, as does the "Zweite Merseburger Zauberspruch", an Old High German charm for healing a broken limb. No evidence for Indo-European shamanism has yet been put forward.

The Indo-European people probably began to migrate from their homeland sometime between the fourth and third millennium B.C.E. (Before the Common Era), spreading fairly rapidly. The first major linguistic change was the division between the Western European ("centem") and the Eastern European/Asian ("satem") branches (the terms *centem* and *satem* are both words for "one hundred", the marker of change being the initial letter). The major European branches are Italo-Celtic; Aryo-Graeco-Armenian; and Balto-Slavo-Germanic. Much is still uncertain about the process of this migration. It was probably not a process of one folk sweeping forth to conquer and colonize on a large scale (as with, for instance, the Celtic domination of Central Europe during the early Iron Age followed by the Germanic incursions), for the physical types of people who speak Indo-European languages differ so markedly as to suggest that, whatever the original physical character of the Indo-Europeans might have been, they did not spread in numbers great enough to affect the genetic makeup of the local population. However, the Indo-European influence must have been extremely strong, for very little pre-Indo-European vocabulary made its way into any of the Indo-European dialects, so the probability of warfare as one of the means through which Indo-European was spread cannot be dismissed. The technical advancements of the Indo-Europeans, (particularly marked in their use of horses), may also have contributed to the spread of their language and culture: an analogy might perhaps be drawn with the dominance of the English language in the latter part of this century.

Because of the homeland problem, there is considerable difficulty in finding out when the Indo-European language/culture might have reached Scandinavia. While there are many cultural changes evident in early Nordic archaeology, identifying one as Indo-European is impossible. If the Indo-European homeland was indeed near the Urals, then Scandinavia would have been on the farthest fringe, and thus not likely to have become Indo-Europeanized until perhaps the second millennium B.C.E. If that were the case, it would open the way to much discussion of which elements of the Elder Troth were originally Indo-European and which were absorbed from the native ways of the North. However, the possibility also exists that the Indo-Europeans originally stemmed from Northern Europe, in which case there would be no evidence for a major cultural discontinuity between the Scandinavians of the Stone Age and the Viking Age Norse. Currently it is considered likely that the Scandinavian population remained relatively stable, with cultural changes arising from a combination of adaptation to climactic alterations and technological innovations filtering up from the south: if migration was a major factor in the Indo-European spread, then current theory makes it more difficult to explain the Indo-Europeanization of the North. Linguistically, as well, the Celtic and Germanic speeches seem to preserve many Proto-Indo-European features intact, which may also argue for a Northern European homeland.

Contributors

Most of this chapter was written by Sunwynn Ravenwood, author of a forthcoming book on the Indo-Europeans. Also contributing were:

- D. James O'Halloran, Elder-in-Training, from *Teutonic Culture: The Development of the Folk* (Eldership thesis-in-process).
- Gert McQueen, Elder

Book-list

(as compiled by Sunwynn Ravenwood, with the comment, "There are dozens of books on the Indo-Europeans; (these), and the Journal, are those that I would require as absolutely essential)

- DeCoulanges, Fustel, *The Ancient City: A Study on the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome* (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor books, 1956. Orig. pub. 1864).
- Dumézil, Georges. *Archaic Roman Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970)

- - *Mitra-Varuna* (New York: Zone Books, 1988)
- Gimbutas, Marja, *Bronze Age Cultures in Central and Eastern Europe* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1965)
 - - *The Prehistory of Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Peabody Museum, 1956)
- Mallory, James P., *In Search of the Indo-Europeans* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1989)
- *The Journal of Indo-European Studies* (periodical)

Chapter II

The Stone Age 9000 B.C.E. - 1800 B.C.E.

Scandinavia was largely covered by ice during most of the Stone Age: it was the last part of Northern Europe to become habitable. The earliest settlements in the Northland date to roughly 9,000 B.C.E., but human beings did not become common there until a couple of millennia later. At that time, folk were already being buried with grave-goods: the Swedish Bäckaskog woman was sent to the worlds beyond armed with a spearhead of bone and flint and a chisel. The dead may have been feared as well: one of the Skateholm burials, a powerful man whose skeleton showed evidence that he had survived a wild boar's attack and a flint arrow in the pelvic bone, was buried with due honour and a sprinkling of red ochre - but his head was chopped off and placed by his foot, an act which Norse sources describe as a means of quieting the walking dead. Red ochre was frequently sprinkled over the dead; animals or parts of animals were also set in the graves. The Skateholm cemetery includes a few dogs who were set in human graves with broken necks; a Danish burial had a small child's corpse laid on the wing of a swan.

With the rise of agriculture, the cult of the dead also seems to have become more important. About 3500 B.C.E., the people dwelling in the areas of Germany and Scandinavia began to build houses for the dead out of slabs of stone, often with mounds heaped about them. By 3000 B.C.E., these houses had developed into huge passage graves, where the dead of a whole community could be brought over a long period of time. Clay vessels of food and drink were given to the dead; they were fully fitted out with weapons, tools, and jewelry. The tombs and their mounds often had one or two circles of stones set out around them. These may have been meant to ward the dead from evil wights, or to keep the corpses from wandering out of their graves; the stone chambers certainly suggest that the dead were expected to live on in their homes (*The Prehistory of Germanic Europe*, pp. 97-98), a belief which was certainly very strong in Germanic culture. Around this time, another means of burial/worship appeared in Jutland: the graves were dug into the ground, but a hut was built beside them where the grave-gifts and perhaps the body could be displayed until the burial (*Prehistoric Denmark*, p. 22).

The next major change in Scandinavian Stone Age culture was the arrival of such items as the cart and the well-fashioned stone battleaxe, about 2,800 B.C.E. At this time, burial customs also changed somewhat: graves were single burials covered by low mounds, which were also marked out by stone rings. More sexual differentiation can be seen in the grave-goods at this time: men were commonly buried with stone axes, women with amber necklaces. It has been suggested in the past that the "Battle-Axe People" may have been an invading horde, but that is not commonly accepted now (*A Scandinavian Saga*, pp. 75-76).

For obvious reasons, we know only a few things about the religions of the Stone Age. Amber was very important at that time, both as a magical gem and as a sacrificial item. Many Stone Age amber deposits have been found in bogs, some totalling as much as 10 kilos (22 lbs.) of beads. These gifts were probably given in the form of huge necklaces, and suggest an early worship of a goddess who dwelt in earth and water (perhaps similar to Nerthus or Frija?). Miniature axe-heads of amber were also worn as amulets: the double-headed form of these is strikingly similar to the Þórr's Hammer amulets of the late Viking Age, and it is possible that the belief in the warding might of the thunder-god's weapon could have continued unbroken from the Stone Age to the conversion (see "Thonar"). The National Museum of Denmark also holds several small amber animals - wild boar, swan or goose, and two fragments that may have been elk or deer. These are thought to have been used as hunting-magic talismans, though it should also be noted that the wild boar and the waterfowl, in particular, continued to be major figures in the magic and religion of the Northern folk until the conversion to christianity. As in later Germanic religious art, the head was given special prominence, as shown by the small amber sculpture of a bearded man's head from Norra Åsarp (Västergötland).

Axes, usually made of flint in the earlier Stone Age and greenstone or porphyry later, were also particularly important. They were often given as gifts to the gods, as was probably the case at Källgårds where fifteen fine axes were left in three neat rows in a marsh, and miniature flint axes were worn as amulets as well. A ceremonial axe with its butt carved into an elk-head was found in Alunda; it may have been an import from Finland, where such axes were more common, but rock carvings from Nämforsen also show men carrying staffs topped by elk heads (*Treasures of Early Sweden*, p.34). The use of ceremonial axes is attested through the Bronze Age; in Old Norse literature, the hallowing axe seems to have been replaced by the Hammer.

There are a number of Stone Age ritual sites in Denmark where holy feasts were clearly held: food and drink were brought in pottery vessels (which were then broken and left behind), and animals were slaughtered for the feast at the site. There is some slight evidence that human flesh may have sometimes been used in the lakeside feasting as well, though this particular form of ritual practise was mostly observed in front of the large grave-chambers in Sweden (Erikson & Lofman, *A Scandinavian Saga*, p. 62). The breaking of crockery and the leaving of the shards was particularly characteristic of religious feasting both in the marshes and at the grave-sites. This was probably done to send the vessel and its contents to the worlds beyond so that the god/esses and the dead would receive them. A horse-skull found at Ullstorp (eastern Scania)

with a flint dagger in it, dated to ca. 2000 B.C.E., is also thought to have been killed as a sacrifice - particularly interesting in view of the great importance of horses as sacrificial animals of the Germanic peoples in later times. Musical instruments may also have been used in Stone Age ritual. A number of bone and flint flutes have survived from that time, as has a bone scraper from Malmö. An artifact from Kongemose has been interpreted as a bull-roarer (a thin oval swung about on a thong to make a humming noise, known to primitive cultures worldwide). Clay drums, both whole and deliberately shattered, have been found outside of the Continental stone-slab tombs. The folk of the Stone Age probably used rattles as well (Lund, *Fornordiska klanger*, pp. 36-40).

Chapter III

The Bronze Age: 1800-500 B.C.E.

The Bronze Age is rich in religious materials, both because the custom of depositing offerings in bogs continued and became even more prevalent and because of the frequent carving of cultic scenes on large rocks. The Bronze Age rock carvings are found largely throughout southeast Sweden and along the southern coast of Norway up to Trondheim. Although the coastlines have changed since, it is thought that at the time they were carved, nearly all of them were within sight of the sea. The most common images on these stones are the ship, the wagon, the plough, the bare footprint, the phallic man with axe or spear, the sun-wheel, and the mating couple. Many of them are carved with little cup-shaped depressions which the Swedes still call *älvkvarnar*; or "alf-cups"; in Sweden, offerings of milk and drink have been made in these cups up to recent times (Ellis, *Road to Hel*, p. 114). Some of the alf-cups are set in rows down the face of a sloping stone so that water (or ale, or blood from a sacrifice) poured into the top one will run from cup to cup. The cultic character of the stones cannot be mistaken: several stones show boat-borne processions with lur-players or acrobats. Their positions are similar to those of the little bronze figurine of the woman in the string-skirt which was sacrificed in a bog at Grevensvænge, southern Sealand together with several other figures. Among these figures were two men wearing horned helmets and holding large axes. These figurines had pegs underneath for fastening them to a base of some sort; it is theorized that they may have fit onto a model of a ship, creating a scene like those on the picture-stones (Kjærum and Olsen, *Oldtidens Ansigt*, p. 66). The most common interpretation of these figures is that they represent fertility rites, possibly depicting ritual dramas or processions.

The location of the majority of the rock carvings by the seaside, as well as the prevalence of the ship, implies that the sea played a very important role in religion during the Bronze Age - probably more so than during the Viking Age. At this point in time, Scandinavians were capable of crossing the Baltic and the North Sea; they were doing a thriving business with Poland and the British Isles, and their supply of bronze and gold was entirely dependent on the southward trade. Gløb points out that "Not only was enough (metal) required to counteract the wastage of tools in constant use; it was also needed for new weapons and ornaments for each succeeding generation since so many personal belongings of bronze and gold accompanied their owners to the grave. Sacrifices to the powers watching over the life and fortune of the Mound People swallowed up a large proportion of metal imports as well" (*The Mound People*, p. 134).

The ship may also have had some connection with the voyage to the Otherworld in the Bronze Age, as it certainly did in the Migration and Viking Ages. De Vries suggests that the tree which sometimes appears above the rock-carving ship (Kalleby, Tanum, Bohuslän) makes it less probable that these are either warships or the ship of the death-faring (*Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* I, p. 108); he associates it with the Maibaume ("May-Tree") of German folk-custom, which is a fir, spruce, or birch brought out of the wood and into the village in a festive procession on May Day (see "Waluburg's Night"). This would certainly seem to emphasize the fertility side of the fertility-death equation; it does not, however, negate the role of the ship as the vehicle of the passage between worlds. In this context, the ship-procession with its lur-players and holy dancers might be seen as bringing the might of the gods into the human world, or as bringing those who take part in the procession into the holy realm, or both at once.

The wain is, of course, the land-bound equivalent of the ship. Both appear as the bearer of the sun-wheel in the rock-carvings, and both are vehicles of the Vanic processions as recorded from the time of Tacitus onward. Probably the most famous wain of the Scandinavian Bronze Age is the Trundholm wagon: the bronze model of a six-wheeled wagon, drawn by a horse with sunlike decoration around its eyes, which bore an elaborately decorated and gilded disk. A similar model, with two horses and a disk, was found in a mound at Tågeborg in Scania. In the later Scandinavian tradition, of course, we know that "Árvakr and Alsviðr they shall up from here, / thin, draw the sun" (*Grimnismál* 37). By the Viking Age, the solar ship has been lost, although the combination of solar imagery with ships on the Migration Age picture stones of Gotland may suggest that the total replacement of the ship with the wain was relatively late. On a social level, the wagon, like the ship, is necessary for trade, agriculture, and even transport in war.

At the time of the rock-carvings, the sun may have sometimes been seen as a masculine being, rather than the feminine Sun known to Indo-European and later Germanic tradition: several of the carvings around Oslo Fjord show phallic figures with weapons, whose bodies or heads are sun-wheels. At Finntorp, a wheel-bodied man is shown mating with a long-haired woman; at Slänge, the phallic wheel-bodied man is approaching the woman, though they are not yet joined. This could be taken as representing the marriage of a sky- or sun-god with an earth-goddess. A number of these stones also show stags with sun-wheels in their antlers, or sun-disks with "antler-like motifs projecting from the rim" (Green, *The Sun-Gods of Ancient Europe*, pp. 80-1). It is possible that some of Fro Ing's solar aspects stem from this period of the development of Germanic religion.

The wedding-theme appears frequently on the rock-carvings. One, at Hoghem in Bohuslän, shows both a man and woman mating and a man copulating with a cow. The latter is especially likely to represent the mating of sun/sky-god and earth-goddess. Gløb also describes a stone from Maltegård in north Zealand which shows a man and woman with strongly emphasized sexual features reaching out to one another. A 'May-tree' stands behind the woman, and the scene is surrounded by a wreath of spring flowers (*The Mound People*, p. 167). The frequency with which the "holy wedding" is depicted on

these stones suggests that the mating was likely to have been carried out in public as part of community ritual

The plough is an obvious symbol of fertility and prosperity. This meaning is often emphasized by its context, as on the Litsleby stone where a phallic man is shown ploughing with a branch in his hand. He is just beginning the third furrow, which probably signifies that this is meant to show a rite connected with the first spring ploughing. According to Gløb, "On Bornholm the old folk used to say, 'Three furrows in Thor give a green spring,' which expresses the hope that the old god of heaven will send the blessing of rain over the field" (*The Mound People*, p. 150). The frequency of the plow in the rock-carvings also suggests that many, if not all, of the ceremonies/ritual dramas depicted on these stones probably took place in the early spring, supporting the theory that some of the pictures may show a ritual "Spring Wedding".

The bare footprints which appear on many of the rock-carvings have often been associated with the story of Skaði choosing her husband by his feet, and thus with Njörðr, whose feet were the most beautiful. This tale, which, like the story of Freyr and Gerðr, describes the mating of a Vanic god with a rather unwilling giantess, can, at least in part, be classed among the "Spring Wedding" materials, and thus seems to fit in with the general symbolism shown on these stones. It has also, however, been suggested that the bare footprints were meant to show the passing of a god, or perhaps the continued presence of an unseen god; and it may be that the celebrants who trod in the holy prints were filled with the deity's might as they stood there.

In addition to the ships, wains, and wedding-couples, the rock-carvings are also dominated by giant phallic men with axes and spears. While we cannot be sure in calling these figures by the names of the Germanic gods, their imagery fits with the deities we know. The god with the axe may well have been a thunder-god, if not *Thonaraz himself. In the Bronze Age, both stone and bronze axe-heads were used as charms against lightning, and stone axes continued to be used for warding and luck in the Northern countries up until the present day. Thonar's priestly character as hallower may be present in this figure as well: "the Hvitlyke stone at Tanum shows a man with an axe raised above a mating couple, which de Vries interprets as the hallowing of a cultic marriage" (*Religionsgeschichte*, I, p. 106) after the example of *Drymskviða* in which Þórr's hammer is used to hallow the bride. That the axes shown here were ceremonial rather than weapons of war is supported by the Västerås bronze axe (deposited as an offering with three sickles), the size and weight of which (12 in., 8 lbs.) make it unlikely that it was used in battle (Andersson, Jansson, *Treasures of Early Sweden*, p. 38). The spear is well known to us as the weapon of Wodan, which hallows the doomed for sacrifice; in earlier times, it could also perhaps have been the weapon of the Sky-Father *Tiwaz.

Burial customs changed considerably in the Bronze Age. Mounds became larger, perhaps as leaders and ruling dynasties began to emerge; it is fairly said that "More work was done on buildings for the dead than ever before in our history", and that the building effort for Bronze Age tombs "bear(s) comparison only with that of medieval churches" (Erikson, Lofman, *A Scandinavian Saga*, p. 95). The tremendous effort and expense of building the mounds and supplying the dead with their gold and bronze grave goods suggests a relatively high level of social stratification, an intense religious influence, and probably a considerable degree of worship of the dead. Some of the dead were buried in large oak coffins, which, combined with the peaty soil of Denmark, preserved the bodies and clothing remarkably well. The dead were buried fully equipped, often with very rich goods, and food and drink sent with them. One, the Egtved girl, was laid in her howe with a bark bucket that had been filled with a fermented honey-wheat-cranberry mead flavoured with bog myrtle. At her feet were the burned bones of a young girl, probably a serving-maid sent into the mound with her mistress (*The Mound People*, p. 60). Fresh yarrow flowers were also laid in the coffin, perhaps for magical purposes. The child in Guldhøj was buried with three crab-apples, which may have been meant to give it life in the Otherworld; the chieftain whose coffin lay beside the child's had six small split hazel-sticks by his dagger, which Gløb also interprets as a magico-religious grave-gift (*The Mound People*, pp. 92-94). In the later Bronze Age, cremation became common, and mound-building much less so.

The large curling bronze horns known as lurs (resembling a sort of sousaphone) appear frequently in the rock-carvings; a good number were also sunken in bogs as holy gifts. They seem to have been made and played in matching pairs (one horn curving left, the other curving right) tuned to the same pitch. Their musical character was enhanced by the use of rattle-ornaments which tinkle as the player walks. Clay drums similar to those of the Stone Age were also used in the Bronze Age, as were bull-roarers and flutes (Lund, *Fornordiska klanger*, pp. 45-53).

Ritual dance seems to have been practised by the women of the Bronze Age, as shown by the stone carvings and bronze figures of acrobat-women clad only in string skirts. Their positions are similar to some of those used by current-day belly-dancers, and it has also been pointed out by the modern-day shaman Annete Høst (personal conversation, Solmonth 1993) that the positioning of the round bronze stomach-disks worn by Bronze Age women would have been ideal for ecstatic ritual dance of that type.

Contributors

KveldúlfR Gundarsson, Warder of the Lore (from "Spring Rites and Bronze Age Rock-Carvings", *Idunna IV*, I, Rhedmonth 1992, pp. 45-47).

Chapter IV

The Celtic and Roman Iron Ages: 500 B.C.E. - 350 C.E.

The use of iron came to Northern Europe around 500 B.C.E. The period from 500 B.C.E. - 0 C.E. is called the Celtic Iron Age because the Celts dominated most of Europe at this time, while the Germanic peoples were largely limited to the Scandinavian area. Although linguistic evolution is difficult to date due to a total lack of any direct evidence, the accepted hypothesis dates the First Sound-Shift (Grimm's Law) which distinguishes Germanic from other Indo-European languages, to roughly 500 B.C.E., so that it is probable that the Scandinavians were speaking Proto-Germanic at this time.

Compared to the riches of the Bronze Age, the Celtic Iron Age was a relatively poor time for the Germanic peoples. The climate in Scandinavia was growing colder and wetter, forcing farming practises and the general lifestyle to change. Cattle had to be kept inside in the wintertime, usually sharing a long house with their owners; the living practices of the Northern folks in this period were probably unhealthier than they had ever been. However, improved ploughing techniques which made it possible to till the heavy clay soil also made it possible for fields to be used much longer before their fertility was exhausted, making settlements more stable in the long run and perhaps leading to a greater degree of social development and cultural continuity. No longer maintaining the widespread trade network which had brought them bronze, the Northerners were probably dependent on the Celts for iron; the Germanic word is thought to have been borrowed from the Proto-Celtic *isarno. In the early part of this period, the Celts clearly held a position of social dominance as well, as the Germanic word for ruler, *rikaz (German *Reich*/English "rich"/Old Norse *rikr*, "powerful") was also borrowed from the Celtic (Schutz, *Prehistory of Germanic Europe*, pp. 312-13). The social stratification which had become noticeable in the Bronze Age became much clearer in the Iron Age: the institution of the warband, which was to give the heroic tales of the Migration and Viking Ages their shape, probably grew up around this time, perhaps formed after Celtic models.

The Germanic people were clearly not subjugated by the Celts, however; fine Celtic-made goods often found their way north along the trading paths. The most spectacular of these pieces is the huge silver Gundestrup Cauldron, which was probably made by Central European Celts around 100 C.E., but was put in a Danish bog as a sacrificial offering.

The Germanic peoples began to push southward onto the Continent roughly around 200 C.E. It may have been about this time that the East Germanic branch (Goths, Burgundians, and several lesser tribes) began their migration into the steppes of Eastern Europe. It is also at this time that we can begin to consider with any certainty that the Germanic peoples knew their god/esses by the Proto-Germanic forms which evolved into the familiar Anglicized-Norse Odin, Frigga, Thor, and so forth. The Gothic alphabet preserves the names "Engus" (*Ingwaz - Fro Ing or Freyr) and "Tius" (*Tiwaz - Tiw or Týr); it seems likely that the Germanic folk also knew *Woðanaz (Óðinn), *Frijjo (Frigg), and *Thonaraz (Þórr), as well as the personified Sun-goddess (and probably a corresponding Moon-god). Tacitus, writing in the first century C.E., mentions a "Mother Earth" by the name of Nerthus (which developed into the Old Norse god-name Njörðr - see "Nerthus/Njörðr"). As has been pointed out by H.M. Chadwick in his ground-breaking study, *The Cult of Othin*, the Roman and Greek accounts of Germanic religion at this time and in the few centuries following are remarkably similar to the Old Norse descriptions. It is, therefore, likely that the basic form of the religion as we know it today from the Norse sources was solidified in the first part of the Iron Age, though many of the elements seem to have been present in the Stone and Bronze Ages as well.

Sacrifices of goods continued to be made in bogs and lakes throughout the whole of the Iron Age. With the increased scale of warfare, it became more and more common for the victorious warband to dedicate their foes to the gods. Captured weapons were bent, burnt, or broken, horses killed, battle-captives slain, and some or all of the booty tossed into a body of water. The oldest large sacrifice of this sort is the Hjortspring find (4th century B.C.E.), which included 169 spear-points, 11 swords, remains from several byrnies, and a large war-boat. A similar, though much larger, deposit was made at Illerup around 200 C.E.; smaller finds of this sort are relatively common through the sixth century C.E. The chief receiver of sacrifices of this type, as described in *The Cult of Othin*, was probably *Woðanaz; *Tiwaz has also been suggested, as he was once the "Sky-Father" of the Teutonic folk and later identified with "Mars" when the weekday-names were translated into Germanic, but there is little solid evidence for this.

Human sacrifice in the bogs also became relatively common during this period; the peat and anaerobic environment preserved these bodies so that not only the corpses and their clothes and gear stayed whole, but even the contents of the stomach can sometimes be analyzed. The most famous of these "bog people" is the Danish Tollund Man. A relatively young man, probably of high social status (his hands showed no signs of manual labour, which is true for an unusual number of bog people), he had been fed a porridge of late-winter gruel including a number of wild grains, then hanged and put into the bog clad only in skin cap, belt, and noose. P.V. Gløb theorizes that Tollund Man was a sacrifice to the goddess Nerthus, suggesting that the gruel of blended wild and cultivated grains may have been a symbolic mixture to encourage the goddess' spring return. He also compares the rope nooses which several bog-people wear to the twisted neck-rings of the goddess, "the pass which carries (the bog man) over the threshold of death and delivers him into the possession of the goddess, consecrating him to her for all time" (*The Bog People*, pp. 165-166). It is also possible, however, that this hanged man may have been given to Wodan: there are ten or twelve places in Sweden called "Óðinn's lake", and a South Jutlandic "Óðinn's bog" (de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* II, pp. 50-51).

In addition to the sacrifices themselves, many god-images survive from the Germanic marshlands throughout the whole of the Iron Age. Perhaps the best-known of these is the "Nerthus" from Foerlev Nymølle, a 9-foot forked oak branch with a shape naturally resembling a tall, slender female form and carving done at the crotch of the fork to make the identification perfectly clear. She was laid in a cairn of stones with a heap of pots around her; Schutz suggests that this may have been "her abode, to which she retired between festivals" (*The Prehistory of Germanic Europe*, p. 332). Both distinctively female figures, such as "Nerthus" and the smaller, but equally explicit figure from Rebild Skovhuse, and definitely male figures, such as the phallic god from Broddenbjerg (also found among a heap of stones in a bog with pottery around him) appear; on the Continent, male-female pairs are also found, such as the two from Braak (southern Jutland) and the bridge-guardians from the Oldenburg moors. Schutz comments that, "In spite of (the Germanic peoples') sophisticated tools and skill as craftsmen, the awkward crudeness of all these figures is striking and must have been deliberate" (*The Prehistory of Germanic Europe*, p. 333).

At this time, we also have our first record of holy groves. Although it is likely that the Germanic folk had been worshipping in groves and on top of mountains, as well as by lakes and bogs, for a long time, only the wetlands preserved the gifts to the gods which would have long since have rotted or rusted away in open air. Thus, it is only through Tacitus' report in *Germania* ch. 9 that the Germans "consecrate groves and coppices" and his descriptions of the holy grove of the Semnonnes (*Germania* ch. 39) and the grove where the booty from the Battle of Teutoberger Wald was hung (*Annals* I, ch. 61), that we know that the Germans of the early Iron Age were worshipping in much the same manner as did the Norse of the Viking Age.

By the beginning of the Common Era, the Germanic people had settled throughout most of modern Germany. Tacitus tells us that the many tribes were divided into three larger groups, the "Ingvaeones" nearest the North Sea (Jutland/North Germany), the "Hermiones" in the middle part of the country, and the "Istavaeones" everywhere else. The Germanic expansion was stopped in the first century B.C.E. by the counter-expansion of the Roman Empire, which had already devoured Gaul and was now reaching over the Rhine. Rome's attempt to subjugate and acculturate the folk of "Germania" came to an end in 9 C.E., when Hermann the Cheruscan (called "Arminius" in the Latin sources) entrapped and destroyed three Roman legions at the Battle of Teutoberger Wald. After that battle, the Rhine remained the frontier between the two folks until the Germanic tribes began to cross it in the Migration Age.

Although the Germanic peoples were never conquered by the Romans, it was common from a very early date for Germanic men to serve in the legions; Hermann, in fact, had been one of those soldiers, and learned the strategy and organization which made the victory at Teutoberger Wald possible in the Roman army. Roman goods, such as glass vessels and swords inlaid with gold figures of Mars, also made their way north to Denmark. As was characteristic of Imperial practise, the Romans along the border of the Rhine integrated local belief with their own, so that a great many votive stones with Latin inscriptions actually refer to Teutonic deities. Our knowledge of the Continental cult of the Mothers (*matronae* - see "Idises"), for instance, comes to us solely through such Romano-Germanic votives. Much of our knowledge of early Germanic religion is through such altars and the writings of Roman historians. However, the tendency of Romans to not only translate the names of foreign deities into those of their own (the *interpretatio Romana*), but to do it indiscriminately and haphazardly, as with the unarmed and cornucopia-bearing "Mars Ollodius" (Great Tree) from Custom Scrubs, Britain (Miranda Green, *Gods of the Celts*, p.118-19), sometimes makes it a problem to determine which native god was meant. Mars and Mercury are the most difficult names to evaluate, since they were the two most popular and, in the Celtic area, seem to have been used interchangeably (F. Benoit, *Mars et Mercure*). The other source evidence, however, suggests that most of the time, *Woðanaz was probably the god meant by "Mercurius"; whether "Mars" sometimes referred to this god as well is still open for question.

The fluid character of the *interpretatio Romana* was not solidified until the late third or early fourth century. At that time, the Romans had acquired the seven-day week from the Middle East and set the names of their own gods to it: Sun-day, Moon-day, Mars'-day, Mercury's-day, Jupiter's-day, Venus'-day, and Saturn's-day. When the *interpretatio Germanica* was applied to the weekdays, it resulted in a fairly standard Sun-Day, Moon-Day, Tiw's-day, Wodan's-day, Thonar's-day, and Frija's-day ("Saturn" never had a standard translation, perhaps because Wodan had already been used for Mercury and the other Germanic deity of death was a goddess - Hella - rather than a god). Thereafter, with a few antiquarian exceptions identifying Wodan with Mars because of his role as a battle-god, the Germanic identities of "Mercury", "Mars", "Jupiter", and "Venus" were firmly established.

Even though the weekday-attributions were not originally Germanic, we have been calling them by the names of our god/esses (and hence, knowing or not, calling *on* those god/esses) for some seventeen hundred years. Thus the choice of weekdays in worshipping individual deities is a matter of some worth: as Wodan has been called most often on Wednesdays, or Frija on Fridays, they are likely to be stronger on the days given to them.

For the three hundred fifty years of the Roman Iron Age, major changes were taking place within Germania. Northern tribes were continuously moving southward, partially in search of better land and partially because the migration from Scandinavia was apparently continuing. The East Germanic tribes in Eastern Europe, under great pressure from the migrating horde of the Huns, were also moving westward into Germania at this time. In the process of these movements, the smaller tribes that Tacitus had described were gathering into larger and more powerful groupings such as the Alamanns ("all

the folk") and the Franks. In 166, the tide of Roman expansion/invasion was abruptly reversed: the Quadi and Marcomanni broke the Roman borders in Venetia, and the Costobocci and the Bastarnae in Achaea and Asia. The Romans quickly regrouped and closed the frontier again, but not easily. In the middle of the third century C.E., several breakthroughs took place: Belgium, Upper Germany, Italy and Greece were all invaded and Gaul very seriously ravaged by various Germanic folks. Eventually the Romans managed to restore their old borders, except for Dacia, which was left to the Goths. Musset comments that, "In the end the brutal energy of Diocletian succeeded, after a generation of disasters, in keeping the Germans out of the Empire. But they had weighed up both its wealth and its weakness, and were not likely to forget either" (*The Germanic Invasions*, p. 11).

Chapter V

The Migration and Vendel Ages 350-792 C.E.

The turning point of Germanic culture was the Migration Age (ca. 350-550 C.E.). In this time, the Germanic peoples settled throughout all of Europe and part of North Africa, conquering the Roman Empire by a combination of military force and political treaties. In the process, however, they lost most of their own heritage, so that the descendants of the Franks and Burgundians today speak French; the descendants of the Visigoths speak Spanish; the descendants of the Lombards and Ostrogoths speak Italian; and only the Anglo-Saxons and those tribes who stayed in the area of Germania kept their cultural inheritance. The great events of the fifth century C.E. began with the great surge of the tribes across the Rhine in the winter of 406-07 - the surge which broke the Roman borders forever. They ended roughly a hundred years later with the baptism of the Frankish king Clovis - the act which was, in time, to seal the doom of Heathenism in Continental Europe. Yet it was from this time that many of the legends which inspired the greatest songs and sagas of the North sprang: the Migration Age was also the Germanic Heroic Age. This was the time of wyrm-patterned swords and boar-crested helms, ring-giving rulers and huge hoards of gold; this was the time of the great heroes and great betrayals.

The Migration Age got its start in earnest in 375, when the Huns devastated the kingdom of the Ostrogoths. The Ostrogothic king, Ermanaric, committed suicide. This is generally thought to have been a religious death connected with his sacral kingship, though opinions differ as to whether his orientation was Wodanic (Caroline Brady, *The Legends of Ermanaric*) or Wanic (Karl Helm, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*). The Goths, however, were forced to move westward in search of food and land. At this time, they had been aware of christianity for several decades: Ulfila had translated the New Testament into Gothic (giving us our only significant surviving example of an East Germanic tongue), and christians had suffered some persecution in 348 (when Ulfila was driven into exile) and 369. It was not until their period of settlement within the Empire, between 382 and 395, that the bulk of the Visigoths converted (Thompson, *The Visigoths in the time of Ulfilas*, pp. 106-07). The new religion had not been accepted universally by the beginning of the fifth century: Claudius Claudianus (d. 404 C.E.) recounts Alaric as having said, "The Gods also drove me to these actions. Birds and dreams are not for me; but a plain voice was emitted from the sacred grove: 'Cast away all delays, Alaric! Cross the Alps of Italy bravely and you shall penetrate to the city!'" (*Gothic War*, in *Grove and Gallows*, tr. James Chisholm) Alaric was successful in this: he led the Visigoths to sack Rome in 410. However, though occasional Heathen elements survived in Visigothic christianity, such as the wearing of torcs and arm-rings by Arian priests, the Gothic religion itself had been lost. This process of migration, semi-integration into Roman society through a mixture of fighting and negotiation, and conversion, seems to have been a general model for all those Germanic tribes who settled in Roman lands (Thompson, *The Visigoths in the Time of Ulfilas*, pp. 128-29). The only exception to this rule was the invasion of Britain under Hengest and Horsa in 449. There, not only were the vestiges of the Roman military and society much weaker, but the invading Saxons, stemming from a homeland far removed from the borders of the Empire, had no reason to associate the acceptance of Roman ways with the acquisition of a part of that large-scale power which Rome still symbolized. Thus, Anglo-Saxon Heathenism stayed strong for another few generations, and much of their culture still lived on even after their conversion.

In 436/37, the battle took place which, more than any other, is the key to Germanic thought and the way in which our folk wove myth and history together to build an understanding of themselves and the god/esses. This was the destruction of the Burgundian kingdom on the Rhine, when (at the encouragement of Rome's general Aetius, who was himself of Teutonic origins) the Huns swept down, killing King Gundahari and the rest of the royal family and devastating the Burgundian folk. From the Roman historical record of the time, this was a political maneuver to deal with a barbarian kingdom which was rapidly becoming too powerful for Rome's comfort; it differs little from the other conflicts of the time. The Germanic legends, however, swiftly made the story a different one. Thus we have the tale of the Rhinegold - brought from the river through the workings of Wodan, Hoenir, and Loki, guarded by the dragon Fafnir, won by Siegfried the Dragon-Slayer, and inherited by Gunther (Gundahari) and his kin after they slew Siegfried by treachery. According to the legend, Attila, greedy for the Rhinegold, lured Gunther and the rest of his family to his own hall. After a great battle, Gunther and his kinsman Hagen were captured and put to the torture, but died without telling Attila where the gold lay; they were then avenged by their sister Gudrun. There are various, and widely divergent, versions of this tale; the three best-known are the Old Norse *Völsunga saga*, the German *Nibelungenlied*, and Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Despite the fact that Siegfried probably did not exist historically, he became the favoured hero of the Continental Germans; his death in *Nibelungenlied* (where the magically protected hero is speared through the one vulnerable spot on his body by Hagen, who is described in *Waltharius* and *Piðreks saga* as being one-eyed) bears both a striking resemblance to the death of Balder and to a Wodanic sacrifice. One of the most mystical poems in the Poetic Edda is that which describes Siegfried's awakening of the walkurja (valkryie) Sigdrifa, who then teaches him all manner of runic and spiritual lore, but also makes it clear that her love for him will be his death. The whole *Völsung/Nibelungen* cycle sets the personal spiritual initiation of the characters against the doom of the Burgundian folk, with Wodan clearly guiding the process in the Old Norse sources

and perhaps showing himself in a more hidden way, through the one-eyed Hagen, in the German version. Historically, the tale is at best inaccurate: Attila was still very young when the Huns destroyed the Burgundians; Theoderic, who was supposed to have been the greatest hero in his band, had not been born yet in 437; and the Norse version of the story then brings Gudrun's sons to the court of that Ermanaric who died in 375. All of this has little weight: though the roots of the story are grounded in the Rhenish kingdom of the Burgundian tribe and its defeat in 436-7, the stem and the fruit became the very soul of the Northern folk.

A similar process took place with Theoderic the Great, the Ostrogoth who took power in Rome at the end of the fifth century and effectively ruled the Western half of the Roman Empire. Theoderic himself was an Arian christian, whose main political agenda was to create a realm in which Romans and Germanic folk could function effectively together. In Germanic legend, however, he became a very different figure: not only the heroic exile of Attila's warband, but born of a supernatural father (the devil, according to christians...) and able to shoot fire out of his mouth. German folklore has him leading the Wild Hunt down the Rhine; the Rök stone (a Swedish runestone, ca. 800), calls on a Theodorich who "sits ready on his steed, his shield strapped on". The identity of this Theodorich has been questioned, but given the prominence of Theoderic the Great in Germanic legend, it was probably he who was meant; like many of the mythic heroes of the Northern folk, he may well have been seen as a half-godly figure whose name and image carried much might.

At the end of the fifth century, the Franks had conquered most of modern France (with the Burgundians in Burgundy); Theoderic and his Ostrogoths held Italy; the Anglo-Saxons had England; the Visigoths were still migrating from France to Spain; and the Vandals were settled in Northern Africa. The Franks were the last of the tribes in former Roman provinces to forsake the troth of their folk. This was brought about by their king Clovis, who was otherwise best known for the way in which he had made his regal power sure by the brutal liquidation of his kinsmen (the chronicler Gregory of Tours mentions that towards the end of his life Clovis made great laments about his lack of kin - not because he grieved for them, but because he hoped to find another living relative whom he could kill). Clovis, who was already married to a Catholic woman, decided that he would convert if he were given victory in a certain battle against the Alamanns. His conversion encouraged his people to follow his example, and the Franks became christians - though the magical powers of the Merovingian kings were still believed in until the end of the dynasty.

At this time, the tribes who dwelt in "Germania" still kept to their Heathen troth. It was through the Frankish influence that much of the conversion across the Rhine took place. The sixth-century Frankish dominance over Frisia, Thuringia, and Alamannia did not directly involve conversion at first; however, the Irish and Anglo-Saxon missionaries of the seventh century were strongly encouraged by the Frankish rulers, as the spread of christianity into "Germania" represented the social and administrative unification of Northern Europe under the Franks. At the end of the seventh century, the conversion/subjugation process began to expand towards the North Sea, where the Frankish reconquest of the Northern lands they had previously held and the christianization of the Frisians "went hand in hand" (Geary, *Before France and Germany*, p.215). Despite the heroic attempts of Radbod of Frisia (best known for his refusal to convert on the grounds that "he could not do without the fellowship of all those who had ruled over the Frisians before him, and...did not want to have to sit around in heaven with a little pack of beggars" - *Vita s. Wulframi*, quoted by James Chisholm in "A Toast to Radbod") to resist, the Frisians were eventually subdued. Thus the ground was laid for Charlemagne's genocidal wars of conversion against the Heathen Saxons in the latter part of the eighth century. Charlemagne destroyed the Saxon religious centre, the Irminsul, in 772, and carried out mass forced baptisms, stunning with clubs those prisoners who were reluctant. The Saxons still continued to resist; and after his victory at Verden in 782, Charlemagne "massacred 4500 prisoners, quite possibly as an act of personal vengeance. The result, of course, was even more widespread rebellion" (Wallace-Hadrill, *The Barbarian West*, p. 98).

England holds a special place in the religious history of our folk, for in this country we see (at least for a time) a successful Heathen settlement in a new land, which might well be taken as a model for Heathen folk who live in places such as North America and Australia today. Seventeen of the place-names which are given to the Anglo-Saxon gods describe natural features, showing that the early English could feel the might and being of their deities in places that were not already hallowed by tradition and the bones of their forebears. Eight such names are formed with *-leah* (grove or clearing in a grove), of which six are called after Thunor and one each after Woden and Tiw; four or perhaps five are formed with *-feld* (field or open area), of which two or three are called after Woden and two after Thunor. The other four are Tysoe ("Tiw's spur of land"), Tyesmere ("Tiw's pool"), Wodnesdene ("Woden's valley") and Woddesgeat ("Woden's gap") (*Anglo-Saxon Paganism*, p. 15). There are also three "natural" place-names which may be compounded with Frig - Frethern (Frig's Thorn?), Froyle (Frig's Hill?), and Friden (Frig's Valley?), but it is uncertain whether the goddess' name is actually the first element of these words (Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Paganism*, p. 21). It was not uncommon to name burial mounds after gods; there are three called "Woden's mound" and two called "Thunor's mound". The Anglo-Saxons clearly lost no time in blessing their new lands and getting on with the worship of their gods and goddesses in the old ways. We know that they built temples: these are described by Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. A building has been excavated at Yeavinger which is thought to have been a Heathen hof: among other features, it lacked occupational debris, was a focal point for an inhumation cemetery, contained a pit which had been filled with regular deposits of ox-bones, including skulls, and had a number of "non-structural, free-standing posts" which may have been carved god-figures of the

sort which were apparently usual from the Iron Age through the Viking Age (Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Paganism*, p. 45). During their Heathen period, the Anglo-Saxons kept up their close ties to the other North Sea peoples. There seems to have been considerable movement back and forth between Jutland, Frisia, and England; and, as discussed below, very close ties between the East Anglian royal dynasty and the kings of Sweden. Relatively little was written about English Heathenism; however, because of the close cultural contact, it is not too unsafe to guess that it was at least very similar to Scandinavian religion in the late Migration and Vendel Ages, if not necessarily identical to that described in the Norse Eddas.

The conversion of England is written up in detail by Bede (*Ecclesiastical History of the English People*). This process began at the beginning of the seventh century; as with the Franks, it started with the kings and was forced on the common people from above. Æthelberht, king of Kent, was the first target for the Roman missionaries, perhaps because he was already married to a Frankish christian. Of the christianization of the Northumbrians, Bede tells us that, "The occasion of the conversion of this race was that Edwin became related to the kings of Kent, having married King Æthelberht's daughter Æthelburh" (*Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Colgrave & Mynors, p. 163); he relates a much fuller story, which is chiefly interesting for the traces of information it gives us about pagan practise and what may have been an English frith-garth of the Wanic type (see "Fro Ing"). Thereafter the conversion happened swiftly. The last of the English kingdoms to hold out against christianity was Mercia, ruled by the staunch old Heathen Penda. Penda was particularly notable for his brand of tolerance: he "did not forbid the preaching of the Word...if any wished to hear it. But he hated and despised those who, after they had accepted the christian faith, were clearly lacking in the works of faith. He said that they were despicable and wretched creatures who scorned to obey the God in whom they believed" (*Ecclesiastical History*, p. 281). Penda died heroically in 659, fighting against Oswiu, a king who had converted not only his own folk, but also King Sigeberht of the West Saxons. After Penda's death, Oswiu promised his year-old daughter to be vowed to the christian god as a perpetual virgin in thanks for the victory, a sacrifice of another's life and free will which some folk might consider far worse than the Wodanic killing of battle-captives.

Although this period was a dark one for Continental Heathenism, religion in Scandinavia seems to have reached new heights of beauty and understanding during the Migration and Vendel Ages. The carving of runestones was becoming common in Scandinavia about this time; most of our surviving runic inscriptions in the Elder Futhark date from this period. Some of the greatest holy treasures of the North were made at this time as well. Among these treasures were counted the Gallehus horns - two horns made from several pounds of solid gold, decorated with scenes that probably represented myth or ritual drama. Unfortunately, they were stolen and melted for the metal in the last century. Still surviving, however, is the great gold collar from Färjestad (Öland, Sweden). Made of five rings of gold ornamented with incredibly detailed wirework and tiny animal and human figures, the whole piece weighs 700 grams (about a pound and a half), and the precision of the workmanship cannot be reproduced with the best modern tools (Erikson, Löfman, *A Scandinavian Saga*, p. 149). An even more impressive and detailed seven-ringed collar of the same ornamented type and from the same period (ca. 500 C.E.) was found in Möne (Västergötland, Sweden). These collars are too large and inflexible to have easily been worn by a human; it is probable that they were made to outfit the wooden image of a god or goddess, "carved from tree-trunks and with sloping shoulders suitable for the collars" (Andersson, Jansson, *Treasures of Early Sweden*, p. 56). The goddess Freyja's necklace Brisingamen may have been seen as just such a piece of work; these collars might well have been counted worth four nights of her love.

About 450 C.E., inspired by the visual art and technical skill of Roman coins, the Scandinavians began to make the stamped gold pendants which are known today as bracteates. A huge number of these exist, many marked with runes and holy signs; many of the bracteate-images can also be easily identified in terms of Northern religion. One of the most common is a rider accompanied by a bird or birds of prey, who may represent Wodan; several seem to show the death of Balder; others have a spinning or weaving goddess, who is probably Frija. A man with a boar also appears, as does a man with his hand in a beast's mouth. There are a number of bracteates which seem to show various forms of shamanic practise, such as shape-shifting and howe-sitting. The style of art is remarkable as well: the lines swirl in a way that suggests an attempt to show swift motion and the currents of might. The later bracteates are almost totally abstract in the sense that it is difficult to identify specific animals or human figures, but their patterns are still very controlled and powerful.

The artistic style which we can see developing in the bracteates - the dissolution of the classical model leading to the weaving of complex patterns in which the shape and symbolism are most important and natural representation virtually irrelevant - is the native style of the Northern folk, one which carries both great beauty and great soul-might. The interlacing, swirling patterns which Northern art began to perfect at this time have an hypnotic magical effect, like watching a weaver at work. Images may also have been brought together for spiritual reasons: brooches such as the Besjebakken raven, which shows a mustached man's face on the raven's back, or the Skörping eagle, which has a bearded face staring out from the crook of the bird's leg, may have shown the Northern understanding of the god/esses working through the beasts that embody their might.

At this time, also, the Scandinavian countries were beginning to form their first large-scale states. Rulership on this scale had a very strong religious basis: the cultic centre was one and the same with the centre of earthly might. As the great mounds at Old Uppsala (Sweden) and Lejre (Denmark), together with the kingly practise of sitting on a mound to make laws and decisions, suggest, the might of the kingly dynasty was, in large part, founded on the ruler's relationship with his

forebears and ultimately with the gods who fathered his line (Freyr and Óðinn were the two most often named as kingly clan-fathers).

The deeds from which legends are born were taking place at this time in the North as well as on the Continent: the foundation of the kingdom of Denmark brought forth the tale of the Danish king Hrólfr kraki and the heroes of his warband, while the kingdom of the Swedes rested on the deeds and holy deaths of the Freyr-born Yngling line. But probably the best-known of the Migration Age heroes of Scandinavia is Beowulf. Though this warrior was a Gautish (East Swedish) atheling, he is famous because of the Anglo-Saxon epic poem *Beowulf* - the greatest word-work of the early English. As a young man, Beowulf is said to have rescued the Danish royal hall Heorot from the troll-wight Grendel who had been attacking it at night by wrestling with the monster and ripping his arm off, then diving into a haunted mere to do battle with Grendel's dam. The later attack of Beowulf's king Hygelac on the Frankish territories of Frisia, and his death there in 521, is documented in Continental record just as it is told in *Beowulf*. As an old man, Beowulf is said to have killed a dragon that was laying waste the land of his people, receiving a mortal wound in the process. The poem was written down by a Christian, and so there is little overt Heathenism in it, but the whole structure of the legend is soaked with Heathen belief, as well as being a clear guide to the basic ideals of Germanic heroism.

In particular, *Beowulf* seems to keep alive the memory of Heathen burial customs. The poem begins with the ship-burial of the legendary Scyld Scefing (see "Fro Ing"), whose body is sent out onto the waves with all his treasures. It ends with Beowulf being cremated amid his weapons and the dragon's gold before his body is laid in a great barrow on a ness as a landmark for seafarers to look for "when the ships drive far over dark-misted flood". For a long time, it was thought that these descriptions were influenced by Viking Age burial customs and signs of the late date of the poem. This was changed by the discovery of the Sutton Hoo ship-burial (dated to the early 630s). Like Scyld Scefing, one of the last Heathen kings of England had been laid in his death-ship, with all his wealth and weapons around him and a golden standard above; instead of sending him out on the earthly ocean, his folk raised the mound over him as he fared over the dark waters to God-Home. This burial is very like the ship-burials in the great mounds at Vendel (Sweden). The helmets adorned with gold, beast-figures, and religious images such as the dancing twin warriors; the shields with opposed figures of eagle and fish; the quality and style of the workmanship; all suggest a common culture. The similarity between the Anglo-Saxon and Swedish burials in this period when the conversion of England was starting to gain momentum may also show that the kin who buried this English king so richly were deliberately making a point about their community with the Heathenism of the Swedes, and perhaps even setting up a religious/dynastic centre similar to those of Sweden.

Chapter VI

The Viking Age 792-1066

To many folk, "Northern tradition" means "the religion of the Vikings". While, as we have seen, that is a long way from the whole truth, the Viking Age nevertheless plays a special part in the memory and rebirth of the elder Troth. It was during this time that the Heathen Scandinavians swept down on christian Europe, raiding and conquering; during this time that the monks prayed for deliverance from "the fury of the Norsemen". The word "Viking" itself, literally "bay-goer", was used to mean "raider" or "pirate"; and this is the image which has fastened itself to the Northern folk. The dragon-prowed Viking longship is thought of by many folk as the very sign of Northern culture - fitting in more ways than one. Not only does the longship show forth the warrior soul of the North, which is what folk usually think of first when they see the dragon-prow raised, but it is also one of the most advanced technological developments of Western Europe at this time, and the exquisite wood-carving of the ship from the Oseberg burial show that our folk were as skilled in the ways of fine art as in the ways of war and invention.

The Viking Age is also the chief source of our surviving myths, recorded by the skaldic and Eddic poets. This, and the following efforts of Icelandic antiquarians such as Snorri Sturluson to preserve their country's heritage, is the reason why most folk learn about the Germanic god/esses by their Old Norse names, against the background of Viking Age culture. Again, it should be noted that the elaborate word-choard of our forebears shows us a great degree of cultural development: the poetry of the skalds was more complex in form and content, and called for a greater level of lore and wit to understand it, than any poetry being composed in "civilized" Western Europe at that time. These Northern "barbarians", in fact, believed that one of the greatest and most impressive gifts a man could possess was the ability to make poems as fast as he could speak. Perhaps the ultimate Viking, showing most of the traits which characterized our forebears, was Egill Skalla-Grímsson - a huge warrior with a furious temper and frightening appearance, who was also one of the most skilled and subtle poets of his age, a runic magician, and a prosperous farmer.

The dreaded "horned helmet" associated with the Vikings in popular culture was, as most true folk know by now, not actually worn in the Viking Age - and certainly never in battle. No horned helmet from the Viking Age has ever been found. There is a small core of reality behind the fictional "Loyal Order of the Water Buffalo" helms, however. Ritual horned helms were used in Denmark in the Bronze Age (though the bronze horns were shaped far more like lurs than like cow-horns) and archæologists have found several Viking Age male figurines (including one from Kungsängen and one from Ribe) wearing what at first glance appear to be horned helmets. However, a close look at the earlier versions of the figure which appear on items such as the Toroslunda helm-plate matrices (Vendel Age) shows that the "horns" are actually tipped with bird-heads; and those on the Ribe figure appear to be whole birds. The heads are hardly recognisable on the Kungsängen figurine, but if one has the other images to compare it with, it can be seen that the slightly forked tips of the "horns" are probably meant to show open beaks. In fact, it is likely that these images may originally have shown either Óðinn himself, with his two ravens flanking his head, or else an Óðinn-warrior ritually decked out to resemble the god - a far cry from Hägar the Horrible and his cow-horn headgear!

In general, the keyword to the Viking Age is dynamism. The Northerners were continuously reaching out in every direction, striving to fare farther and win more - more land, more gold, more lore, more glory. The Viking Age is thought to have officially opened with the raid on the christian monastery of Lindisfarne, off the coast of England. This took place sometime in late 792 or early 793 (there are various readings of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's dates). The next fifty years saw an explosion of Viking activity: the ships of the Northmen sailed up the rivers of France (Ragnar loðbrók sacked Paris in 845 C.E.) and were feared as far south as Moorish Spain. At the same time, the Swedish Rus were trekking east to Miklagarðr (Constantinople). Some of them stayed in the city as the Emperor's Varangian guard, others simply conquered and settled their way along the Volga, building cities there (the Rus founded Novgorod and Kiev in the 860's) and, in time, giving their tribal name to Russia. In Ireland, where only small local fort-settlements had been known before the Vikings introduced the very concept of large towns and cities: Dublin, Limerick, Waterford, and Wicklow were all founded as Viking settlements in the 840s.

The British Isles were the main target for Viking attacks, however, and in 850 C.E. the Danish warriors began not only to strike and raid England, but also to winter there overnight and to conquer land for themselves to hold. By the end of the third quarter of the ninth century, the northern and eastern parts of England (the area known as the Danelaw) was almost wholly under Scandinavian control; only the efforts of King Alfred (best-known for the burning of fictional cakes) kept the Danes from taking over the whole country. Alfred turned the tide of invasion in 878, defeating the Danish leader Guthrum and forcing him and his folk to accept baptism as part of the settlement which established the borders of their lands.

While the Danes were turning their attention to conquering other lands, Haraldr hárfagri (Hairfair) was in the process of uniting all the small kingdoms of Norway under himself as ruler, something which hardly sat well with many Norwegians. Some were inspired by Haraldr's example to go win lands elsewhere; others began to move to the newly-

discovered Iceland (the settlement of which started ca. 870).

When the Norse came to Iceland, they found it uninhabited except for a few Irish monks, who hastily packed up and left, and a great horde of land-wights and trolls. Although the land itself was of varied character, including glaciers, volcanoes, and lava-fields, parts of it were green and fruitful, the general climate relatively mild, and the waters teeming with fish. The country was also said to have been largely covered with forest - or rather, scrub birches of the sort that still grow there in patches. The new settlers quickly established themselves in the farmland all around the coast; the interior of the country was then, as it is today, totally uninhabitable. The full story of the settlement is told in *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*; many of the better-known sagas (such as *Laxdæla saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, and *Egils saga*) tell how certain clans came to the country and took their lands there. This was often guided by the gods or forebears: one settler, Raven-Floki, was shown the way by a pair of ravens which he had blessed (*blótaði*) in Norway (*Landnámabók*); the Þórsgoði, Þórólfr Mosturskeggi, cast house-pillars carved with his god's image into the water and settled where they came ashore; and Egill's father Skalla-Grimr did the same thing with the coffin of his father Kveld-Úlfr, who had died during the voyage (*Egils saga*).

As well as explorers, settlers, warriors, artisans, and poets, the Viking Age Scandinavians were also merchants, trading all the way down to the north of Lapland and up to North Africa. Their chief items of export were furs, walrus ivory, and slaves; many items of extreme rarity came into the Scandinavian countries, such as the peacock found in the Gokstad ship-burial (Erikson and Löfman, *A Scandinavian Saga*, p. 203) and the lizard-skin purse from Birka (Foote and Wilson, *The Viking Achievement*, p. 195), but more common were such things as silk, wine, and glass. A great deal of cash also flowed Northward; Arabic silver coins are not uncommon items in Viking hoards. The major towns of the Viking Age were large merchant centres such as York, Dublin, and Birka, where goods both local and imported seem to have changed hands at a great rate. The Scandinavian traders of the Viking Age, in fact, probably had a greater effect on the West than the Northern raiders: as far-faring and ambitious merchants, they can be seen to have brought a new and exciting life to the economy of Europe.

The tenth century was marked by the consolidation of Northern gains and the integration of Scandinavian settlers into the lands they had claimed. In 911/12, the whole area of Normandy was given to the Northmen from whom it gets its name; more and more Scandinavians were migrating either eastward into Russia and the Byzantine Empire, or westward to the British Isles and Iceland. Greenland was discovered by Eiríkr inn rauði in 982, and settlement there began a few years later. Bjarni Herjólfsson (after whom the "Bjarni Herjólfsson Icelandic Navigation Memorial Award" is named - see "Word-Hoard"), getting lost while trying to find Greenland in 985, was likely the first European to see America, unless one believes that the Irish St. Brendan really did cross the Atlantic and return in a leather boat (not impossible, as proven by Tim Severin's "Brendan Voyage", but perhaps somewhat dubious). Attempts were made to settle "Vinland" between 1000-1005, led by Leifr Eiríksson and Freydís Eiríksdóttir, but these proved unsuccessful, and for some time the authenticity of the saga accounts was doubted. However, the excavations at L'Anse aux Meadows, which turned up, among other items, a Norse soapstone spindle-whorl, a ring-headed bronze pin, and foundations of a sort typical of Scandinavian settlement, have proven definitively that the sagas which speak of Vinland are based on reasonably solid fact.

On a religious level, many other changes were taking place during the Viking Age. Thonar, or Þórr, seems to have been rising to greater and greater prominence; the Norse rulers of Ireland, for instance, were spoken of as the "tribe of Þórr" (Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion*, p. 94), and the most common item which we can definitely identify as a Viking Age religious symbol is the Hammer of Þórr, which often appeared as a pendant and/or grave-amulet at this time, perhaps in response to the christian habit of wearing a cross. One Danish jewelry-mould, in fact, shows Hammers and crosses being cast together (Roesdahl and Wilson, *From Viking to Crusader*, p. 191). The most famous "mixed piece", however - the dragon-headed pendant from Iceland which has often been seen as a crosslike Hammer with the christian cross cut into it - is sometimes suspected to be simply a rather strangely shaped cross (Graham-Campbell, *The Viking World*, p. 187). In any event, Þórr seems to have been the chief god of the Viking Age, closely followed by Freyr. Óðinn, as the patron of poets and especially the god of battle from whose names most war-kennings were formed, is far more prominent in skaldic poetry than other forms of evidence suggest was the case in general worship. The skaldic influence also seems to have led to the (probably late tenth-century) formulation of Óðinn's hall as largely or exclusively a warriors' afterlife.

A growing interest in the end of the world and the doom of the gods also seems to have made itself felt in the last half of the tenth century. Part of this may have stemmed from the millenarian hysteria which was gripping christian Europe at this time; part of it probably came from the encroachment of christianity on the Northern countries, as well as the series of disastrous battles ravaging them. Both *Hákonarmál* and *Eiríksmál*, the memorial poems of Hákon the Good and Eiríkr Blood-Axe, link the deaths of these kings with the threat of the doom of the gods. *Völuspá*, which tells of the last battle in chilling terms shaped by both Heathenism and christianity, is generally accepted as having been written around the year 1000.

It was in the tenth century that the influence of christianity first began to really spread into the Northern lands. In 965, King Haraldr Blue-tooth of Denmark was converted, and he in turn (as the runestone of Jelling with its bizarre tendrilled crucifix proclaimed) christianized the Danes. Several of the Norwegian kings were converted during their sojourns in England. This was the case with Hákon the Good, but upon his return to Norway, thanks to the guidance of his

friend Sigurðr, jarl of Hlaðir, he returned to the Heathen ways which were necessary for him to keep the support of his folk, and upon his death (961), the great Heathen skald Eyvindr skáldaspillr praised him for protecting the holy steads and spoke of his welcome by the gods and einherjar (*Hákonarmál*). The sons of Eiríkr Blood-Axe, who came after Hákon the Good, were christians who destroyed the holy places; Eyvindr speaks of how their reign was attended by bad weather and famine. However, they were succeeded by Hákon the Great (son of Sigurðr jarl), whose reign Einar skálaglamm describes in the most glowing terms in *Vellekla*, telling how the earth became fruitful again when Hákon restored the hofs and wih-steads.

The next source of christian influence on Norway was Óláfr Tryggvason (Óláfr the Traitor - not to be confused with Óláfr inn digri or "St. Óláfr"), who was likewise converted while abroad and who, with the support of Haraldr Blue-Tooth, found it politically expedient not only to stay christian, but to use his faith as a pretext for rewinning the sole rule of Norway which had been won by Haraldr inn hárfagri. Óláfr promoted christianity by bribery and, when that failed, sword and torture. A general example of his methods was seen in the story of Eyvindr kinnrifi, one of the most notable folk who resisted conversion. The king tried to convince him "with blithe words", then with gifts and great banquets, then with threats of death. At last Óláfr had a brazier of glowing coals set upon Eyvindr's belly, which burst from the heat; Eyvindr then spoke his last words of defiance against the christian king and died (*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, ch. 76, *Heimskringla*). Óláfr also sent missionaries to Iceland, with variable success. He was killed in the year 1000 C.E., brought down by an alliance gathered by Queen Sigríðr (whom he had understandably angered during their unsuccessful courtship by striking her in the face and calling her a "Heathen bitch" when she refused to convert for him).

The southern faith had found some interest in Iceland, however, leading to much strife. In the year 1000, the conflict had become serious enough that it was decided that all folk should live under one troth and one law, and that the person who should choose would be Þorgeirr the Lawspeaker. He went "under the cloak" for a day and a night, a description which may hint at a shamanic ritual of communication with the gods and ghosts (Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson, *Under the Cloak*). When he came forth again, he decreed that all the folk of Iceland should become christian, but that Heathen practice (including the eating of horsemeat and the exposure of deformed infants) should still be allowed in private. Upon his return home, Þorgeirr cast his god-images into the falls called Goðafoss. It is thought by many Heathens now that Þorgeirr's decision actually made it possible for Icelanders to preserve the tales and poetry of Heathenism, protecting them against the economic stranglehold which the mainland could have exerted upon them (and would have in later years) had they officially held to the elder Troth, and thus leading to the rebirth of our ways in the fullness of time. Þorgeirr's act of casting the god-images into the falls is especially interesting since, as we know, this was a usual means of making sacrifices, and earlier holy images were likewise hidden for Heathen purposes. We may perhaps guess that these deeds were guided by whatever Þorgeirr learned while he was "under the cloak" - maybe, with an eye towards what *should* become in the age when the gods should rise from the waters of Wyrð and take their high seats once more?

Shortly after Óláfr the Traitor, Norway was plagued by a second christian Óláfr - Óláfr inn digri (the Fat or Big-Mouthed), a great tyrant and destroyer of Heathen ways. Óláfr was more hated by the folk of his country than any king before him; in the version of his story given in *Heimskringla*, Snorri tells us that "He investigated the christianity of men, and when it seemed lacking to him, he made known the right customs to them, and he laid so much upon it that if there was anyone who did not wish to leave Heathenism, he drove some out of the land; some he let have their feet or hands hewn off or their eyes gouged out; some he let be hanged or hewn down, but he let no one go unpunished who did not wish to serve (the christian) god" (ch. 73). For these charming activities, he became the patron saint of Norway, whose feast day is still celebrated there today. Before his death, even the christian Norwegians were less enthusiastic about him: when the Danish king Knút came to Norway, there was no one who did not support him against Óláfr, so that he won the country without shedding a drop of blood. Óláfr then fled the country, and when he tried to come back, the folk rose against him, so that "they had there such a great host, that there was no one who had ever seen such a great army come together in Norway...There were many landed men and many very powerful farmers, but the great mass was made up of cotters and workmen...That host was greatly raised to foeship against the king" (ch. 216). Óláfr inn digri was slain at the battle of Stiklarstaðir in 1030.

The Viking Age is thought to have come to its official end with the death of Haraldr hardraði at the Battle of Stamford in 1066 - the last direct Scandinavian attempt to conquer another land. Haraldr himself, who had previously served in the Varangian guard in Byzantium (among other adventures) and was known as a vicious and subtle strategist as well as a mighty warrior, is sometimes spoken of as "the Last Viking"; certainly he was not followed by any kings with great ambitions outside their own countries, so his death may well stand as the end of the age. Ironically, after the English king Harold Godwinsson had defeated Haraldr hardraði, he was called at once to march his weary army back south to Pevensey - where the Viking-descended, but French-speaking and totally assimilated Norman, William the Bastard, had just landed with his own host. Harold Godwinsson fell in that battle; the Normans took England, imposing their own system of feudalism and, to a degree, the French language upon the Saxons.

Heathenism, however, survived longer in Sweden; it was not until 1100 that the great hof at Uppsala was broken. Sweden had always been the most conservative and the most religious of the Northern nations; and since its contacts tended to reach eastward rather than westward and the other lands bordering the Baltic still by and large kept their native traditions, there was less pressure on the Swedes until the end of the eleventh century. Today, Old Uppsala - the heart of Swedish rule

and religious activity in the old days - is still thought of as the holiest stead of Northern Heathendom by many true folk.

With the suppression of Heathenism, Scandinavian artistic culture, which had been so largely based on the Northern religious beliefs, eventually ceased to be productive. The last phase of the highly developed native art, the "Urnes style", had effectively died out by 1200, to be replaced by rather inferior attempts at imitating Romanesque art; Norse poetry lasted longer, but was already beginning to go into decline by the time Snorri Sturluson wrote the Prose Edda (about 1220). The last bastion of native Germanic creativity was Iceland, where the antiquarian interest of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries led to the writing of the sagas and the preservation of the older poetic lore; but eventually the Icelanders ran out of material and, having no productive/evolving religion to support further literary development, went into a decline similar to that of their mainland cousins.

Chapter VII

The Rebirth 1150 C.E. - onwards!

Some 150-200 years after the conversion of their country, the Icelanders began to show a great antiquarian interest in the tales and ways of their forebears, writing down both historical events and legends. The first Icelandic historian was Ari Þórgilsson the Wise, who wrote down the tales of the settlement of Iceland, now known as *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*.

The greatest of these antiquarians was undoubtedly Snorri Sturluson (born 1179 - slain 1241). Snorri was the Lawspeaker of Iceland twice (1215-1219 and 1222-1231), exerting his office from a booth at Þingvellir which he called "Valhöll"; a major political figure who negotiated Iceland's integration into Norway - and, most important of all, an historian and a skald who wanted to be sure that the dying art of skaldic poetry would not be wholly lost. For the latter purpose, he wrote his Edda, called the *Prose Edda* or *Snorri's Edda* - a compendium of Norse religious tales and an instructional text in skaldcraft. Snorri was highly educated in both Classical and christian mythology, and his version of the Norse myths shows a great deal of systematization which may not have been there in the original (see discussion under "Books and Sources"), but it is still a major source for us. He also wrote *Heimskringla*, a history of the kings of Norway, and is strongly suspected to be the author of *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* (not only does the style closely resemble his, but he was one of Egill's proud descendants). The tale of Snorri's own life is told in the near-contemporary *Sturlunga saga*.

In 1643, Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson acquired a manuscript which he thought had been compiled by Sæmundr the Wise (an Icelandic priest-magician who lived from 1056-1133, the source of many colourful Icelandic folk stories) and hence referred to as "Sæmundr's Edda". This belief is not founded in anything solid, but the name stuck, so that the Poetic Edda was often also called "Sæmundr's Edda". In 1662, Brynjólfur gave the codex to King Frederick III of Denmark; it is therefore called "Codex Regius", and is the main manuscript from which the Eddic poems as we have now are derived. The other manuscript containing many of these poems is *Hauksbók* (written down by Haukr Erlendsson shortly after 1300), which also holds a version of *Landnámabók*. Some of the poems which are usually collected in Eddic editions or translations today come from other sources: *Hyndluljóð* was written down in *Flatexjarbók*, and *Baldur's draumar* comes from the fragmentary fourteenth-century ms. AM 748 4to.

The sagas themselves are divided into four sorts, "family sagas" or "Icelanders' sagas" (sagas such as *Egils saga*, *Grettis saga*, *Brennu-Njáls saga*, and so forth), "kings' sagas" (historical sagas of the kings of Norway, such as those collected in *Heimskringla* and *Flatexjarbók*), "sagas of elder times" (*fornaldarsögur* - those legendary sagas such as *Völsunga saga*), and "sagas of chivalry" (mediæval romances such as the tale of Tristan and Isolde, translated into Icelandic). The kings' sagas were the first types to be written; the later parts of these (or at least the lost sources of some), were actually composed by contemporary chroniclers from roughly 1150 onwards, a practice which continued through the fourteenth century. The first sagas of Icelanders were probably composed around the beginning of the thirteenth century, and continued to be written through the middle of the fourteenth century. The sagas of chivalry probably began to be widely translated around 1250. We are much less certain about the *fornaldarsögur*. Most of the basic stories were surely known in some form to general Norse oral tradition throughout the Viking Age, and may well have influenced the Icelanders' sagas - the most obvious example of this being the famous similarity between Grettir's battle with a certain troll and she-troll and Beowulf's battle with Grendel and Grendel's mother.

In general, the Icelanders of the thirteenth and fourteenth century seem to have looked back at their Viking past with much pride. Sometimes they are thought to have gone out of their way to make their ancestors more frightening and bloodthirsty than they actually were; Roberta Frank, for instance, has argued strongly that the saga accounts of the "blood-eagle" were based on a combination of antiquarian enthusiasm about the wild Vikings with misunderstood skaldic poetry (*English Historical Review*, 1984). With just a few exceptions (such as *Flatexjarbók*, where the compiler seems to have believed that the name Óðinn could not be written without the words "hin ille", "the evil", in front of it), they also seem to have been relatively sympathetic towards memories of Heathenism. Sometimes this in itself causes problems, as when accounts of "Heathen customs" that may or may not have been accurate were added for literary purposes to give the sagas that certain archaic flavour, but it has also permitted the preservation of a body of lore unparalleled among the orally-based native religions that were destroyed by christianity.

Antiquarian interest on the Continent and mainland Scandinavia did not really get started until the seventeenth century, when the Dane Ole Worm began his great work of collecting the "national monuments" of the Northern countries. In 1622, he obtained an edict forcing all the bishops of Denmark to submit reports on runestones and other antique monuments in their areas. At about this time, the Swede Johannes Bureus (tutor and advisor of King Gustavus Adolphus) carried out a similar work in Sweden, drawing and beginning to interpret a great many of Sweden's runestones (many of which have since been lost and are known to us only through his drawings). These two men may be thought of as the founders of modern runic studies. After Bishop Brynjólfur's gift of the "Codex Regius" to King Frederick III, the Eddic

poems began to be published and more widely circulated and known.

This antiquarian interest continued to simmer on a low level until the nineteenth century. At that time, the general awareness of Europe turned towards "romanticism" - the interest in spiritual development, guidance by soul and emotion, and the belief in an idealized past. This, combined with the new nationalism which was particularly sparking those folks with no direct Classical/Western heritage (mostly Germans and Scandinavians) to seek their national identity in their own origins, led to a great upsurge in the awareness of a Germanic past. This upsurge was manifested in such groups as the Swedish Gotiska Förbundet, which combined an interest in ancient Norse literature and culture with the desire for national independence and reform. It also appeared in persons such as the Grimm Brothers, Jacob and Wilhelm, who collected and published their "fairy tales" between 1816-18. Jacob Grimm went on to found modern Germanic philology; in 1844, he produced his massive study, *Deutsche Mythologie (Teutonic Mythology)*, which linked Norse literature with folklore from all over the Germanic world.

Perhaps the greatest of the German "romantics" was Richard Wagner, whose four-opera cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, was first performed in 1876. This huge work (15-18 hours of solid music, depending on how slowly it is conducted) was loosely based on *Völsunga saga*, considerably altered by Wagner's own rather idiosyncratic ideas on politics, love, and life, but also informed and inspired by an immense amount of research into Norse literature and Germanic traditions. The Ring Cycle is probably the best-known single source for Germanic mythology today. Unfortunately, Wagner's attitude towards the god/esses was not particularly good (in places, bloody awful), and his version of the religion is slightly warped (It is probably a good idea for those true folk who deal with the general public to watch the Ring Cycle after having read both *Saga of the Volsungs* and *Nibelungenlied*; the current Warder of the Lore found it needful at one point to prepare a long handout detailing the differences between Wagner and the other two versions). However, he was also a deeply inspired man whose wide reading in Germanic tradition always makes his works worthy of consideration, whether or not he chose to change the stories. His main contribution to modern Germanic religion may be the linking of Loki with Loge and the interpretation of Loki as a fire-spirit - which academics today do not generally accept, but which has stuck deeply into the awareness of most Ásatrúar. He has also given us an image of valkyries which is very hard to shake...

In the last years of the nineteenth and the first two decades of the twentieth century, Germanic mysticism found a new degree of interest among the younger folk of Germany. A number of small bands and "Germanic prophets" sprang up at this time. Among these, perhaps the most prominent was Guido von List, inventor/discoverer of the eighteen-rune Armanen futhark. At this time, unfortunately, Germanic mysticism, political pan-Germanism, and racism, especially anti-Semitism, were beginning to be strongly linked - a linkage which had not previously existed. In particular, the anti-Semitism which was so deeply ingrained in continental German culture by the nineteenth century was a product of the intense persecution of the Jews encouraged by the Christian church in the later Middle Ages; it was a concept which would have been wholly unfathomable to the Heathen tribes of Germany, and which seems never to have reached Scandinavia at all. However, the combination of the mediæval Christian fear and loathing of the Jews with Darwin's discoveries about evolution and genetic inheritance, the native Germanic love for clan and kin, and the newfound sense of nationalism provided a deadly mixture of ideology and powerful, though distorted imagery - which led to the greatest harm Germanic religion and culture have suffered since the Hof-breakings of the eleventh century. "The Nazis did not invent neo-Germanism - they subverted something that was already strong for their own political purposes. Unfortunately, many would-be revivalists of Germanic culture, religion, and magic are all too enamoured of the Nazi mythos and mystique. The National Socialists did not advance the cause of Germanism - they set it back at least 100 years" (Edred Thorsson, "A Short History of the Revival of the Troth", p. 8).

While the Nazi movement used many Germanic signs of power, such as the swastika and some of the runes, Germanic religion essentially played no part in it. Aside from a few half-hearted attempts to replace Christian holidays with vaguely pagan solstice-feasts, the Nazi regime was from beginning to end a cult focused towards a single personality, Adolf Hitler - who himself believed in nothing but his own will and sense of destiny. Germanic studies in general were encouraged and tolerated only insofar as they supported Nazi ideology; discoveries or historical materials which contradicted that ideology had to be carefully re-interpreted. A small example of this may be seen by Nazi-era depictions of the clothing of Bronze Age women, which was known to have sometimes consisted only of a string skirt and a blouse (such as those in which the Egtved girl was buried) or even only a string skirt (such as those on the goddess/belly-dancer images from this period). In Nazi Germany, however, Bronze Age women were always shown as wearing long and modest dresses - sometimes with the string skirt sketched in as a kind of decorative overgarment (Gløb, *The Mound People*, p. 64). The purpose of this alteration was, of course, to demonstrate conclusively that the Germanic women had always been the most modest and chaste of ladies, as according to proper Nazi ideology (though some may not think this as terrible as negligently attributing the Bronze Age string skirt to "800-1000 A.D.", two thousand years after its actual date, as was done by Ed Fitch in *Rites of Odin*). During the Nazi era, Germanic religion and history were, in short, simply treated as any other propaganda tools, with complete disregard for the actual beliefs of the Heathen Teutons, the god/esses in who they believed, and the very underpinnings of the Northern culture. Anyone who doubts this has only to try picturing a free-minded Viking or Germanic tribesman accepting the suggestion that he be shorn like a thrall and made to wear a uniform and march in step, obedient to the least word of his leader - or a woman such as Signý the Völsung, Sigríðr the Proud, Unnr the Deep-Minded,

or Freydis Eiriksdóttir listening meekly to the news that her sole purpose for being is to bear strong sons for "the race"!

Despite the fact that the Nazi movement was not, for all its trimmings, a product of the elder Germanic culture, the imagery of native Teutonicism it used became so closely associated with it that no more attempts were made to revive the elder ways for some time. Even now, more than a full generation later, the taint of Nazism is one with which all true folk who are open about their Heathenism have to deal sooner or later. It keeps us from using one of the holiest signs of our forebears, the swastika, in public where it might distress people or give them the wrong idea about us (that is, the idea that we might be neo-Nazis, fascists, or racists), and often leads to suspicious glances when we speak about the runes, Wodan, Thonar, or our Germanic heritage (this problem is not only rife among the general public, but even among other Pagan folk, who have in previous years gotten an impression that Ásatrú consists largely of the "Thor-and-swastika boys"). In the era immediately following World War II, Germanic religion and culture were largely taboo subjects: everything "German" was tarred with the same brush.

In the 1950s, however, Karl Spiesberger reached back to bring up the Armanen rune-magic of Guido von List again, while an Australian by the name of A. Rud Mills produced a series of books on the elder religion. They did not meet with great success, though small Armanen groups have continued in Germany since.

The next appearance of Teutonic culture in a mainstream setting was given to us, ironically, by a deeply christian scholar of Germanic philology - Professor J.R.R. Tolkien, author of *Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien's work draws extensively on Germanic literature: for instance, his dwarf-names come straight out of the Poetic Edda (including "Gandalf" - "wand-alf" or "magical alf"), Bilbo's theft of the cup which awakens the dragon is a straight steal from *Beowulf*, and Aragorn's ancestral sword - broken at his father's death and reforged again when it is time for him to win his rightful place - bears a suspicious resemblance to the sword of the Völsungs. Tolkien's use of the English language was also strongly influenced by his knowledge of Germanic word-roots, as well as his extensive background in Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse literature. It has often been said of Tolkien that he gave the English-speaking peoples a folk-heritage, but this is only half-true; it would be better said that he is the little thief who brought Sága's gold cup into the light and thus awakened the dragon of the Northern ways which had slept so long in the barrow-mound of our forebears. From Tolkien's work stemmed, in large part, the modern explosion of interest in "fantasy literature" - the literature which makes use of the archetypal elements of magic, heroic questing, and wights beyond humanity and the limited pantheon of the Abrahamic religions; and from that stemmed a reborn interest in the magic, history, and ultimately religion of the North, from which much of the most effective "fantasy literature" since Tolkien has drawn its might.

The bud of rebirth blossomed in 1973, when Sveinbjörn Beinteinsson founded the Ásatrú movement of Iceland and Stephen McNallen founded the Ásatrú Free Assembly of America. The former is still going, and Ásatrú is accepted as one of the official religions of Iceland; the history of the latter was rockier. However, the Ásatrú Free Assembly did manage to establish Ásatrú solidly as a re-created Heathen religion. In 1980, Edred Thorsson founded the Rune-Gild as a magical/initiatory Order for those dedicated to the study of runic galdr-magic.

During the same period of time, Garman Lord was also reviving the related Northern tradition of Theodism, which, unlike the AFA (whose focus was almost totally on the Viking Age), concentrated on the lore and beliefs of the Heathen Anglo-Saxons. The Theodish movement continues today and is closely linked with the Troth. The Odinic Rite was also moving to gain acceptance in England; it split up a couple of years ago, and at present there are two groups going by the name "Odic Rite". The main focus of Ásatrú in Great Britain, however, is the active and swiftly-growing Rune-Gild UK, headed by Drihtning Freya Aswynn (Troth Elder, High Rede member, author of *Leaves of Yggdrasil*).

The Ásatrú Free Assembly broke up in 1987. Near the end of the same year, Edred Thorsson (as Warden of the Lore) and James Chisholm (Steersman) founded the Troth, an explicitly non-racist organization dedicated to the promotion of the religion and culture of the Germanic peoples. In 1988, the Ásatrú Alliance, a small group of loosely-organized member kindreds with a decidedly more conservative and less scholastically-based slant on the religion than that promoted by the Troth, was also founded and began to publish its minimal-production quarterly newsletter, *Vor Tru* and to hold a general moot called the Althing in Arizona every summer. At their last Althing, the A.A. produced the official ideological declaration that "Ásatrú is the ethnic religion of the indigenous Northern European peoples".

Edred Thorsson's *A Book of Troth*, outlining some of the general ideas, rituals, and organizational elements of the Troth, was published by Llewellyn in 1989. Since its founding, the Troth has also continued to produce a quarterly magazine, *Idunna*, heroically edited by Shope Dianne Ross from 1988 until mid-1991, when it was taken over and dramatically expanded by Shope Þórfinn Einarsson. At Ostara of 1992, James Chisholm turned the Steersmanship over to current Steerswoman Prudence Priest and Edred Thorsson stepped down from his office, leaving it to Kveldúlfur Gundarsson, current Warder of the Lore. A full High Rede was also appointed at this time.

Another notable Northern-tradition organization which has made itself known in the last years (though even smaller than the Ásatrú Alliance), is Hrafnar, a San Francisco group headed by Diana Paxson. Hrafnar is particularly well-known for reconstructing the practice of seiðr or spae-working, a form of Northern magic loosely related to shamanism.

From mid-1991 through the end of 1993, the general Ásatrú community was also served by the independent glossy-covered magazine *Mountain Thunder*, a beautiful production edited and put out at an unreasonably low price by Will von Dauster (careful readers will mark that many of the chapters in this book are taken from, or refer to, works originally

printed in *Mountain Thunder*). Unfortunately, it proved impossible to maintain such a high-quality magazine at such a low cost, and rather than compromise his standards, von Dauster chose to stop publishing the magazine. Back issues and article reprints are, however, available (address under "Organizations and Resources"). Will von Dauster has also begun to publish a smaller *Ásatrú* newsletter, which discusses matters and happenings of importance to the Heathen community; this can be ordered via the same address.

At the time of this writing, Blessing-Month (November) 1993 C.E., Germanic Heathenism, while still tiny in comparison to Wicca, seems to be thriving and growing swiftly. The Troth is the largest Heathen organization by a factor of five or six, and the most active; there are also a number of independent kindreds and individuals who are working strongly to make the general public aware that the Teutonic ways exist, do not involve racism or fascism, and are worth learning about and following. It seems likely that Heathenism will continue to grow and become stronger for a long time to come - so long as there are folk willing to study, work, and speak up for the gods and goddesses of the North!

Section 2

Trust of the Troth:

The Gods, Goddesses and Wights of the North

Chapter VIII

The God/esses of the Troth

The Elder Troth gives worship to a great many gods and goddesses. The ways in which we do this, and the ways in which we see them, are very different from the ways of the Abrahamic religions. To us, the god/esses are our eldest kinfolk, to whom we give the greatest love and respect, but before whom we do not kneel or bow. Our aim is to come to know them better and better and to live together with them - to become one again with the clan from which we have been long sundered. As we are descended, both in soul and body, from them, their might also shows itself forth in us.

The god/esses themselves stem from two great kins: the Ases (Æsir) and the Wans (Vanir). The differences between them have often been simplified by attributing war and thought to the Ases, peace, nature, and fruitfulness to the Wans. As a close look at the god/esses themselves will show, this is not strictly true: Fro Ing and the Frowe both have strong battle-aspects, for instance, while Thonar is, among other things, very much a nature-god, and most of the god/esses have some ties to earthly fruitfulness. The difference between the Ases and the Wans seems to be more one of character and element: the Wans are firstly deities of earth and water, the Ases of fire and air - though even here there is a great deal of overlap. The best-known of the Ases are Wodan, Frija, Thonar, Sif, and Tiw; the only Wans who we know by name are Njördhr, Nerthus, Fro Ing (Freyr) and the Frowe (Freyja). At one time, the Ases and the Wans made war, but neither side could overcome the other in battle. A truce was settled and hostages exchanged: the etin Mímir and Wodan's brother Hoenir went to dwell among the Wans, and Njördhr and Fro Ing came to live with the Ases, where, according to Snorri Sturluson's *Ynglinga saga*, they held a special position as priests, and the Frowe as a priestess.

Some folk of the Troth also set great store by Georges Dumézil's theory of an Indo-European tripartite hierarchy reflected both in the god/esses and the society of Germanic folk. According to this theory, there are three "functions": Ruler (magician, priest, judge), Warrior, and Provider. Wodan and Tiw are the gods of rulership as magician-king and judge-king respectively; Thonar is the god of warriors, and the Wans are the deities of peasant-farmers; Edred Thorsson explains that the hierarchy "must be arranged in just this way: sovereignty must rule over force, and generation must serve the interests of the whole again under the direction of sovereignty. The king commands the warrior, and the farmer, or worker, provides for all" (*A Book of Troth*, p. 72). It is undoubtedly true that the three great things, consciousness, strength, and fruitfulness are needful to everyone; and that the Northerners, like all folks who speak the Indo-European languages (and many who don't), use threefold divisions for the mightiest things of religion and magic. Many folk feel that this tripartite structure is particularly good for designing rituals, as well, especially since we know that Óðinn, Þórr, and Freyr were the three gods most favoured in the Viking Age: a well-formed general rite (as opposed to one for a specific deity or purpose) should probably at least name all three (and the corresponding goddesses), and bring in the three functions in some way.

However, among the Germanic folk, a ruler was expected to bring fruitfulness to the land, every free person was supposed to be able to be a warrior at need, and the sovereign gifts of magic and skaldcraft cropped up as often among the ordinary folk (especially the free farmers of Iceland, who were well known to be the best poets of the Viking Age) as among the kin of kings. Nor, as we see by looking at the being of the god/esses themselves, can any of them be limited to a single primary function. The Wanic Fro Ing, for instance, is equal to Wodan as a god of kingship (first function) and appears, together with his father Njörðr, most often of all the gods in the priestly role (first function); while Thonar, though himself a mighty warder who often does battle, was almost never called on as a battle-god. As far as the practising of the Elder Troth is concerned, we have many more references to Thonar as a god of hallowing (the priestly first function) than as a patron of warriors. Wodan himself was the chief battle-god (second function) of the Germanic peoples at least from the Iron Age onward; and his original function, as discussed later, was probably that of death-god - a role which, though enfolding aspects of all three Dumézilian functions, has no clear place anywhere in the tripartite system. Although Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda* places a great deal of emphasis on Óðinn as the ruler of the pantheon, the sources we have describing Viking Age religion show that the god who was seen as highest varied from place to place and tribe to tribe, (as Freyr was particularly worshipped among the Swedes, for example) while Þórr was most generally the chief god in the Norse hofs.

There is no evidence in any source older than Snorri, who was writing two hundred years after the conversion of Iceland, that any one Germanic deity was ever seen as having authority over any of the others. In short, for the Dumézilian system to stand up within Germanic religion, one must pass over all descriptions of the practise and history of the elder troth in favour of the latest and most literary descriptions of it.

The tripartite system also ignores two important classes of folk: the crafters, who are sometimes classed as "third function providers" but who, especially as smiths, were thought to have magical powers; and the marginal figures of the thrall and the outlaw. For those who like neat patterns, Dan O'Halloran suggests an alternative five-fold system: First Function = sovereignty/authority; Second Function = lore and crafters; Third Function = warrior; Fourth Function = farmer/provider; Fifth Function = thrall/outlaw. O'Halloran cautions against associating any one god with any one function, however, pointing out that each of the gods shows attributes of all levels of society (Wodan even appears in the fifth function as an otherworldly outlaw). In general, it is not the way of the Germanic folk to hierarchize and separate, but rather to see the needful things of life (such as rulership/magic/spirituality, strength, and fruitfulness) in a more holistic way, as a single weave of might. Nevertheless, there are many who have found the threefold model powerful for ritual and belief, so it cannot be set aside too lightly, although careful consideration of the god/esses (and of early Germanic society) would suggest that sticking too closely to structuralist literalism may not be greatly helpful in understanding the souls and thought of our forebears and the holy ones we worship; indeed, inasmuch as a strict Dumézilian view requires ignoring large amounts of data about our ancestors' beliefs and knowledge of the god/esses, it may actually do injury to the effort to bring back the old ways.

In regards to the being of the god/esses themselves, there are also different views within the Troth. A few choose to see them as Jungian archetypes, or as ideal embodiments of various aspects of our souls. Most folk of the Troth, however, know the god/esses as real and mighty beings, as free-standing and individually aware as we are (or more so!) who work their wills upon the Middle-Garth in different ways and whose might is with us in all that we do. Likewise, most folk of the Troth are sure that the god/esses came into being before we did. They are mightier than we are (though not omnipotent), wiser than we are (though not omniscient), and probably more complex of character than we are. Although they are greater than we, however, there is no doubt that we are (or can be, if we are honourable and strong) worthy of them, in much the same way as children can be worthy of great parents and grandparents; indeed, there are many stories from the old days which tell how gods (especially Wodan and Fro Ing) fathered human dynasties, and the Jarls of Hlaðir, who warded Norway against christianity for a long time, were said in *Háleygjatal* to be born of Óðinn and Skaði. Thus the worship we give our god/esses is not a matter of moaning about their highness and our lowness, but literally "worth-ship": we honour them for what they are and have given us, and seek to bring forth that in ourselves which mirrors them.

There is surely much knowledge about the god/esses that has been lost to humans over time, and much more that is yet to be found. Their own beings do not change, but different sides of what they are tend to come out at different times. Tiw, for instance, was best known as the great Sky-Father in earliest days, but in the Iron Age, he seems to have been called on most as a god of battle, and in the Viking Age he was known as "ruler at the Thing (judicial assembly)" (*Old Icelandic Rune-Poem*). They also take note of changes in the world: lately, guns have been brought forth at rites for the blessings of Tiw, and the computer on which this book was edited has been hallowed to Wodan many times, with a little mead spilled to Loki to keep his glitches out of it.

As to what the god/esses are and where they came from: the Eddic poems *Völuspá* and *Vafþrúðnismál*, and Snorri's *Prose Edda* tell of the birth of Óðinn and his brothers, and of the making of the worlds. We also know from the Norse sources that some of the gods, such as Thonar and Balder, are Wodan's children; while other deities, such as Skaði, Gerðr, and Loki, are etins who were adopted into the ætt (clan) of the Ases by the rites of marriage (the two goddesses) and blood-brotherhood (Loki). But there are many of the god/esses about whose kin and roots the lore of our forebears tells us little or nothing: for instance, there is no tale of the birth of the Wanic kind; Snorri clearly says that nothing is known of Sif's kin; and Frija's ætt is known only by the name of her father Fjörgynn. Those who know these deities well, and think on them often, may find their own answers in the course of time; but most folk are content to accept and love them as they are.

On an earthly level, as the chapters on our folk's history suggest, it is possible to trace some of the roots of our forebears' understanding of some of the god/esses, and to see how we came to know them as we do. To some degree, it is sure that the Troth is, and always has been a nature-religion: Thonar's name simply means "Thunder", and his mother is the living Earth; we hear Wodan's voice in the storm-wind and see Sif's hair in the ripe fields, the brightness of Wulþur's (Ullr's) arrows in the Northern Lights. This should not be taken as meaning that the god/esses are mere personifications of natural forces, as was often suggested in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: rather, this world shows forth their great soul-might in everything about its shaping, and should therefore be treated with the worship and love that we give to our elder kin. Other things have also played a part in the growth of our understanding of our god/esses, however. The love and worship of our ancestors has been one of the strongest elements in the religions of the North from the Stone Age onward, and several of our deities (especially Wodan, Fro Ing, and the Frowe) have very close ties to those of our forebears who still watch and care for their living kin. As our ancestors learned new skills and new lore, these also widened their awareness of the god/esses and their works: for instance, Wodan was surely known long before the spread of the runes to the North, and the first artistic models for the Gotlandic picture-stones with their horse-and-rider motif also came from other lands, but

these things gave our forebears yet another a means to show forth what they already knew of our god/esses. For this reason, the question of anachronism is not a matter to be thought of in the workings of the Troth. If we were a group dedicated to pure historical re-creation, you would not be able to scratch an inscription in runes from the Elder Futhark (ca. 0-700 C.E.) on a reproduction of a tenth-century Þórr's Hammer; but to us, the god/esses are one from their eldest roots to this very day, so that we may yet see Bronze Age luhorns blown before a Troth hof built after the model of those twelfth-century Norwegian stave-churches which were probably based on heathen holy architecture.

The god/esses themselves appear in many shapes to us, which are not bound by time as we see it. Unlike some Pagan religions, which have different deities (or major deity-aspects) for different times of life, such as the Maiden, Mother, and Crone of Wicca, we see our god/esses as coming forth simply according to need and how they are called. Thus, all of them have youthful aspects and old aspects. The same goddess can, like Skaði, be the Warrior Maiden and the mother of a dynasty; the same god can, like Wodan, be the brave young adventurer and World-maker and the wise and sorrowful old father. Some folk find their favoured deities shifting with changes in their own lives, as an unmarried maid might pass from Gefjon's patronage to Frija's at marriage; others see their own changes and growth in newly found sides of their beloved god/esses. It is not that the god/esses themselves change: it is rather that their being is and has always been a single wholeness, but humans find them easier to know by looking at their various aspects and the ways in which they come forth in different situations.

Usually Troth folk give some worship to all the god/esses, though how strongly and how often varies widely. It is not uncommon to find those whose interest is divided by godly ætts, so that together with the usual term "Ásatrú" (trust in the Ases), we often now see folk who call themselves followers of the "Vanatrú" (trust in the Wans). Generally, it is not good to seek out one godly kindred and never give the other a thought; however, there are many who think that (so long as all the god/esses are duly respected), one may be able to learn more by concentrating on the kindred that is closest to one. And it is surely true that, just as in the elder days, most folk find in time that there is a single god or goddess who calls strongly to their own souls. The Old Norse word for this was *fulltrúi* (manly) or *fulltrúa* (womanly) - the one in whom you put your full trust/belief. In *Eyrbyggja saga*, Þórolfr Mosturskeggi is called a "great friend of Þórr" (ch. 3), and the god himself is called Þórolfr's *ástvinr*, 'beloved friend' (ch. 4): this, together with the understanding of the god/esses as our elder kin, shows more clearly than anything the Germanic view of the holy folk. From what the sagas show us of the relationship of the "beloved friends" to humans, we can see why each of the god/esses must be able in all ways: you may call upon other deities for blessing in many things, but for the chief things of life - whether they be fruitfulness and riches, wisdom, strength, love, or success in struggles - it is the god/dess who has chosen you who is likeliest to give at your need. Each of them does this in their own way, which not only matches the god/ess' being, but is best fitted to the soul of the chosen one. For instance, Thonar might help in a battle by strengthening your arm, Wodan by casting terror and war-fetter on your foe, Frija by warding you against all blows, and Fro Ing or the Frowe by giving you the fierce might of the battle-boar.

The basic relationship between god/esses and humans is one of gifts given by each to the other. They give us our lives, our awareness, and all that we need from the growing grain that feeds us to the highest wisdom of the soul; we give them love, worship, and the might of the blessings we make at the holy feasts of the year and whenever we speak their names or drink toasts to them. Grønbech says that "The worshipper went to his grove and to his god in search of strength, and he would not have to go in vain; but it was no use his constantly presenting himself as receptive, and quietly waiting to be filled with all good gifts. It was his business to make the gods human, in the old, profound sense of the word, where the emphasis lies on an identification and consequent conjunction of mind with soul". As we learn from the god/esses, they also learn from us; as they fill us with life and awareness, so do we give the same back to them. More: "(When someone) bloted - he made the gods great and strong...The gods who were much bloted were - according to Christian authors - worse to deal with than ordinary supernatural beings" (II, p. 209). The gift was always a deed of sharing, whether it happened in human life (as with the gifts of wedding or those given by drighten to thane) or between humans and god/esses. Grønbech comments that "The gift implies mingling of mind and life, communion and inspiration, and this reality is heightened in the relation to the gods. To own - *eiga* - implies vital connection between the owner and the thing, and the verb *eigna* means to transfer body and soul, as we might say, to make the conveyance real; thus *gefa* and *eigna* in a religious sense is identical with *blóta*" (III, p. 72). At the blessings of the Troth, both god/esses and humans are blessed!

A clear, straightforward expression of the way many (perhaps most) true folk see the god/esses of the North is put forth by Gamlinginn in his statement of troth, "Hér Stend Ek".

Here stand I - alone if necessary - for the things that I believe.

1. I believe that the Æsir and the Vanir are living Deities who came out of Ginnungagap before the beginning of time, and have ruled the Nine Worlds since then, and will rule them until Ragnarök - whether or not humans believe in them.
2. I believe that the Æsir and the Vanir are inherently good, and that they always support good and oppose evil, and that they always want all humans to do what is right.
3. I believe that the Æsir and the Vanir foster and value the individuality of each person, and that each person should be proud of what he or she inherently is - and that people should never look down on others, or themselves, for

what they inherently are.

4. I believe that Faith in the Æsir and the Vanir constitutes the Religion of Ásatrú, which is separate from and not connected to any other religious faith (although it may be superficially similar in some respects), and that Ásatrú is my religion and my only religion.
5. I believe that, as an adherent of Ásatrú, I have a personal relationship with each and all of the Æsir and the Vanir, individually and collectively - that Frigg and Óðinn inspire me, that Týr and Zisa guide me, that Sif and Þórr protect me, and that Freyja and Freyr provide for me - and that all of the Gods and Goddesses are my friends.
6. I believe that every human on earth can and may have a similar personal relationship with all of the Æsir and the Vanir, individually and collectively, and has as much right as I do to be an adherent of Ásatrú, if he or she so chooses, and that Ásatrú is freely open to anyone who wants to accept it - regardless of gender, race, colour, ethnicity, national origin, language, sexual orientation, or other divisive criteria - and that no individual or group of individuals has the right to deny Ásatrú to anyone, or to try to force it onto anyone.
7. I believe that religious beliefs should always be of free choice, and that each person who chooses to adhere to Ásatrú should interpret it according to his or her own ideas, and that no individual or group of individuals ever has the right to try to make a person adhere to any religious ideas or beliefs against that person's will, or to try to harm those who do not agree with them, for any reason.
8. I believe that the Ásatrú Religion, guided by the great Gods of Ásgarð, provides the best Way of Life for all who choose to follow it, and that the Ásatrú Way of Life esteems: courage, honour, hospitality, independence (and liberty), individuality (with self-reliance and self-responsibility), industriousness (and perseverance), justice (including an innate sense of fairness and respect for others), loyalty (to family, friends, and the society of which one is a part), truthfulness, and a willingness to stand up for and do what is right.
9. I believe that when I die my Spirit will live on in Ásgarð, if I have earned it, in the company of all of the Æsir and the Vanir - so help me Týr and Zisa.

Gamlinginn

Contributors

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Chapter IX

Tiw and Zisa

(Týr, *Tiwaz, Tius; Tisa, *Týa, *Tiwon)

Although the tales of our folk speak little of Tiw, his name and what few things we do know of him hint that he held a great place in early times. Now, many are finding themselves touched by this god (and even his less-known womanly counterpart, Zisa), and seek to bring his ur-old worship back to life again and call his might forth to brighten the Middle-Garth. Among these folk stands William Bainbridge, who tells of his chosen god (and goddess) in this work, "Týr and Zisa".

The Eddic Týr may seem to some, at first blush, a relatively simple and straightforward deity; Zisa, on the other hand, appears not at all. A deeper investigation into Týr's nature and character, though, shows a complexity arising, not only out of the vastly different sources of knowledge of him, but also out of the seeming differences, even incompatibilities, in the pictures one derives from the various references. What, among all the different personalities that could emerge, is the central reality that is Týr? Is Týr the transcendent Sky Father, the cold and rational orderer, co-ruler with Óðinn, the stern but fair judge, the patron of Þing and *hólmganga*, or the brave and stoic warrior who sacrifices himself for the well-being of the folk. Each person who attempts to come to grips with Týr must answer this question for him- or herself, and yet one suspects that the core truths of this god and his even more obscure consort (or womanly aspect? - KHG) must remain something of a mystery - in the best and most sacred sense of the word - even to those who most honour them, as befits two of the most ancient of our deities. In seeking mysteries, however, we take them into ourselves and become one with them. It may then be that the characters of Týr and Zisa will reveal themselves more fully through the words and deeds of us who find in this pair a holy path imbedded in our own souls, and an essential aspect of the wholeness that is the Northern faith.

The earliest appearance of the god we know as Týr appears to have been as the great sky god of the Indo-Europeans. This we surmise from the apparent derivation of the names for many of the sky gods in Indo-European peoples - examples include Dyaus in the *Rig Veda*, Zeus for the Greeks, Jupiter or Jove among the Romans, Sius in the ancient Hittite pantheon, and perhaps Zîu, Zîo, Tîuz, or Tîwaz in the original language of the Teutons - from a single source, and the similarity in function displayed by these deities. His name originally may have meant "shining", or simply "light". For the Germanic peoples, as with others, the name was also a generic word for "god", a circumstance that continued even into Eddic times. From this, and from the position of this god in other Indo-European cultures, we believe that the Sky Father was also the chief of the gods, and probably honoured together with the Earth Mother. He appears to have been ancient, and thus, imperfectly understood, when the Indian *Vedas* were composed; Indra, the "king of the gods", was considered in some sense his offspring, and Varuna, as the "creator and sustainer of the world", is considered to have inherited those functions from Dyaus. According to early Vedic thought,

The Sky is the Father and, with the Earth, the origin of everything. All the gods, Sun, Moon, Wind, Rain, Lightning, Dawn, and the rest, are children of the Sky. Dyaus covers the Earth and fertilizes her with his seed, that is, with rain.

One consequence of Týr's origin is that, unlike Óðinn and despite his appearance at times as a cold and implacable god of struggle, Týr has not been viewed as embodying both light and darkness within his nature, but has remained for those who follow his path preeminently a god of light.

As might be expected, the Tiwaz of Heathen theology had undergone great changes between the time the Indo-Europeans began to split into separate peoples and the late Heathen period in Northern Europe, which furnishes us with most of our data on ancient Germanic religion. Nevertheless, a few circumstances indicate that at least some element of Týr's identity as the overarching god of the heavens persisted down to that time. First, there is the phenomenon of the sacred column of the Saxons, *Irminsul*. It is thought that the name of this column is related to the name *Hermiones*, which, according to Tacitus, was one of the earliest tribal names among the Germans. The Irminsul is said to have represented the "column of the universe upholding all things". While it is difficult to say when the tradition of the Irminsul began, it is a fascinating coincidence that, between approximately 170 and 240 C.E., there appeared in Northern Gaul several "Jupiter columns", on which Jupiter was sometimes represented mounted and holding a thunderbolt, and around which the images of the four seasons, the days of the week, or various other deities appeared. Certainly, it strikes one as at least somewhat plausible that the depiction in Northern Gaul of the Roman sky god on a column may have influenced the later use among a Germanic tribe of the column to honour the ancient Germanic sky god (showing, by the way, that at least some Germans understood who their sky god was, even if the Romans insisted on equating him erroneously with Mars). Another indication

that for some, Týr retained at least the spiritual authority of the ancient Sky Father is the description of him, in the *Old Icelandic Rune Poem*, as "the ruler of the temple".

A second connection between the Germanic Týr and his ancient function as sky god is his identification with the pole star, Polaris. This is clearly stated in the "Anglo-Saxon Rune Poem":

(Tir) is a star, it keeps faith well
with athelings, always on its course,
over the mists of night it never fails.

Combining the idea of a "world column" with the pole star, one arrives not only at a principle linking heaven with earth, but also an ordering principle around which the heavens and the earth are organized and revolve. Whether the old Saxons and their English descendants actually made this connection or thought of Týr in such terms remains, unfortunately, a matter of conjecture.

Finally, it appears that in the most ancient times, Týr was honoured primarily on mountains and in forests. If Týr were, as many have assumed, primarily a war god and a god of the political and juridical structures, one would not expect to find his holy places in natural and somewhat inaccessible settings, but rather, mainly in towns or near places of military significance. That an ancient Teuton would have to climb a mountain - that is, to place him- or herself between earth and sky - to honour Týr completely indicates that Týr, like so many of the Heathen gods and goddesses, retained a vital connection for the old Germanics with the natural force in which he was first perceived, and never became entirely "socialized".

In his extensive account of German society, the most comprehensive such survey of Roman times, Cornelius Tacitus made prominent mention of three deities, to whom he ascribed the Roman names Mercury, Hercules, and Mars. It is generally assumed that these names correspond to Óðinn, Þórr, and Týr, and later Roman usage in Britain decisively confirms the identification of Týr with "Mars". This tendency to regard Týr as a god of war has continued, for some, down to the present day, and there is ample ground for it. It seems to have been common to engrave a "Týr rune" on implements of war, presumably so that they would not fail their wielder in battle. This custom was expressly sanctioned in the *Sigrdrífumál* of the *Poetic Edda*:

Learn victory runes if thou victory wantest,
and have them on thy sword's hilt -
on thy sword's hilt some, on thy sword's guard some,
and call twice upon Týr.

In the *Prose Edda*, Óðinn, in the guise of Hár, "The High One", describes Týr in terms quite consistent with his apparent function as bringer of victory in war:

There is a god called Týr. He is the boldest and most courageous, and has power over victory in battle; it is good for brave men to invoke him. It is a proverbial saying that he who surpasses others and does not waver is "Týr-valiant". He is also so well-informed that a very knowledgeable man is said to be "Týr-wise".

The Saxons' progenitor deity, again decisively identified with Tiwaz, is thought to have been one Saxnot, or later in England, Seaxneat, the divine ancestor of the royal house of Essex. The name means something like "Sword Companion".

In modern times, this tradition regarding Týr was carried on in the ritual manual of the Ásatrú Free Assembly:

Tyr, in his many guises, is the original Indo-European sky god. Long before the Viking Age, though, he had been demoted to a lesser, but still important status. Tyr is a war god, and his virtues are those of bravery, sacrifice, and devotion to justice.

Tyr, then, is a model for those who follow the path of the duty-bound warrior, responsible for the welfare of others.

The "demotion" spoken of is nowhere so clear as in the "Hymiskviða" of the *Poetic Edda*, where Týr serves as little more than a straight man for Þórr.

There are, however, difficulties in regarding Týr's perceived function of "war god" as an essential element in his character. First and most obviously, Týr was originally a chief deity, in an age and land wherein a people not adept at warfare had little chance of long-term survival. Under such circumstances, *any* deity would by necessity have become a

"war god", since victory in war was one of the crucial items the deity would be expected to deliver. For example, there can be little doubt that Freyr also sometimes functioned as a "war god", for all that he is also a god of peace and plenty (see "Fro Ing"). Another problem is that none of our sources for Týric mythos show the supposed war god actually making or participating in war. Certainly, Óðinn, and Óðinnic human protagonists, are depicted in such activities, and indeed, one of the reasons Óðinn is believed to have supplanted Týr as chief god is his ability, as "chooser of the slain", better to produce victory by producing more slain among the opposing side. But the extant sources fail to show either Týr or Týric military heroes in battle. And in the one Eddic tale to show Týr in any detail, he is shown as *binding* violence, not unleashing it.

A third consideration is that in other Indo-European cultures, the true counterpart of Týr is not especially associated with war. In the Indian pantheon, neither Dyaus, nor Mitra (after Dumézil), nor Varuna (as inheritor of the role of Sky Father) were viewed as specifically war gods. Zeus and Jupiter, though rulers and thus capable of overcoming their foes, were accompanied in their pantheons by deities for whom war was a specialty, Ares or Apollo or Mars, respectively. Only if one identifies Dyaus with Mitra, and then follows him to Persia where he becomes Mithra, does one approach a war god, and by the time of that transformation, the Teutonic branch of the Indo-Europeans would long have parted company with the Indo-Iranian branch. Assuming, as from the standpoint of Ásatrú we probably ought to, that a god is more than a social function, and retains his essential character regardless of what people at any given time may happen to think about him, it is difficult to support with comparative material anything more than the view that Týr probably functioned more or less as a "war god" for a period because the Northern peoples needed him to.

Finally, war is not terribly compatible with the other roles Týr has performed in society. As Sky Father, Týr's function is quintessentially *creative*, not destructive; as noted above, he tends to be viewed as a god of light, and certainly cannot supportably be regarded as a "death-god", as can Óðinn. In making fertile the Earth through his seed, in the form of rain, Tiwaz is generally considered to be taking part in a marriage, not a rape. And as Þing god, Týr's function was to manage conflict and direct it into channels that are not destructive of the community, not to stir up conflict for its own sake, again, as Óðinn has been known to do. Thus, although Týr can certainly be, as McNallen wrote, the true patron of the self-sacrificing warrior fighting for the common good, he is not fundamentally a god of slaughter, nor does he call especially to those whose path involves physical violence. One must look, then, far past the battlefield to glimpse his true nature.

Týr is also referred to as the Northern god of justice. This term can be enormously misleading. "Justice" comes from a Latin source, and expresses a fundamentally Mediterranean concept. The word seems to imply that there is a set of abstract, universal principles against which empirical phenomena can be rationally measured to arrive at a "just" result, and also implies the existence of a judge - an impartial, disinterested, and all-powerful party who adjudicates disputes based upon the previously mentioned abstract principles of justice. A third component of a system of "justice" has in practice been a set of comprehensible, codified laws promulgated by an absolute, but definitely human, "authority". The old Teutonic system of punishing wrongdoing and resolving conflict, by contrast, was local rather than universal, based itself on precedent, rather than a rationalistic derivation of a result from abstract principles, often utilized an assembly acting as jury rather than a judge, and relied on principles of conduct that were viewed as having divine origin and as being the property of the local folk, rather than on the edicts and decrees of political authorities. Thus, the lore gives us no indication that Týr was a judge, or that he decreed laws for the people to follow. Forseti, as an arbitrator, came closest to a judge, and Heimdallr was the one who ordered society and put people in their proper places (as described in the Eddic poem *Rígsþula*). Týr simply established a framework for managing the struggles and conflicts inherent in any community such that the community, rather than being torn apart, emerged stronger. To call Týr, therefore, a god of right, after the German *Recht*, would come nearer to the truth, although perhaps the most accurate term would be Þing god, after the institution with which Týr was most closely identified in later Heathen times.

The Romans clearly knew of the connection between the Teutonic "war god" and the judicial function in society; Tacitus reported that:

Capital punishment, imprisonment, even flogging, are allowed to none but the priests, and are not inflicted merely as punishments or on the commanders' orders, but as it were in obedience to the god whom the Germans believe to be present on the field of battle.

Since Tacitus later mentions that capital cases are tried in the assembly, the link between Týr and the Þing is inescapable. This connection was also recognized by the Frisians in Britain who crafted two Latin inscriptions found at Hadrian's Wall referring to "Mars Thingsus". While this is not the place to examine in detail the remarkable institution of the Þing, it would probably be fair to describe it, at its most sedate, as a jury trial with audience participation, and at its most raucous, as the pursuit of open warfare by other means. In its judicial aspect, it, and Týr, are also associated with trial-by-combat, or the *hólmganga*. Particularly in the Icelandic sources, the picture clearly emerges of a forum guided to a large extent by what were regarded as the ancient laws of the locality (as enunciated by the Þingspeaker or Lawspeaker?), but in which the support of powerful factions for one side or another unquestionably affected the outcome, and the lone, unpopular litigant stood a drastically reduced likelihood of success.

Two cultural phenomena in Britain hint strongly at the persistence of the connection between Týr and the political

and judicial systems. The first is a symbol known as the "broad arrow", appearing as a rather truncated Týr rune, that was used to signify the legal profession, government property, and the military. The second is the mediæval fair, discussed at some length by Nigel Pennick in his work, *Games of the Gods* (pp. 129-60). Pennick links these fairs to locations identified through their names either with the Þing or with Týr, and discusses how their layout, according to a "sacred grid", implies a connection with a metaphysical/religious concept of divine and cosmic ordering of the universe. The fairs also featured a pole in the center (*Irmingsul?*) on which was hoisted a glove (Týr's severed hand?). Overshadowing these in importance, however, are the institutions of the adversarial and jury-based (as opposed to the investigative and judge-based) system of justice, and Anglo-Saxon common law. These are virtually unique in the world today to English-speaking countries, and can only have their roots in the Heathen concept of law, and in the Þing.

Týr's connection with the Þing has led Georges Dumézil, by a somewhat torturous path, to conclude that Óðinn and Týr represent two aspects of the social function of sovereignty, the "first function" in his tripartite socio-theology. In Dumézil's view, Týr represents the rational, social, and "light" aspect, and Óðinn represents the magical, inspired, and "dark" aspect. The author is decidedly not a Dumézilian, and hence will leave a comprehensive discussion of Dumézil's theories to someone more sympathetic to them. An important, and apparently sound, basis for them is de Vries' opinion that the "war god" aspect of Týr is not fundamental, and arises largely from the almost warlike character of the Teutonic judicial system (and indeed, on the tendency of the Teutons to regard war, as well as lots, as a sort of judgement by the gods and hence, judicial in nature). More troubling is Dumézil's view that Germanic law, as represented by the Þing, expresses a corrupted and "pessimistic" view of law:

At the very least theology describes a divine Order where all is not perfect, either, but where a Mitra or a Fides keep watch as guarantors and shine as models of true law. Even if polytheistic gods cannot be impeccable, they should at least, to fulfill their role, have one of them speak for and respond to man's conscience, early awakened, surely already well awakened and mature, among the Indo-Europeans. But Týr can do that no longer. The Germanic peoples and their ancestors were no worse than those Indo-European peoples who fell upon the Mediterranean, Iran, or the Indus. But their theology of sovereignty, and especially their god of Law, by conforming to the human example, was cut off from the role of protestation against custom which is one of the great services rendered by religion. This lowering of the sovereign "ceiling" condemned the world - the entire world of gods and men, to being no more than what they are, since mediocrity there no longer results from accidental imperfections, but from essential limits.

One with a more sympathetic view of Germanic religion would note that the function of a native or folk religion is generally to support and strengthen the folk, not imbue it with guilt for not living up to artificial standards of behavior. One might also find it peculiar that Dumézil should consider those gods admirable who encourage wishful thinking, and mediocre who teach self-sacrifice for the common good. Still, if Týr and we are condemned to being no more than we are, that is nonetheless preferable to being what we are not.

Another weakness of the theory is that important aspects of Northern theology must be distorted in order to make it fit. To conclude that Týr has abandoned his "proper" function, Dumézil suggests as a "possibility" that Týr, despite the obvious derivation of his name, really has no connection with the ancient sky god, uses that lever to speculate that Týr "might have" coexisted with Óðinn, and then assumes not only that they must have coexisted, but that they must have been counterparts representing two aspects of the "sovereign function", since such a nice model of this division of labour exists in Vedic lore surrounding Mitra and Varuna, and since some very rough correspondences seem to exist in Celtic religion and in some relatively minor figures in Roman myth and pseudo-history. However, the *Irmingsul* speaks of Týr's continuing link with the sky and the universe beyond it, and the whole of Teutonic mythology fails to show an instance of Týr in cooperation or interdependence with Óðinn, or any indication of a clear, recognised division of labour between them.

Dumézil does derive important support from Saxo Grammaticus' story of Óðinn's temporary replacement:

Thus, Odin, wounded by the double trespass of his wife... took to an exile overflowing with noble shame, imagining so to wipe off the slur of his ignominy. When he had retired, one Mit-othin, who was famous for his juggling tricks, was likewise quickened, as though by inspiration from on high, to seize the opportunity of feigning to be a god; and, wrapping the minds of the barbarians in fresh darkness, he led them by the renown of his jugglings to pay holy observance to his name. He said that the wrath of the gods could never be appeased nor the outrage to their deity expiated by mixed and indiscriminate sacrifices, and therefore forbade that prayers for this end should be put up without distinction, appointing to each of those above his especial drink-offering. But when Odin was returning, he cast away all help of jugglings, went to Finland to hide himself, and was there attacked and slain by the inhabitants.

Presumably, upon his return, Óðinn reinstated collective sacrifice. Dumézil proclaims this "undoubtedly an ancient myth", and identifies Mit-othyn, or Mithothyn, with Týr on the strength of the name's similarity with the word *mjötúðinn*,

meaning "the judge-leader". Then, relying on Julius Caesar's description of Germanic society as communal, and in a rather jarring intrusion of modern economic theory into ancient society, Dumézil associates Óðinn with totalitarian communism, and Týr with classical liberalism and private property. Saxo's source may indeed have been an ancient myth, and could conceivably have had to do with Óðinn's replacement of Týr as chief of the gods. Caesar, however, is notoriously unreliable, having described the whole of Germanic religion as worship of tangible things such as the sun, the moon, and fire, while Tacitus, a mere century and a half later, found any number of deities being honoured, some in ways that continued in use up to the christian suppression. From Tacitus on, Teutonic society does not appear particularly communistic, nor Óðinn especially hostile towards private property or, for that matter, individual freedom.

Theories such as Dumézil's, of course, are advanced with the idea that certain predispositions and patterns recur in a grouping of people, in this case Indo-Europeans, and these shape people's religious perceptions and thus, their mythology. From the standpoint of psychology, comparative religion, or, for that matter, political economy, this approach can provide useful insights. From the standpoint of theology, however, and assuming that one accepts the possibility that a god actually exists and has a definable character apart from his social function, one cannot respect the integrity of the available sources regarding Týr as a Germanic deity and conclude that he is simply a rational and social counterpart to the divinely-mad and other-worldly Óðinn. Neither Týr nor Óðinn can be comprehensively defined in terms of one another and the roles they play in human society, or even human psychology; given the cosmic scope of both their natures, we would be presumptuous in believing we can comprehensively define them at all. As believers in the folk-religion we are studying, we seek after mysteries that expand the scope of our gods and our understanding of them, not reductionist theories that reduce them to manageable and socially productive "functions".

The single tale in the lore unquestionably about Týr, and expressing his nature so clearly that it could not be transferred to Óðinn after the latter ascended to the throne of Ásgarðr, describes the binding of Fenrir, the wolf son of Loki and the giantess Angrboða. Because the auguries told the gods to expect great harm from Fenrir and his siblings, the gods "brought the wolf up at home, and only Týr had the courage to go up to it and give it food". As the wolf grew great and strong, the Æsir sought to find a fetter strong enough to bind him. After three failed attempts, they obtained from Svartálfheimr a magical fetter, and went with the wolf to an island in a lake. When they suggested, however, that Fenrir allow himself to be bound, he balked, even though the gods promised to set him free if he could not break the bonds:

The wolf said: "If you bind me so that I can't get free, then you will sneak away so that it will be a long time before I get any help from you. I don't want to have that ribbon put on me. But rather than be accused of cowardice by you, let one of you place his hand in my mouth as a pledge that this is done in good faith." Each of the gods looked at the other then and thought that they were in a fix, and not one of them would stretch forth his hand, until Týr put out his right hand and laid it in the wolf's mouth. Now when the wolf began to struggle against it, the band tightened, and the more fiercely he struggled the firmer it got. They all laughed except Týr: he lost his hand.

From this tale, Týr is known above all as the god of self-sacrifice for the common good. The story's other implications, though, are not so easily discerned. The spectacle of the Þing god, often called the "god of justice", swearing a false oath has troubled many. Even disregarding that the word "oath" was not mentioned, however, one must remember that all the gods made the promise, and Týr alone redeemed his honour by paying the pledge-price. Beyond this legalism is also the fact that all knew that Fenrir must be bound if the earthly and cosmic order of things was to be maintained, but only Týr was capable of putting the universal need above his personal welfare; and who better to perceive the greater need and the relative unimportance of his own appendage than the god of earthly and cosmic order, Tiwaz, Sky Father?

But the real mystery embodied in this story lies only partially in Týr's act, which is readily comprehensible in human terms. Týr's relationship with the wolf adds a far deeper and more complex aspect to the myth. Whether Fenrir represents cosmic chaos and destruction, as some theorize, or violence and greed, which Týr also in some sense bound in the Þing, the striking element of the story is that Týr seemed actually to have been friends with the wolf. Whatever it was about Fenrir that so terrified the other gods seems almost to have struck a chord in Týr. A mere god of law and order would not have reacted in that way. Only a god fully cognizant of the necessary part that chaos and destruction play in the cosmos, and in his own nature, would have *fed* that chaos and destruction, knowing that it must bring the end of all the god himself works to preserve. Although Týr plays a decisive part - *the* decisive part - in binding the destructive forces that threaten the worlds, he nonetheless does so from a viewpoint that acknowledges and respects those forces, and that identifies with the totality of being and of Wyrð, rather than his own role in Wyrð's working out. Týr is thus the warrior, the constant star impassively recording the warrior's deed, and the universal axis of being and destiny that joins the two and gives them meaning, *Irmínsul*. In Týr's defining act, the warrior, the master of struggle presiding over the great Þing of life, and the universal, boundless, and transcendent sky become one, and we see more clearly than in a thousand etymologies the essential unity among the multitude of faces Tiwaz has chosen to show the Indo-European peoples over the millennia.

The discerning reader will have noted by this time that practically nothing has been said about Zisa. This is because, however sparse our sources of knowledge are about Týr, they are infinitely sparser as to Zisa. Discussing Teutonic

religion, Tacitus tells us:

Some of the Suebi sacrifice also to Isis. I do not know the origin or explanation of this foreign cult; but the goddess' emblem, being made in the form of a light warship, itself proves that her worship came in from abroad.

Jacob Grimm, our principal source for information on Zisa, makes the eminently plausible connection between *Isa* and *Zisa*, or *Cisa*, and links both with mediæval Latin references from around the 11th century to the patroness of Augsburg, Germany, once a home of the Suebi, who also honoured Tiwaz. September 28th seems to have been the Feast of Cisa, in fortuitous juxtaposition with Michaelmas the following day; the archangel Michael's character does appear to manifest some similarities with that of Tiwaz. Cisa seems to have borne at least some relationship with the harvest.

Such is the nature of our hard knowledge; what we do with it is largely up to us. Some have seen Zisa as a female counterpart to Týr, out of theological necessity, and because Loki taunts Týr with cuckoldry in the "Lokasenna". Some support is given to this view by the discovery of the Raum-Trollhättan bracteate. This bracteate has often been seen as Týr because it shows a figure with one hand in the mouth of a beast. However, the hairstyle and the skirt are characteristically female, as are the clearly defined nipples or breasts: knowing of the existence of a goddess whose name is the womanly form of Týr, it is hard to interpret this piece as showing anything else. On the other hand, the picture emerging from both Tacitus and Grimm is not that of a Mrs. Warrior, a Lady Justice, or even a Queen of the Sky. Far from representing evidence of foreign origin, the ship is extremely ancient in Northern religion, and carries connotations both of early goddess worship and of death and the journey to the other world (see "Bronze Age", "Njörðr and Nerthus", and "Soul, Death, and Rebirth"). One might even be forgiven for noticing as perhaps more than a coincidence that the goddess Nerthus, although described by Tacitus as Mother Earth, has her holy place on an island in the *sea*, on which was found a secluded lake. Nerthus, much in the manner of Freyr in a later age, was carried about the precinct in a chariot pulled by cows, and during her procession, weapons were put up and the peace was kept as sacred. If one tends, as some do, to see in the original Sky Father Týr's most essential nature, one would also tend to seek in Zisa echoes of his earliest and only known consort, the Earth Mother, a figure in fact quite like Nerthus; and if Tiwaz incorporates within himself the blinding light of creation, then his consort would have included within herself the darker mysteries of death and the transformation within, represented since earliest times by a ship. But such thoughts at present are no more than speculation, and time must determine whether a truth is contained within them that will emerge in the minds and workings of those on a Týric path.

In modern times, Týr has attracted his share of folks who accord him especial honour. For the most part, these Týrians share many common traits derived from their patron, such as a certain reserve, a tendency to place more emphasis on thought and reason than on emotion and ecstatic experience, a deep concern for fairness to others and for insuring that the consequences of their own acts promote the common good, and most fundamental, an uncommon capacity for seeing past their personal viewpoints and interests, and acting on behalf of the community, the faith, and Wyrd itself, to bring into being what the Norns have woven for us in the most beneficial manner possible.

As Týr has many aspects, however, so those attracted to him often differ substantially in their view of Týr, and in the way they express their acceptance of him as a paradigm for their own lives. As the old A.F.A. ritual book shows, there are some who place the image of self-sacrificing warrior at the center of their concept of Týr, regarding his other facets as secondary or too far in the past to matter. While the path of a Týric warrior doubtless has much in common with other "warrior paths", such as discipline, self-testing, and, most often, training in some form of martial arts, a Týric warrior tradition would offer a stark contrast to, say, an Óðinnic one. Few Týrians emphasize magical practice much, nor would they find the berserker rage much to their taste. Other differences would exist with practices inspired by Þórr or Heimdallr, both of whom have served as models for warrior paths. A Týric warrior, for example, may incline more than most to enquire carefully into the philosophical and moral underpinnings of a cause, and the motives of its advocates, before committing to defend it.

Several Týrians see the god's path as one of service to the community and to justice. One such person summarizes this approach succinctly:

In basic terms, Týrian spirituality involves always trying to do what is right, what is fair, what is just, and what is honest, with special stress on service to, and protection of, the community, both the Ásatrú community and the general community in which one lives.

While it is difficult to find fault with this description, and most Týrians seem to adhere to it as best they can regardless of their personal ideologies, the discussion above of Týr as Þing god provides a somewhat different model, and one perhaps closer to the concepts of the old Heathen Teutons. As the Þing, and the ancient law that informed it, sought to harness the conflict and hostility in ways that strengthened and unified the community, accorded a certain dignity and respect to both winners and losers, celebrated the folk's traditions and heritage, and permitted the folk to arrive at a result that it felt and considered fundamentally *right*, so a modern Týrian might step into the fray, not to mediate and bring peace,

but to sharpen, define, and elevate a conflict, to make it possible for both sides to retain their own dignity and honour while recognizing those of their opponents, and to strengthen the contestants and the community by encouraging better solutions and a deeper sense of responsibility. Such a Týrian would not be "called a peace-maker", but might nonetheless bring the community greater benefits than what many think of as peace. Binding the wolf, after all, was not intended to make him tame.

But yet another path calls to those who seek Týr, not on the battlefield or in the assemblies and courts, but in the crystal clarity of dawn in the high mountains, between Earth and Sky. This path has long seemed lost in the mists of ancient history and pre-history, and it yet glimmered only faintly when the Vedas were composed. It is somewhat like the path whose perceived absence in Northern religion Dumézil so lamented, but it is not the same. It is not, as Dumézil thought it should be, a path that opposes or judges the folk for not living up to an intellectual's ideals. Rather, it is a way that does justice to the complexity of the multiverse, which far surpasses the capacity of our theological vocabulary, and yet it remains firmly rooted in the land, and in the community. This way is akin to *Irmingsul*. At its top is the blinding light and pure being of sky and sun. Its base is enveloped and supported by earth, mother of all. And from its axis radiates the sense of natural order, relation, and meaningfulness that allows one, whether in the stillness of contemplation, the flash of intuition, or the immediacy of action, to grasp and become one with the dynamic and sometimes chaotic flow of life that surrounds one, and to find the place in that flow from which one may realize one's highest *ørlög*. This way of Tiwaz does not sacrifice the self to the Self, as Óðinn taught; having seen the transitory nature of any self, it seeks rather to express the ever-transforming Truth of being and becoming, life and spirit. But part of that expression is to nourish the chaos and destruction at the core of transformation, and part of it is to pledge one's strength, honour, and life to nourish the Truth and spirit at the core of the folk. And another part is to seek once again the loving and peaceful embrace of Zisa, as storm-driven rain seeks the fertile field.

A pantheon is often thought of as a sort of bureaucracy, in which each member has his or her desk, or "function", where specific requests can be addressed if one only has an adequate directory. I do not believe this to be accurate, because I do not believe that gods and goddesses are functions. Certainly, it does appear that if those scholars who have studied the Indo-European and other religions have taught us anything, it is that the deities people honour are not always who and what the people imagine them to be; that is, the pronouncements of folk religion are not always to be taken literally at face value. On the other hand, the theologian is not accorded the scholar's luxury of assuming that nothing happens in religion other than what takes place in people's heads. Thus, a people may ascribe characteristics or functions to a deity that are not inherent to the deity, and that the deity later discards at the earliest opportunity. Further, although the Teutonic peoples are unquestionably Indo-Europeans, not all of their deities can be derived from and comprehended within an Indo-European context; some have uniquely Teutonic characteristics, which is to say that some have helped shape the Northern peoples in ways one does not find elsewhere. Consequently, some of the native Indo-European gods who found themselves in this new, Teutonic pantheon expressed their characters in new and different ways. One assumes that this was intentional. And of course, the origin of peoples does not necessarily tell us anything of the origin of gods.

With this as a preface, I would suggest that, over the centuries and millennia, as the Northern peoples emerged, various beings whom we think of as deities found in those peoples a fitting medium for their creative activities, and the Teutons responded by inviting those gods and goddesses into their hearts and minds. Many of these gods were more ancient than the Germanic peoples, and some, including Týr, were honoured by many other peoples as well. But all in some way committed themselves to us. For Týr, the moment of commitment came when Ásgarðr and Miðgarðr hung in the balance, when even All-Father Óðinn despaired of accomplishing what was needed to insure a future for Ásgarðr and the folk to whom he had extended his protection, and when Tiwaz, already ancient enough to have been forgotten by peoples of whom the Teutons knew little or nothing, stretched forth his hand as pledge to Ásgarðr and to us that his friend, the devouring Wolf, would not, until the end of the age, keep us from knowing and living our Wyrð together.

Týr has kept his pledge to us, and now some of us, a tiny part of the last folk still to honour him of all the peoples he has befriended, extend our own hands and offer pledges of our own. I believe that it is not too late to restore the ancient and sacred bond between us, and I know that some of us are working to that end now; may the work succeed. May Zisa once more bring peace and renewal to the tortured Earth and to the folk, and may she guide us to the mysteries we need to inform and empower her restored rites. And let Týr, Sky Father, help us to erect the new *Irmingsul* joining heavens, earth, and folk, and celebrating the victory, not of arms over an enemy, but of our true spirit and destiny over the centuries of falsehood and forgetfulness we have survived. Such, then, is my view of the Týric path, which we now claim because it is ours by nature, and because it is ours by *Right!*

In the modern age, Tiw's colour is often seen as red, though it may also be a very light blue.

Some followers of Tiw think that the god's holy beast should be the wolf (which, together with its ferocity, is a beast with a highly developed social character, geared towards working within the common society of the pack). However, Jamey Hrolf-Martin argues well for seeing the dog (Gamlinginn suggests, specifically the Wolfhound, that noblest of all dogs) as the beast of Tiw, mentioning that "The next semi-major role Týr plays in myth is his battle with the helhound

Garmr. The choice of Týr's doom-foe has caused some well-founded confusion, given the latent antagonism that exists between the lord of law and Fenrir, the wild wolf. Despite this, given the nature of the opponents faced by the other major gods at Ragnarök, I feel Týr's pairing with Garmr is ideal. Þórr faces the earthly wyrm, Óðinn faces the wild wolf, and keeping in context, Týr faces the truthful hound.

"Keeping in mind Garmr's role as guardian of the Helway, he serves a lawful purpose. Among men the hound/dog has come to be known as an ever loyal companion to man, and in Germany, the hound/dog was a sign...of the foundation of justice and the codification of law...Given this, one might draw the conclusion that the hound/dog is an animal sacred to Týr, much as the wolf is sacred to Óðinn (note the contrasting nature of both beasts and gods)". And what is a hound if not an even more socialized wolf?

The horse may also be associated with him: the English place-name "Tysoe" is paired with the red horse cut into the slope of Edge Hill.

Tiw's weapon may have been the spear in earliest times; there is some question as to whether the great spear-casting men of the Bronze Age rock-carvings represent *Tiwaz or *Woðanaz.

Contributors

- From the second paragraph to the discussion of Tiw's colour, this chapter was written by William Bainbridge, Elder
- Gamlinginn, Elder
- Jamey Hrolf-Martin, from "Fenrir's Binder", *Idunna* V, ii, 19, For-Litha 1993, p. 37.

Chapter X

Wodan (Óðinn, Woden, Wotan, *Wodans, *Woðanaz)

(*Bragi*): 'Why did you take victory from him, if he seemed the bravest to you?'

(*Óðinn*): 'For that which cannot be known: the gray wolf gapes ever at the dwellings of the gods.'

(Unknown skald, *Eiríksmál*)

The root of Wodan's name is the Proto-Germanic *Woðanaz - which may mean "The Furious One", "The Mad One", or "The Inspired One". Wodan is all of these, and more: his being is that wild *wod* which rushes through mind and body, to be seen in the inspiration of skaldcraft, the howling of the stormwind, and the frothing madness of the berserk warrior.

Of all the god/esses, Wodan is the one who is best known to us, as it was his gifts for which the skalds and saga-tellers of the eldest days were most grateful. He is the winner, keeper, and giver of the mead Wod-Stirrer (ON *Óðroerir*), which he shares with those humans whom he wishes to bless so that they may speak and write with some of his song-skill. Like all the god/esses, he is many-sided, and more of his names and strengths have survived than those of any other deities. He is the god of battle and kingship; as leader of the Wild Hunt, he is greatly feared through the Germanic lands, but farmers also leave their last sheaf out so that Wodan and his horde of ghosts will make their fields fruitful. He is the father of many human kindreds, and the betrayer of his chosen heroes; he sits in dignity above the worlds on his seat Hliðskjálf, and wanders through the worlds in the guise of an old tramp. Though all the god/esses have their share of magic, he is best-known as a wizard, winner of the runes and father of galdor-songs.

Wodan most often appears as a tall, one-eyed man with a long hoary beard, wrapped in a blue-black cloak with a wide-brimmed hat or a hood drawn down over half his face. *Völsunga saga* describes him as being barefooted and wearing patterned breeches. Sometimes Wodan is also seen in full armour, with byrnie, helm, shield, and spear (though not sword). All things about the shapes of the holy ones tell us about their being. The blue-black cloak Wodan wears is the colour of death and the undead, the shade our forebears called "Hel-blue". In Icelandic sagas, men put on a blue cloak when they were in a mood to slay, and *Piðreks saga* tells us that wearing this colour is the sign of "a cold heart and a grim nature". Yet it also shows us the endless depths of the night sky - the realm of the god's wisdom - and his might to hide and show forth what he chooses. Likewise the hat or hood: Wodan's face, and what he sees through the eye that lies in Mimir's Well, are ever half-hidden from humankind, his mirk-side ever matched evenly with his brightness. Still, he appears differently at different times: there are some true folk who have seen both of his eyes at once in their meditations, and some images that are thought to be his, such as the mask-faces on the backs of several Vendel Age raven-brooches, also have two eyes.

Although Snorri Sturluson, with the dual models of christianity and Classical mythology before him, carefully presented Óðinn as the head of the pantheon (and dignified ruler of Ásgarðr), the surviving evidence tends to show that this god was not dearly loved by most folk. Unlike "Þórr" or "Freyr", "Óðinn" was seldom used as an element in human names: there is one late reference to a human woman named "Óðindís" on a 10th century Swedish runestone from Vestmanland, and a relatively rare Danish man's name "Óðinkaur" (either "Óðinn-tresses" - in which case, perhaps a cultic title referring to the long hair of a king or other holy man - or "the one given to Óðinn"). The latter name survived into the christian period, and was the name of at least two bishops of royal blood. "Óðinnphobia" is not uncommon even today, and for good reason. Many call on him for help in one thing or another, and hail him as kindly teacher and shaman, which he is in some of his aspects, but those who do this without being wholly given to him should be very careful. Of all god/desses, Wodan seems to be swiftest to claim the *geld* for his gifts, and he often takes what one would rather not give. One of the ways in which he sometimes works is shown in the tale of how King Víkarr's mother asked Óðinn for help in her brewing. The god gave her that help, asking in return "that which lies between your girdle and yourself". While uncertain why he should want her dress, she agreed - only to find that, unknown to her as yet, she was pregnant and that it was her unborn son whom Óðinn wanted to be dedicated and, in time, sacrificed to him.

Wodan can be tricky to those who deal with him, but he is often cruel to those who are truly given to him and love him best. He is a grim god, a stirrer of strife; and as many of our sagas (*Saga of the Völsungs* perhaps being the clearest of these) show, he is well known for testing his chosen ones to destruction. In Icelandic literature, his heroes are usually the type known as "dark heroes" - ugly, troublesome, tormented men of great might and tangled character, such as Starkaðr and Egill Skalla-Grimsson. Wodan himself is seldom a god of social order; if anything, he is the opposite. His most beloved

dynasty, the Völsungs, included outlaws, werewolves, and brother-sister incest, and he says of himself in *Hávamál* 110, "I know that Óðinn swore a ring-oath: who can trust in his troth? He swindled Suttungr, took symbol-mead from him, and left Gunnlöð to weep". Yet of all gods, Wodan seems to be the one who is seen most often within the Middle-Garth and who has the most to do with the affairs of humans, especially on the large scale. He forges his chosen ones harshly and brings about their death in time - not because he loves their suffering, but because he is always gathering his might against the Last Battle, Ragnarök, so that a new world may be born after the death of the old. He himself has already undergone many great trials to gain the wisdom which makes this possible: the nine nights' hanging and stabbing through which he found the runes, the casting of his eye into Mímir's Well as payment for a draught of its waters.

Despite these things, Wodan is not always dark of deeds or of heart. One of his names is Óski, "wish" (perhaps related to the Anglo-Saxon proper name *Wisc-frea*, Wish-Fro?), showing him as the kindly granter of desires. He often appears to give rede and help to his chosen ones, as he does to Sigurðr the Völsung and Hrólfkraki, for instance. In a lighter mood, he came to King Heiðrekr in the shape of a man Heiðrekr knew and challenged him to a riddle-game; he also showed himself to Óláfr inn digri (Óláfr the Fat, also known as "St. Óláfr") as an old storyteller, offering blessings which the Christian king rejected by trying to hit the god with a prayer-book. *Hárbarðsljóð* shows him playing a practical joke on Þórr, appearing unrecognised to the other god as an old ferryman, introducing himself by saying, "I am called Hoarbearð - I seldom hide my name" (this out of a god with more than an hundred recorded by-names!), and teasing his son until Þórr is ready to start swinging his hammer.

Wodan is more than a little fond of his drink; *Grímnismál* 20 tells us that he lives on wine alone, and in *Hávamál* he recounts, perhaps a little ruefully, his drinking of the three cauldrons of the mead of poetry: "I was drunk, I was over-drunk, at the house of the wise Fjalarr". In her article "Óminnis hegri", Ursula Dronke even offers an argument for ritual excessive drinking to the point of vomiting as an Óðinnic act, which may or may not be comforting on the morning after to those young thanes who have won the somewhat uncoveted "Egill Skalla-Grímsson Drekk-til-at-Spýja Memorial Award"...Wodan's adventures with women are also well-known: not only does he father many dynasties on human women, but he also seduces etin-maids such as Gunnlöð and has at least three lovers in the Ases' Garth - Frija, the Frowe, and Skaði. In *Hávamál*, he boasts of his spells to win the favours of women; and in *Hárbarðsljóð*, he matches his many exploits in the bedchamber against Þórr's tales of fighting thurses.

As much as anything, Wodan is a teacher of all the wights of the worlds. *Sigrdrífumál* tells how he scraped the runes into "the holy mead" and sent them on wide ways, so that "they are with the Ases, they are with the alfs; some with the wise Wans, some with mortal humans". The skald Þjóðólfr ór Hvini called him *hapta snytrir*, "the one who makes the gods wise" (*Haustlög*), and Wodan does the same for human beings. Though this is by no means a set rule, and has become less general in the past few years as the elder troth has spread, many true folk whose lives are given to study and teaching find themselves drawn to Wodan.

Wodan is also called Farmatýr, "Cargo-God". This title can be read in several ways; it may be that, like Mercury (to whom he is compared in the *interpretatio Romana*), he also had a role as a god of trade. It could be taken as referring to the booty-loaded ship of the Viking whose raids Óðinn blessed; it could speak of his return from Etin-Home fully laden with the "cargo" of the mead Wod-Stirrer; or it could be related to his role as ferryman of the dead, as seen in *Frá dauða Sinfjötla*. In modern practise, however, it has also been found that Wodan as Farmatýr is a good god to call upon when searching for things that are hard to find - not only out-of-print books, but ritual items of all sorts.

Wodan's first shape was that of death-god: not as the keeper of Hella's kingdom, but as the Chooser of the Dead, leading souls from world to world and bringing the might and wisdom of the dead out from the dark realms to the bright lands above. The rune *ansuz (Ase) is most closely tied to Wodan; the Old Icelandic Rune-Poem says specifically that this rune names this god. The word *ansuz itself may have first spoken of the dead forebears whose might still worked on the living; according to Jordanes, the Goths called their ancestor-ghosts "anses", which the christian chronicler interpreted as "demi-gods". As drighten of the restless dead and leader of the Wild Hunt, Wodan was known through the Germanic lands from an early time - perhaps the earliest times. Though no Norse myths tell of the Hunt, the Hunter's name is known as Wodan or Oden (or as the earlier form, Wod) from Scandinavia to Switzerland. The rushing might of the dead through the empty fields of winter brings forth all the strength that sank into the earth at harvest's end: the Last Sheaf is left out for them so that their blessings will make the lands fruitful again.

As the god who goes forth into the realm of death and brings might back, Wodan became the god of magic and skaldcraft (which in itself is the skill of galdor-magic): it is from the land of the dead that those lores rise and that wod roars. As the Eddic poem *Hávamál* tells us, he got the runes by means of a shamanic death-initiation. Hanged and stabbed at once, dangling on the Gallows-Tree between the worlds, Wodan sank slain to find the twenty-four-fold pattern which lies at the very roots of the worlds - the shapes and sounds of the mights with which all things are wrought. As a magician, he also calls the dead forth to learn lore from them and hear the wisdom of their fore-tellings.

As the one who passes between the worlds of death and life, Wodan became king- and forebear-god, for the might of the king in Scandinavia and Saxon England was grounded on the mounds of his forefathers, from which he spoke his deemings and laws with the wisdom of the holy ones who lay within. Wodan was the first father of many of these lines, particularly in Anglo-Saxon England where nearly all the kingly genealogies go back to him; and it was he (together with

Fro Ing, as spoken of later), who opened the speech between the king lying beneath the mound and the ruler who sat on its heights.

During the Iron Age, while the Germanic people were migrating, Wodan rose more to be seen as a battle-god, in which role he was the chosen patron of many of the Germanic tribes such as the Lombards, the Alamanns, and the Cherusci. From the later Norse sources and the Classical references, Wodan's place as battle-god and hence tribal patron was not due to his might as a warrior, but his role as Chooser of the Slain: the god who made the casualty-list was clearly the one whose choices ruled the outcome of the struggle, and thus Wal-Father (Father of the Slain) became Sig-Father (Father of Victory). In later Norse sources such as *Styrbjarnar þáttur*, battle-hosts were given to Óðinn by letting a spear fly over them with the words, 'Óðinn have you all!' The many deposits of weapons and accounts of captives and booty being given as sacrifices in the Iron Age are likely to show just such dedications: whatever survived the battle on the losing side had already been marked out for the god's keeping.

Wodan was by no means the only god of the Vikings, not even of those who went raiding or battling to win new lands for themselves in the south. But his presence was surely mighty among them. The Raven Banner was borne by the Danes in 878, as described in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*: "that battle-flag...which they call Raven"; and the *Ecomium Emmae Reginae* tells how the Danes had a banner of white silk in the middle of which a raven appeared at times of war. According to *Orkneyinga saga*, the jarl Sigurðr of Orkney had a raven banner (woven by his mother) which ever brought victory to the one before whom it was borne, but death to the one who bore it - probably as a sacrifice marked out for Óðinn. Turville-Petre suggests that this god was also the particular patron of many of the kings of Norway, such as Harald inn hárfagri (Hairfair) and Eiríkr blóðøx. Although there are few signs of the cult of Óðinn in Iceland, where Þórr and Freyr were the favoured gods, Óðinn was not unknown there. His worship in that land, however, seems to have been limited to a few individuals - skalds such as Egill Skalla-Grímsson and cross-grained adventurers like Víga-Glúmr - who were not only suited to him by nature, but stemmed from families with a tradition of Óðinn-worship. Even in such families, dedication to Óðinn was by no means the rule: Egill's brother and uncle, both named Þórólfr, had no share in either the wisdom or the surly tempers of the family Óðinnists, Kveldúlfr, Skalla-Grímr, and Egill.

Though Wodan is a battle-god, he is hardly ever seen fighting for himself. He chooses the slain, but seldom actually slays them; his decision is enough to set their doom. In token of this, it may be noted that he bears no sword: though he gives swords and armour to his heroes, and is seen dressed in byrnie and helmet, his only weapon is the spear Gungnir ("the shaking one"). The spear is the sign of his might, used for hallowing - but not in the same way as the Hammer of Thonar. The Hammer-hallowing is a blessing; the hallowing of the Spear dooms whoever or whatever its flight passes over to be destroyed in the Middle-Garth so that Wodan may have it in his own hall. Although most pictures of Wodan show Gungnir as a thrusting spear, all references to his use of it, or indeed to the Wodanic use of any spear, tell us that it is a throwing spear. The many spear-blades with runic inscriptions from the Migration Age are also very narrow of haft, showing that they must have been used for casting rather than thrusting. The same is true for the Kragehul spear-shaft (Denmark, 5th century), the inscription of which is debated, but seems to be a ritual dedication of its victims.

Wodan is known as the ruler of Walhall - the Hall of the Slain, where his chosen *einherjar* ("Single-Harriers") fight every day and feast every night in training for Ragnarök. Although Snorri presents Valhöll as the Norse heaven reserved only for the battle-slain elite, in contrast to Hel where everyone else ends up, this view seems to be late; the growth of the Walhall-belief is spoken of further in the chapter "Soul, Death, and Rebirth".

Together with the Walhall belief is the belief in the walkurjas (walcyriges, valkyrjur) - the women who choose the slain for Wodan and bear drink to the god and the heroes in Walhall. In earlier Asatrú, the word *valkyrja* was used to mean the woman who carried the drinking horn at rituals; more recently, it has been either a very general word of honour for a strong woman or else as a technical spiritual term for the fair womanly being who wards, teaches, and inspires - the highest part of the soul. The walkurjas will be spoken of further in the chapter on "Wights"; here it is enough to say that the reading of their being which is best-supported from elder sources is that they seem to be parts of Wodan's own self sent forth in womanly forms. The god himself is called *Valkjósandi*, a manly reflection of the womanly *valkyrja*, and the walkurja-name Göndul (probably related to *gandr*, "magical staff or wand") mirrors Óðinn's own *heiti* Göndlir. The walkurja-names Herfjötur (war-fetter) and Hlökk (fetter) are likeliest to stem from Wodan's own skill at laying battle-fetters; "Skögul" ("shrieker") may be related to the *Óðinsheiti* Viðhrimnir ("he who screams in opposition"). The walkurjas often act as Wodan's messengers and, as Wagner had it, the embodiments of his will. Eyvindr skáldaspillr's *Hákonarmál* shows Óðinn sending Göndul and Skögul out to choose Hákon the Good in battle and bring him back to Walhall; in *Völsunga saga*, the god sends a walkurja with an apple of fruitfulness for one of his heroes.

Wodan's best-known beasts are the raven and the wolf, best known in Northern literature as those who feed on "Yggr's barley" - the bodies of the battle-slain. His two ravens, Huginn ("Thoughtful" or 'Bold') and Muninn ("Mindful" or 'Desirous'), fly forth every day to bring him news of all the worlds. The ravens' names are often incorrectly translated as 'Thought' and 'Memory', but they are in fact adjectival formations. Our forebears thought that to see ravens flying before one was a sign of Wodan's great favour, especially before a battle or after a holy rite. When Hákon jarl of Hlaðir, who had been forcibly baptized, had escaped and won his way back home, 'he made a great blessing. Then there came flying two ravens and croaked loudly. Then the jarl thought he knew that Óðinn had accepted the blessing and the jarl should have victory in

battle' (*Heimskringla I, Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* ch. 27). The raven is also tied to Wodan through its relationship to the gallows, so that: "There is...no certain way of determining whether the raven first became associated with Óðinn as gallows-bird or battle-bird; the Germanic sacrificial practice of hanging prisoners after a battle might indeed make a distinction between the two sources of the raven's diet meaningless" (Grundy, "The Raven in the Cult of Óðinn" - unpublished dissertation chapter).

Óðinn's wolves are called Geri and Freki, both names meaning "the greedy one". In its description of Valhöll, *Grimnismál* 20 tells us that "glorious Host-Father, used to battle, sates Geri and Freki; but weapon-famous Óðinn lives on wine alone". In Norse or Anglo-Saxon poetry, "to sate wolves" is a usual phrase for killing men, but here the image is of a great drighthen feeding the hounds in his hall - a double image which shows us Wodan as the bright ruler in God-Home and as the dark ruler of the corpse-strewn battlefield. The wolf shows the fiercest side of Wodan's battle-might. His warriors were berserks and shape-shifters, often called *úlfheðnar* (wolf-coats) from their use of wolfskins to bring on this wod. The best-known image of such a warrior is from one of the Torslunda helm-plate matrices (Sweden, ca. 700), which shows a man in a wolfskin holding a spear before a one-eyed weapon-dancer who wears a helmet horned with bird-heads. Similar figures also appear on the sword-sheath plate from Gutenstein and in one of the graves from Kungsängen (Sweden, ca. 800).

As well as ravens and wolves, Wodan also has the gray eight-legged horse named Sleipnir ("slipper"), whom he rides through the worlds. This horse is shown on the Gotlandic picture-stones Ardre VIII and Alskog Tjängvide I. There has been much talk over the meaning of Sleipnir's legs. The simplest reason given is that the eight legs shown on the picture-stones could have merely been meant to show the horse's speed, and only later taken as a specific peculiarity of Óðinn's mount. However, in *Myth and Religion of the North*, Turville-Petre tells us that 'Apparitions portending death often appear mounted on greys...(and) misshapen horses with varying numbers of legs have been widely reported as portents of evil' (p. 57). H.R. Ellis-Davidson suggests that there may be a relationship between eight-legged Sleipnir and the funeral bier borne by four pallbearers; she also refers to an Asian *shamanka* (female shaman) and her eight-legged horse (*Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*, pp. 142-43). Sleipnir's eight legs could also be seen as mirroring the eight worlds ringed around the Middle-Garth.

Wodan himself appears as a serpent and an eagle, taking both shapes in his quest for the mead of poetry; two of his *heiti* (by-names), Ófnir and Sváfnir, are also listed as names of the wyrms who gnaw at the roots of the World-Tree.

In elder days, Wodan was particularly worshipped with human sacrifices; though he was not the only deity to whom men's lives were given, he was by far the most usual one. This, of course, can no longer be done. However, there was another manner of "human sacrifice": the dedication of one's own life to Wodan, so that the one thus dedicated was known to be fey (*feigr*) - death-doomed and willing alike to live or die for the god. This was best spoken by Sigmundr the Völsung after Óðinn had appeared to break the sword which the god had given him long ago. When Sigmundr's wife Hjördis found him wounded on the field, she asked if he could be helped, and he replied, "Many live when there is little hope, but my luck (*heill*) has turned from me, so that I will not let myself be healed. Óðinn does not wish me to brandish sword again, now that it is broken. I have had my battles while he willed it." The emblem called the walknot, made of three overlapping triangles, is strongly associated with Wodanic sacrifice and/or death in battle; at least, this is the context in which it appears on the Gotlandic picture stones. Though there is still some academic debate about what this sign might have meant in elder times, heathens now take it that the walknot is the token of those who are thus given to Wodan and should be worn only by those who are willing to fall at his choice. The Old Norse reconstructed form **valknútr* - "knot of the slain" - is based on the modern Norwegian name *valknut* for the embroidered or woven pattern.

Wodan has two brothers with whom he made the worlds, called either Vili and Vé (Prose Edda) or Hoenir and Lóðurr ("Völuspá"). Hoenir appears as Wodan's brother in other myths, for instance as one of the hostages given to the Vanir; Lóðurr is often interpreted as Loki, as a couple of myths have Óðinn, Hoenir, and Loki wandering through the worlds together. "Vili" and "Vé" mean "Will" and "Holiness"; they are often seen as hypostases of Óðinn himself. De Vries points out that in the traditional Germanic genealogies the youngest generation has three alliterating names, and that therefore the Óðinn-Vili-Vé triad must go back at least to Primitive Norse, before the loss of the initial W- in front of o and the change of w to v which is one of the marks of the transition from Primitive Norse to Old Norse (*Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* II, p. 281).

Holy places given to Wodan in elder days include mountains, fields, lakes, streams, at least one bog, and groves. He himself is often seen as a god of the wind, particularly the stormwind, but has watery aspects as well: according to the story of Sinfjötli's death, it is he who steers the ship of the dead over the dark waters, and *Hárbarðsljóð* also shows him as a ferryman.

Stones which have been associated with this god in modern times are meteorites and lapis lazuli. Because the ash-tree was used for spear-shafts, it is thought to be a tree of Wodan; the yew is also seen as his tree because of its close ties to both magic (especially runic magic) and death. Nineteenth-century references speak of the fly agaric mushroom as springing from the froth dropping from Sleipnir's mouth, but this is likeliest to be a product of Germanic romanticism. It is also highly unlikely that the fly agaric (or any other psychoactive substance) was used in bringing on berserker-gang, though this mushroom does have a long history in shamanic use (Note: fly agarics are poisonous unless properly prepared - do not try this at home). The European mandrake (not to be confused with the American mandrake or May-Apple) has also been found

to work well with Wodan, as do hawthorn and mugwort.

The drink most associated with Wodan is mead, because of the clear tie to the mead of skaldcraft. The *Grimnismál* reference to "wine" may be meant to show Wodan's status, as wine was a rare drink imported to Scandinavia from southerly lands; in an article in *Skalk*, Christine Fell suggests that the word could have been used for any sort of fermented fruit drink. Especially in poetic usage, it could also have referred to alcoholic beverages in general. It has also been found in modern times that akavit is a good drink for calling on Wodan.

Contributors

- Freya Aswynn, Elder
- Stephan Grundy (summarized by Kveldúlfr Gundarsson from Grundy's Ph.D. thesis-in-progress: *The Cult of Óðinn: God of Death?*)
- Kveldúlfr Hagan Gundarsson, Warder of the Lore
- Diana Paxson, Elder
- and all the folk of Trothline who took part in the "Óðinn's Eyes" discussion

Chapter XI

Loki

They hurry to their end,
they who ween themselves so strongly standing.
I am almost ashamed to work with them.
To turn myself again into licking flames
I feel a luring lust.
To consume them who once tamed me,
instead of stupidly going under with the blind,
though they be the godliest gods!
that does not seem stupid to me.
I'll think on it: who knows what I'll do?
- Wagner, Richard (*Rheingold*, scene iv)

This subtle friend of the gods is rather refractory to a sober method of analysis dividing him into mythological and folkloristic elements. As a matter of course he has been caught time upon time and placed on the anatomist's table, has had his body dissected and his inner organs numbered as belonging partly to a corn spirit, partly to a spirit of nature and partly to something else; but the analysis has never succeeded in depriving him of his deftness and agility, he slips from under the hands of the anatomists and springs to his feet ready with a shocking jest" (Grønbech, II, pp. 330 -31).

There are few god/esses who bring forth such a strong and swift reaction among followers of the Northern ways as Loki. Particularly in the earlier days of the Rebirth, he was seen almost as a "Nordic Satan", never called on, and usually not acknowledged as a deity by anyone - with a few exceptions such as Alice Karlsdóttir, whose *Borealis* article on Loki stands as one of the best heathen explorations of his character (this article was later reprinted in *Gnosis*). There are still plenty of folk in Germanic religion who are shocked by the very idea of giving Loki any sort of worship or spiritual attention, and cannot imagine how someone following the Northern ideals of honour and truth could do so - they see Loki as a sort of Nordic Satan. The idea that someone can call themselves "Ásatrú", true to the Ases, and still worship or even work magically with the one who often works to bring about their end, is still one that meets with much challenge, and is indeed open for discussion. However, there are a few true folk who, like Wodan himself, have found the Trickster to be someone worth sharing a horn with. Forthwith the words of one of those folk, Paul Stigård...

Picturing the Æsir, Loki doesn't fit. He is not a valorous warrior, an incarnation of the world's fertility, nor a sage with the wisdom of the ages. He does not represent a divine level of honour, strength, courage, or any ideal of Teutonic society. Picturing Ásatrú, Loki still doesn't fit. Books dealing with the Norse gods as a subject of religion or magick tend to spend a half page on him. Just enough to show thought was given to Mischief-maker, but not enough to encourage any thought about him by the reader. Asking Ásatrúar brings a similar reaction. No one seems to want to think about Loki, he just doesn't fit.

However, Loki is ever-present in Norse mythology. If our pagan ancestors wanted to ignore him as much as modern Ásatrúar do, he would be briefly mentioned in the Edda, rather than driving Þórr mad in every other lay. Obviously, Loki fits somewhere.

Scholarly works on Norse mythology and paganism also only deal with him perfunctorily. Therefore, books were written to deal with Laufey's-son separately. De Vries wrote "The Problem of Loki" in 1933, and Rooth's *Loki in Scandinavian Mythology* came out in 1961. Loki was dealt with academically. However, reviving the religion of Óðinn and Þórr leaves no rest for the wicked. Loki insists on having his due.

A problem arises, though, in trying to know who Loki is. This is an eternal problem with neo-pagans. Worshipping a deity who embraces more than one concept prevents easy understanding. Flame-hair takes this to a new level, not only presenting himself in many different, even contradictory, aspects, but also requiring at least minimal effort of study to understand these aspects. He not only refuses to let himself be known, no one seems to want to know him.

However, knowing Od's-blood is possible, whether or not it is desirable. In doing so, another problem facing neo-pagans arises: that of reconciling oneself with one's god. The more common case is the original pagan worship of a deity seeming horrible: the Blood-Eagle and similar rites are no longer desirable.

But in this case, the god himself appears reprehensible. Understanding Loki on an intellectual level becomes as much of a problem as dealing with him on a spiritual level.

Possibly the worst act associated with Loki is the killing of Baldr. To most Ásatrúar, this no doubt seems the worst crime possible, the killing of a god. And Wolf's-father is not even remorseful for this act, as well he should not be.

The Edda does not tell of the time Baldr spent in Jötunheimr, learning their ideas before he came back, determined to undermine the gods. He taught them of peace and became the most beloved of the Æsir. He spread flowers and the concept of utopia. He was actually talking deities of war into being nice. While it is not known why the others were so gullible, Loki was not fooled. He discovered Peace-freak's weakness to mistletoe, which was hard to find as it is not native to Iceland, and put that knowledge to good use.

Of course, this is not serious. Baldr was not out to destroy the strength of the Æsir, but his teachings were certainly having that effect. Ragnarök would be coming early in the year, and the gods would not have had a chance in Hel. And if Loki had simply spoken out against this divine hippie, no one would have listened. After all, who trusts Loki? They would have tied him down right then to prevent him from harming the Flower-powerful. And his efforts would have come to naught (Warder's note: Snorri's presentation of Baldr as a kind, sweet, peaceful Christ-figure is almost certainly a great distortion of the god's original warrior-character, as discussed in the chapter on Baldr, where the many spiritual implications of this myth are looked at more closely. But when one considers what Snorri seems to have been doing here, the Loki he knew is to be applauded as the force of change who - even in a literary work - shows up to keep the forces of stagnation from weakening Ásgarðr. Of course, no one thanks the guy who rocks the boat! - KHG).

But there are other despicable acts, other atrocities Sky-walker has done. His family tree reads like a litany of plagues and curses (as if he were responsible for his relatives!). He is apparently the father of the Miðgarðsormr, the Úlfr Fenris, and Hel; the brother of Byleistr ("Lame") and Helblindi ("Death-Blind" - one of Wodan's less lovable aspects - KHG), as well as the mother of Sleipnir, Óðinn's eight-legged horse. And if Baldr can end up resembling Christ by the time the Edda is written, apparently Loki can have descendants similar to Lucifer at that point as well. However, since Loki's children by his other wife, Sigyn, turned out wonderful, is it possible his other progeny took after Angrboda, their mother? If so, this still does not deal with the question of marehood, but that is another matter entirely.

This leaves the primary negative image of Loki, that of a thief. Many times he plays a prank or steals some treasure and brings down the wrath of the Æsir. However, they do not simply punish him or cast him out, they demand he solve the problem. Which he does, every time. He has a trait common to tricksters the world over: providing. Just as Prometheus gave humans fire, Sammael gave Adam and Eve the Apple of Knowledge, and Raven gave the world light, Loki, under the name Lóðurr, has the power to provide mind ("Völuspá" mentions life-force and good appearance - KHG) to humanity, as well as returning anything of which he deprives Ásgarðr. In fact, he is very likely the only one capable of retrieving such things. Simply put, he has the power to give and take, and is the only one with the power to give back what he has taken.

Which is one reason to worship such a god. When something disappears mysteriously, Týr is certainly not to blame, and as such cannot help in his retrieval. Lost objects are the province of Loki, and while his followers may be more likely to lose possession, they do not stay lost.

Another dominion of Loki is parties, especially the crashing thereof. Lokeans come and go unannounced, and try to avoid being bounced from parties as ruthlessly as Venom-eye was in *Lokasenna*. On the other hand, Ásatrúar who want their celebrations to go smoothly do not offend, but please Loki. Unlike the Greek goddess Eris, he does not pick on people just because they got his attention.

Actually, he does have many other aspects in common with Eris, including bad puns and mental masturbation. However, choosing the path of Loki is more than that, transforming life into the divine rebellion, demonstrating the personal existence of free will every day. Discordians refer to such people as "Chaosists", those who stir up chaos. "Zenarchy" (by Kerry W. Thornley) explains a fitting sort of philosophic lifestyle for Loki-worship, although by no means the only one.

For example, an aspect of life Thornley does not mention is the use of computers. If there is a single greatest representation of intelligence and freedom flowing as fire, it is the energy pulsing through electronics. The keyboard is the tauf of inspiration and the monitor scrys into the Well of Wyrð. No vitki should be without one, much less a follower of Loki.

But all manifestations of freedom without bounds, such as keys, and intelligence without limit, such as books, are connected with Gold-thief. This is why his punishment is so horrible. At the end of *Lokasenna*, Loki was captured and taken to a cavern under the Earth. There he was tied down with the bowels of his son Nari, and a serpent was placed above him to drip venom onto his face. Sigyn catches the vile liquid in a bowl until it fills up, and then she must pour it out while a few drops of poison spill into her husband's eyes. When he writhes, the Earth shakes.

No doubt the binding of Loki happened in conjunction with the religious suppression in Scandinavia. One of the most positive aspects of Ásatrú is the free admission that every aspect of the religion is a metaphor, a motif of life. When the binding of Loki is mentioned, it is in a prose afterthought to a poetic lay. It is an addition, as the free spirit of the Norse was not being bound until later in history.

But the final point is that just as Óðinn, Þórr, and even Freyr and Frigg have dark sides, Loki has a bright spot or two, and both the "good" and "evil" need to be accepted in any deity. Further, to be Ásatrú is to be true to all the Æsir, not just most of them. Ásatrúar have as many layers as Ásatrú does. Just as all are made up of small amounts of the more popular gods, all have a little bit of Loki as well. Loki has been bound for at least 800 years, as the Teutonic religion has. Now, his bonds are loosening and we gain his fire in our soul and an occasional mischievous spark in our eye.

As far as our forebears' view of Loki, we know relatively little outside of the Eddas. He is not born of the Ases or Wans: he is an etin, with whom Wodan swore blood-brotherhood. This is no bar to counting him among the god/esses: Skaði and Gerðr are also of pure etin-blood, and most of the holy folk are half-breeds. He is the son of the etin Fárbaumi ("Cruel-Striker") and a womanly wight called Laufey ("Leafy Island"). Although there is no direct Norse evidence for the nineteenth-century reading of Loki as a fire-god (based on a false etymology connecting him with *logi*, 'flames'), a naturalist interpretation might read his birth as springing from lightning setting a wood on fire - an event which, in itself, is destructive, but is often needful for the health of the land. One might even draw this out to suggest that, like forest fires, Loki brings true devastation on a long-term scale forth only when he has been kept from doing his smaller works of destruction (leading to new life) for a while.

Loki has several *heiti*, including Hveðrungr (roarer? - *Völuspá* 55, *Ynglingatal* 32), Loptr (he who fares aloft - or, as Paul translates it, "Skywalker"), and perhaps Lóðurr (etymology difficult). Snorri describes him as handsome, and he is normally seen as a short slight man with fiery red hair. The small size is surprising, since he is supposed to be of etin-kin; but other wights (mostly Þórr) are always threatening or beating him, and he seems unable to defend himself physically. On the other hand, Heimdallr, as Warder of the Ases' Garth, is presumably a fine warrior, and Loki proves his equal at Ragnarök...

Not only is Loki always getting the Ases into trouble and out again - but his solutions always bring them more good than they had before. Sleipnir, the walls of the Ases' Garth, Wodan's spear, Thonar's Hammer, Sif's gold hair, Fro Ing's golden boar and ship, the acceptance of Skaði among the god/esses - we have Loki to thank for them. He does not do these things out of loyalty, a trait he seldom shows (in fact, to save his own skin, he once tricked his good friend Thonar into faring towards an ambush in Etin-Home without Hammer or gauntlets). Most of the time, his motivation is to keep from being punished for whatever he did wrong in the first place. Nevertheless, there are many who might think that the reparations he ends up making far outweigh the original damage. Even when he is in the worst odour with the Ases, he is inadvertently helpful: while hiding out from their wrath, he builds a fishing net. As he hears Þórr nearing, he burns it, then leaps into the river and turns into a salmon - but the pattern of the net remains in the ashes so that the Ases can recreate it, and Loki is caught by his own invention and Þórr's quick hands.

Loki is also sometimes helpful when he was not responsible for the problem in the first place. In the Eddic poem *Drymskviða*, for instance, he has nothing to do with the theft of Þórr's Hammer - but it is he who finds out where the Hammer is and what Dyrmr wants in return for giving it back, and it is he whose quick wits cover so that Þórr can pass as Freyja through the whole of a bridal feast at which the cross-dressed god shows a distinctly unladylike character. He also goes above and beyond the call of duty to make Skaði laugh by tying one end of a rope to a goat's beard and the other to his bollocks, then starting a tug-o-war with the goat. All of the stories in which it is Loki who saves the day (whether or not he was the one who nearly lost it) hint that perhaps it is not such a bad idea to ask him for help in the stickiest situations. In one of our older skaldic poems, *Haustlög*, which describes Loki's recapture of Iðunn from the etin Thjazi, Loki is called "Óðinn's friend", "Þórr's friend", and "Hoenir's friend". Simek suggests that this, together with his generally good portrayal in the poem and the myth, "could possibly point to an originally more positive role for Loki in Germanic mythology" (*Dictionary*, p. 315).

Loki often appears as Þórr's travelling companion on journeys to Etin-Home. In fact, J.S. Pereira has suggested that travellers in highly dangerous areas would do well to call on Thonar and Loki together - though stresses that this would probably only be done in times of the greatest need and most intense danger, such as a war zone where the social order has already broken down so far that Loki's amoral swiftness of wit is the best thing for dealing with it. In such a case, Thonar would not only give the strength and endurance such a faring would need, but also offer a sign of the stability lying on the other side of chaos and the traveller's hope to get to settled steads again. For more ordinary farings, one might suspect that calling on Loki (with or without Thonar) would, at best, be an invitation to lost luggage. Then again, Loki might be just the god to ask about bringing said luggage back, although we would suggest insuring it before calling his attention to it!

Despite his usual charm, Loki appears as a terrifying figure at Ragnarök, when all his might is turned towards destruction - when he breaks his chains and leads the hosts of the evil dead across the sea on a ship called Naglfar, which is made from the finger- and toe-nails of corpses. Then, one of his sons is Wodan's bane and one is Thonar's; if Surtr can be

seen as his kinsman as well, which seems likely, it is almost wholly Loki's clan that works the doom of the gods. It should also not be forgotten that he is the god of earthquakes, forest fires, and such.

The earliest evidences we have for Loki are the "Balder-bracteates" of the Migration Age, on which a winged figure - probably Loki in Freyja's falcon-cloak - stands in front of the sacrifice. One image which is probably of Loki has also survived from the Viking Age. The Snaptun bellows-stone found near Horsens in Jutland (now held in the Prehistoric Museum at Moesgård near Århus) shows a moustached face with its lips sewn together - the revenge taken on Loki by the dwarf Brokk when Loki had cleverly gotten out of paying for a lost wager with his head. Though there is no way to really know, one might guess that the smith's sympathies were with the dwarf and that this particular reference on the bellows-stone was a warning to Loki not to get too frisky in the smithy: in fact, the practical purpose of the stone was to feed the flames with a controlled flow of air while protecting the bellows from their heat. This use of his image also suggests the possibility of Loki as first stemming, not from the etins of mountain and ice, but from Surtr's fiery kin in Muspell-Home.

As far as traditional worship goes, there is no evidence for it, neither place-names nor literary/historical references. As William Bainbridge observes, most religious practice is based, one way or the other, on upholding social norms; while the dangerous Trickster may have had his place in some rites, it is unlikely that he ever had an organized cult.

However, ritual drama may well have been a major feature of Scandinavian worship; and if the myths were enacted in a cultic context, Loki would have shown himself very important to Norse worship indeed. Here he could be likened to the Trickster-figures of other traditional cultures, whose clowning during ritual performances and processions - and the whole concept of temporary reversal and "carnival" mockery of the established order presided over by the Lord of Misrule, which ultimately strengthens social norms - is needful to the success of the rites. Like many other Tricksters or Lords of Misrule, Loki is of ambiguous gender: not only does he mother Sleipnir (and it should be remembered that calling a man a mare and/or saying he had borne children was the worst insult possible to the Vikings), but he also dresses as Þórr's lady-in-waiting in *Þrymskviða*, and in *Lokasenna*, Óðinn accuses him of having lived under the earth as a woman for eight winters and borne children. When he wants to travel most swiftly, he borrows, not Wodan's eagle-shape, but the falcon-hides of the Frowe and Frija; this again must be seen as a form of shamanic cross-dressing. The Trickster is the one who crosses all boundaries (especially those of social taboo), creating the border-state in which acts of ritual shaping and reshaping are possible. This function, particularly in regards to various degrees of cross-dressing, is shared by other deities; but Loki is the one who embodies it most often and thoroughly. The border-state is the time of greatest might - but also the time of greatest danger, when nothing and no-one is safe; this too should be remembered when dealing with Loki.

It is also worth pointing out that the poem *Lokasenna* ("the Flyting of Loki"), in which Loki crashes a party of the Ases to which he was not invited (rather like the evil fairy in "Sleeping Beauty") and trades vicious insults with everyone there, is actually one of our richest sources for Norse god/ess lore. Until recently, it had been thought that the irreverent attitude this often raunchy poem shows towards the god/esses was a sign that it had been written after the conversion; but the language and metre are consistent with an early date. Gurevich suggests that the mockery of *Lokasenna* actually "should be interpreted not as a sign of the 'twilight' of paganism but as a mark of its strength...All these parodies, mockeries, and profanations occur *within* the sacral sphere" (*Historical Anthropology of the Middle Ages*, pp. 168-69), arguing that one of the strongest and earliest characteristics of traditional religions is the ability to weave humour with the most serious holiness and even to laugh at the god/esses. This is surely a side of the Norse religion in which Loki comes into his own....

Grönbech suggests that Loki "was the sacral actor whose business was to draw out the demon, to bring the antagonism to a head and thus to prepare for victory - hence the duplicity of his nature; to act the part he must partake in the holiness and divinity of the sacrificial circle, and when this ritual fact is translated into the language of the legend, it assumes this form: Loki is of giant extraction, born in Utgard and admitted to the company of the gods on his entering into friendship and a blood covenant with Odin" (II, p. 331).

Loki is the total antithesis of social rules, whose very being causes them to break down around him. Sometimes good comes of this, and sometimes ill. Taken to its farthest reaches, this characteristic of his appears in his role as one of the chief causes of Ragnarök. It should be marked that Loki's chief foe is not Thonar (who thinks little of breaking guest-laws when he has the chance to bash an etin on the head), nor even Tiw (as one might have guessed), but Heimdallr, the warder of the Rainbow Bridge and of the gates of the Ases' Garth.

In later Scandinavian folklore, Loki appears as the creator of fleas and spiders, and the spider, *lokke*, may possibly have some etymological connection with him. This would fit neatly with Loki's character. As well as the father of monsters and mother of Sleipnir, he is certainly likely to be the creator of mildly obnoxious bugs and insects which, like the spider, can be very helpful or can be deadly poisonous. Although cockroaches seldom appear in Scandinavia or Germany, it is a pretty good bet that Loki has something to do with them as well. Other than that, there are no beasts traditionally associated with Loki. However, Alice Karlsdóttir suggests that the grackle, being a small, loud-mouthed, and obnoxious cousin of the raven, is probably Loki's bird. The fox, which seems like a smaller, weaker, but slyer and more adaptable cousin of the wolf, has also been suggested for him in modern times. For the same reason, American Ásatrúar might also see Loki in the coyote; he surely has much in common with the Amerindian spirit Coyote.

When working with Loki, it should not be forgotten that he has a truly ill-willing side, and his sense of humour can be very nasty indeed at times. He can, indeed, be a practical joker of the most dangerous sort. Great care is called for,

especially in a religion such as that of the Troth, where fires of sundry sorts play such a great part. Both houses and woodlands can go up in flames very easily... Calling Loki into your life will surely bring changes, but there is no surety that you will like them, or even live through them. Toasting Loki at sýmbel has been found to bring small accidents within the evening (such as eyeglasses melted in campfires or lost forever in snowbanks). Those who work with delicate equipment, especially that through which energy runs, should be especially careful: Loki is the God of the Glitch and the Power Surge.

Nevertheless, it is probably better to be on good terms than bad with him. Some of us have found that a toast made to Loki, or a few drops poured to him, before the start of a ritual/feast works well to stave off disasters, whereas *Lokasenna* shows in graphic detail what happens when Loki is not given a drink and a seat among the other god/esses - and even when he is not invited, he will show up anyway. Further, it might even be seen as somewhat rude to ask Thonar in and tell him his travelling-buddy has to stay outside, or invite Wodan to a feast and let him think that his blood-brother is unwanted.

In working with Loki today, it has been found that he is especially fond of single-malt Scotch, and a shot of it poured out to him with the appropriate request will often encourage him to fix whatever horrible thing he has done to your life or your computer.

On the wilder edges of Ásatrú, there exists a disorganization by the name "Friends of Loki" - a sort of Norse Discordianism, frequently manifesting via computer. "The Friends of Loki are known for strict dogmas, coordination, hierarchy, organizational rules, orthodoxy, and respect for the staid and socially oriented aspects of mainstream Ásatrú. Not!"

But perhaps the most truly Lokean blessing/curse was not first spoken by any Germanic folk, but by the Chinese: "May you live in interesting times!" Whether this is a blessing or a curse...just depends on how well you get on with Loki.

Contributors

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Chapter XII

Balder (Baldr, Bealdor)

The greatest secret of the North is a secret that only two know: "What did Óðinn say - before he climbed on bale-fire - into the ear of his son?" With that question as the last one of the riddle-game, Óðinn showed himself forth to both the etin Vafþrúðnir and the human hero Heiðrekr, winning the games and setting the dooms of his opponents. Wodan and Balder: they know the rune that is hidden from all others, the eighteenth song of *Hávamál* which Wodan will not tell.

Snorri tells us that Balder is the fairest and most beloved of the gods. He is the heir to the Ases' Garth, the son of Wodan and Frija - but was doomed to an early death. Snorri's version of Balder's death is one of the best-known tales of the North: how, after Frija had gotten everything in the worlds except the little mistletoe to swear not to harm him, the gods played a game in which they tossed weapons at Balder. Meanwhile, Loki, in the shape of an old woman, had gotten the secret out of Frija and cut an arrow of mistletoe, putting it in the hand of the blind god Höðr and aiming it at Balder. After Balder's death, Hella said that she would let him go if everything in the worlds would weep - and this happened, except for one giantess named Thokk, who, Snorri tells us, was Loki in disguise. However, according to *Völuspá*, Baldr and Höðr (who was slain in revenge by Váli, the son that Óðinn had gotten for that one deed) shall come back when the world is reborn after Ragnarök and rule in Óðinn's place.

Saxo Grammaticus has a different version of the story. As he tells it, Balder was an aggressive, highly sexed warrior who competed with Höðr (not blind in this version) for a woman. One day, Höðr came on the house of some "forest-maids" (generally thought to be walkurjas) who told him that they decided the outcome of war by their invisible deeds in battle, and warned him not to attack Baldr. Höðr then learned that there was but one sword that would kill Balder, which could be found together with an armring that would give wealth to its owner. After several adventures and struggle between the two heroes, the "forest-maids" found Höðr again and told him he would have to eat the magical food from which Baldr got his strength. Höðr followed the three maidens who made the food and convinced them to give him some of it, after which he was able to mortally wound Balder.

The story of Balder, especially as Snorri tells it, has often been thought to have been influenced by christianity. This is almost certain in Snorri's portrayal of the god: "He is the wisest of the Ases and most beautifully spoken and most gentle, but it is one of his characteristics that none of his decisions can be fulfilled". Snorri, in fact, gives us the image of a beautiful, suffering, and rather passive god - very suspiciously like the "White Christ". This is hardly consistent with the rest of what we know about him. Like Freyr and Freyja, Balder is known to us only by a title meaning "ruler" - a title which continued in ordinary Anglo-Saxon usage and, less often, in Old Norse. The root of the word is probably "strength"; it may also be identical with the Old Norse adjective *baldr* - "daring, courageous". His wife's name, Nanna, probably means, "the courageous" or "the battle-joyful" (de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, p. 223). Although Saxo is infamous for garbling his stories, as well as euhemerizing them, his description of Balder as a warrior is likely to be closer to our forebears' beliefs than is Snorri's pre-Christ. The tale of the Finnish legendary hero Lemminkäinen was also probably influenced by or based on Balder's story (Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion*, pp. 117-18). Like Balder, Lemminkäinen was slain with a weak reed or herb (cowbane) by a blind man. His mother, too, sorrows after him and undergoes a great journey for his sake, but she is more successful than Frija: she is able to put her son's body together and bring him back to life. Lemminkäinen's chief characteristics are his love for battle and his love for women, concerning both of which he is notably successful: he is the very paradigm of the manly young hero, and it is likely that Balder also shared this character.

Likewise in the heroic mode, Balder's dreams foretell his own doom. In this, he closely resembles many (indeed, most) of the heroes of the North, who typically dream their own deaths before the event comes about. The description of these dreams in Saxo, where the goddess of the underworld promises Balder her embraces, are particularly similar to Gísli's death-foreboding dreams in which a dark *dís* claims him as her husband (*Gísla saga Súrssonar*) and Glaumvor's dream of dead women beckoning to Gunnarr, which foretells the doom of the Burgundian king ("Atlamál hin groenlenzku"). In fact, Balder is particularly (one might even say fatally) attractive to these dark and deathly goddesses. It is Balder whom Skaði desires above all others, though it is not his wyrd to be claimed by her: it is Hella who decks her hall and brews the beer for his welcome feast.

The earliest literary work we have which probably holds references to the Balder story is the Anglo-Saxon "Dream of the Rood" (ca. 650-750), which inverts the process demonstrated by Snorri. Although this poem was ostensibly about Christ, many of its elements do not correspond to the christian myth of the crucifixion. The poem's "Christ" is presented as a strong young Germanic warrior undergoing a swift and violent heroic ordeal, and Wyrd is in fact invoked to describe his doom: "that was a dreadful Wyrd" (line 73). He is wounded, not with spear or nails, but "with arrows"; after his death, the whole of the world weeps, a detail which is elsewhere only found in the Balder tale. It seems likely that the christian poet used the story of Balder to transform his god from a meek figure undergoing a shameful criminal's punishment to an heroic sacrifice of the sort for which the Anglo-Saxons already had a model.

The image of Balder as a sacrifice is almost certainly native Germanic. In *Húsdrápa*, which was written by the Heathen Úlfr Uggason in the tenth century and shows no taint of christian influence, Balder is called the "heilagr tafn" - the "holy sacrifice". The very word "tafn" was used only for Heathen gifts to the god/esses; it could not be given a christian interpretation after the conversion. It was most often used in skaldic poetry as an internal rhyme for "hrafn" (raven), referring to the battle-dead; the skaldic poet Helgi trausti Óláfsson specifically called his slain foeman "Gaut's tafn" (Óðinn's sacrifice). The interpretation of Balder's death as a holy, and probably Wodanic, sacrifice is also borne out by the way in which it seems to appear on a number of bracteates of the Migration Age, as spoken of later.

Balder's home is called "Breiðablik" (Broad-Gleaming), and it is said that no *feiknstafir* (staves of harm) can come there, which de Vries reads as speaking of Balder's invulnerability (*Religionsgeschichte*, p. 214). The god Forseti (Fosite) is supposed to be his son. Balder was worshipped during the Viking Age; several place-names in Sweden and Denmark are compounded with his, including a "Balder's Mountain" and a "Balder's Cornfield". Turville-Petre comments, however, that these names tell us little - only that his cult does not seem to have been practised widely, that it might have been connected with rocks and hills, and perhaps that there was an element of fruitfulness to it (*Myth and Religion*, pp. 117-18). There is a place-name Baldersbrønd (Balder's Spring) in Denmark, which Saxo mentions. According to the *Gesta Danorum*, when Balder returned to shore after defeating Höðr in a sea-battle, he pierced the earth to loose this spring so that his tired soldiers could drink. This, as Stephan P. Schwartz has pointed out (*Poetry and Law in Germanic Myth*, pp. 20-21), bears a close resemblance to the Frisian legend of Fosite, and may well hint at a belief in Balder, as well as Fosite, as a law-god (see the discussion under Fosite in "Wuldor and Other Gods").

The "Zweite Merseburger Zauberspruch" also mentions Balder:

Phol and Wodan went to the wood.
Then Balder's horse sprained its foot.
Then chanted Sinthgunt, Sunna her sister;
then chanted Frija, Folla her sister,
then chanted Wodan, as well he knew how to.
Thus be the bone-sprain, thus be the blood-sprain,
thus be the limb-sprain,
bone to bone,
blood to blood,
limb to limb:
thus be the binding.

There has been much academic argument about this charm, including the question of whether "Balder" is meant as a personal name, or whether it is a title for the god "Phol". If this charm has any meaning besides being the common Indo-European healing charm with Germanic names plugged in, then the interpretation which seems the most spiritually valid (though Turville-Petre dismisses it as over-imaginative) is the idea that the stumbling of Balder's horse on the way to the wood (presumably, to the holy stead within a grove) was a sign of his coming death. The belief that the stumbling of a horse was an ill sign was, indeed, very well known to our forebears; and in his studies of bracteate-iconography (see below), Karl Hauck has come to the conclusion that there is Migration Age pictorial evidence for this reading of the charm.

The bracteate from Fakse (Denmark) has a central figure with a ring in his left hand and a half-broken twig jutting downward from his solar plexus. He stands in a half-marked enclosure. Behind him is a man with a spear; before him is a man with wings who wears a feminine skirt and also holds a ring. A bird of prey hovers above his head; there are two fish at the bottom of the bracteate. On the bracteate from Beresina-Raum, the same grouping appears, with the difference that the figure in feminine garb stands within the semi-enclosure and holds the twig up; the shot has not yet been fired. The one from Gummerup has the foremost figure holding a sword as well as a ring; the twig is shooting overhead.

Karl Hauck, a German scholar who has specialized in bracteate iconography for over forty years, has written extensively on these bracteates: his conclusions can be summarized as follows. The spear-holding man is clearly Wodan, the winged and cross-dressed figure Loki, and the man in the middle Balder. Hauck interprets the ring which Balder holds as Draupnir, which Wodan put on the funeral pyre, and suggests that here, it appears as the symbol of Balder's sacrifice. As discussed in greater detail below, it is possible that Höðr's part in the slaying was a later addition and that Wodan originally had a more direct part in it; Hauck's interpretation is that in the oldest version, which we see on the bracteates, Wodan gave his son the ring while Balder was still alive, to mark him out for doom. The enclosure, which appears in several variant forms, is especially interesting: it seems to show a fence of some sort, and in the area from which these bracteates stem, a number of place-names go back to an original "Óðinn's enclosure", in which the particular term for "enclosure" seems to describe a construction of wood ("Frühmittelalterliche Bildüberlieferung und die organisierte Kult", p. 487). In Snorri's version of the story, vengeance cannot be taken on Höðr at once because the slaying occurred in a holy place (*gríðastaðr*, or "peace-stead"); this may also refer to a specific holy enclosure. The bird of prey may represent, as Hauck has often suggested, a baleful battle-wight whose appearance is a sign of Balder's doom, or it may be one of Wodan's birds ready to

claim its share of the sacrifice; the fish which appear at the bottom of a couple of these bracteates probably show the might of the Underworld where Balder, according to the Norse sources, shall soon fare on his burning ship.

The variant forms of the Siegfried-story also offer a suspiciously close correspondence to the tale of Balder's death. According to the German *Nibelungenlied*, Siegfried had bathed in a dragon's blood and was therefore invulnerable except for one spot on his back where a linden leaf had fallen. Hagen found out from Siegfried's wife Kriemhild where that place was, and speared Siegfried in the back as he bent to drink from a stream. Both the invulnerability motif and the spearing are missing from the Norse version - it might be suggested, because Balder was still known as a god in the North at that time, but had long been suppressed in the south. In both versions, however, the figure of Siegfried was very like that of Balder: handsome and loved by all, the bravest of men and the best of warriors, but doomed to die young in spite of all his strength and magical warding. According to Continental tradition (the epic poem "Waltharius" and the German source for *Þiðreks saga*), Hagen was also said to be one-eyed; and his name means "hedge-thorn" (hawthorn), which is a wholly unlikely name for a Germanic warrior (the popularity of the Old Norse name Högni was based on this character's heroic role in the lays about the fall of the Rhenish Burgundian kingdom). "Hagen", like "Helgi" and a few other names which became common in the Viking Age, may well have originally been a cultic title, referring to an enclosure like that in which the Balder of the bracteates was sacrificed. The place-names Hauck cites also hint at the possibility of a strong Wodan-identification for both the name and the character. The spearing, of course, is typical for a Wodan-sacrifice; the more so given the streamside location, since running streams were often thought to be holy, and there is a particular connection between streams and both Balder and his son Fosite.

The interpretation of Wodan as the chief mover in Balder's death rests on several strong points. Firstly, the seemingly harmless missile weapon which suddenly becomes deadly is characteristic for Wodan-sacrifices. In *Gautreks saga*, Wodan gives Starkaðr a reed to thrust into King Víkarr at the mock sacrifice which has been arranged. When Starkaðr does this, the reed suddenly becomes a spear and the calf-gut around Víkarr's neck becomes a strong rope. In *Styrbjarnar þáttur*, after King Eiríkr has sacrificed to Wodan, the god gives him a reed to cast over Styrbjörn's army with the words "Óðinn has you all!" He does this, and his foes are straightaway struck blind. Wodan is also well-known for deeming the deaths of his chosen heroes and his children. The list of heroes whom he blessed, only to have them slain in the end, is long and enfolds both legendary and historical warriors: Sigmundur the Völsung and Hrólfkraki, Haraldr Hilditönn, Heiðrekr, Eiríkr Blood-Axe and Hákon the Good, among others. Unlike the rest, however, Balder does not take his place in Valhöll - it is not for the last battle that Wodan wants him.

The name Höðr simply means "warrior"; and Wodan himself, as well as Bileygr ("weak-eyed") is also called Tvíblindi ("blind in both eyes"), and Helblindi ("Hel-blind"). The figure of the blind warrior, then, is not hard to read as Wodan himself, and this is how many scholars, including Turville-Petre, de Vries, and Polomé, see him. However, the *Beowulf* poet knew a version of the story in which Hathcyn slays his brother Herebeald; if *Beowulf* is indeed to be dated to the late seventh/early eighth century, this would show that Höðr was a part of the tale quite early. It is also to be noted that Wodan seldom actually slays his own victims: he is the one who deems their death, but leaves other hands to carry out his sacrifice.

De Vries (*Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*) and Polomé (*Essays on Germanic Religion*) both interpret Balder's death as an initiation ritual: and surely a youth's passage through death to come back as man and ruler, as Balder does, is one of the basic models of initiation. This can also be compared to Wodan's initiation on the World-Tree: he dies, sinks down, and returns more mighty than before. Balder's initiation, however, is far longer-lasting, and may even have greater meaning for the worlds. Because he does not join the warriors in Walhall, despite the fact that he has been slain with a shooting-weapon and burned according to the usual practise of Wodan's followers, he does not die at Ragnarök. Instead, he is in Hella's safe keeping throughout the last battle, so that when the world is born again, he can come back and take his father's place to make the might of the gods great again. Balder's rebirth is also Wodan's rebirth, and Wodan's great victory: but without death, as the Death-God himself knows, there can be no rebirth. Balder's death has sometimes been read as a myth of fruitfulness, but he has nothing to do with the fruitfulness of the fields. Instead, his passage shows this process on the largest of all scales: the falling and rising again of the cosmos. The worlds weep at Balder's death, because they know that to be the sign of their doom as well, but we know that this shall not last forever. Kveldulf Gundarsson suggests that this lore is truly the secret which Wodan whispered in Balder's ear: the rune eihwaz ("yew"), "the rune of the will which survives death and rebirth...life hidden within death as the fire is hidden within the rough, cold bark of the yew...By this rune Baldr, hidden for a time in Hel's protecting kingdom, is able to bring himself and Hodhr forth alive again after Ragnarok" (*Teutonic Magic*, p. 103).

To Asatru, Balder is the seed of hope. Living, he is, like Siegfried, the brave young hero who embodies all that is brightest within us. His sacrifice ends the old age and brings the new to birth; as he waits in Hella's halls for his rebirth, he reminds us that even Ragnarök cannot destroy the might of the god/esses nor the best of what they, and we, have wrought. In this new time, we may also think on the fact that it was Siegfried's story which has saved more of the old lore, in poetry and prose, than the legend of any other hero, and the same story that has kindled the widest-reaching works of Teutonic art in this age: Siegfried's deeds and early death have wrought much the same work for Heathendom among the folk that Balder's early death will wreak for the god/esses, so that the hero may well be seen as a reflection of the god.

Balder is less a god to be called on for help than one to be loved, remembered, and toasted at symbol. There are no hints in the lore of our forebears of him doing anything for humans: his might is not in what he does, but in the promise of what he is and shall become. It is particularly fitting to remember him at the four great feasts of the year: at Midsummer's, when the Sun stands at her height and our thoughts turn to the deeds of the bright young heroes and heroines; at Winternights, when the world turns towards darkness and cold; at Yule, when the dead are closest to the land of the living and only the evergreens show that life shall spring forth again; and at Ostara, when we may most hope that the brightness of the land's rebirth shall be echoed again in the bright rebirth of the worlds after Ragnarök.

The plants holy to Balder are the ox-eye daisy and white flowers of the same family, which are called "Balder's Brow"; the name is also given to the chamomile. The linden and the mistletoe bear the obvious association with the god, especially the latter: the "mist-twig" is the plant that opens the way into the underworld, as it did for Balder, but it may also be seen as the plant that will open his way back out again.

Balder's colour is white; gold may also be fitting to him.

"Siegfried's Funeral March" from *Götterdämmerung* is fitting music for remembering Balder's death, the more so since Wagner quite deliberately substituted Siegfried for Balder in his version of the fall of the old world and the dawning of the new.

Contributors

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Chapter XIII

Frija and Other Goddesses

"Motherly Frigga, you who miss Balder, you who bear the world's woe in your embrace, You who comfort Odin, you who nourish all things..."

(Grieg, Edvard, from the operatic fragment *Olav Tryggvason*)

Frija

(Frigg, Frige, Fricka, *Frijjo)

Except for Hella, Frija was (so far as we know) the most widely known of the early Germanic goddesses. Her name appears in Old Norse, Anglo-Saxon, and on the continent; as chief among the goddesses, it was her name that was used for the sole feminine weekday as a translation for "Venus" - from which we get the modern English "Friday". She is Wodan's wife not only in the Old Norse materials, but in the Continental *Origio gentum Langobardorum*, where she likewise uses her wits to trick him into giving victory to the menfolk of a woman who had prayed to her for help.

Frija's background before her wedding to Wodan is almost unknown. In *Lokasenna* she is called "Fjörgynn's maid", but nothing is told of Fjörgynn himself. He may be a manly twin to the womanly Fjörgyn - a name which is given to Thonar's mother Earth. In this case, it is possible that Frija herself, like many of the goddesses and mothers of gods, was firstly one of the etin-kin. However, it is also possible that Fjörgynn was an earlier Germanic god, whose borrowed name survived among the Baltic peoples as the god Perkunas and perhaps as a Gothic *Fairguneis. The name may be related to a word for "oak"; the Baltic Perkunas was a thunder-god, so that Fjörgynn/*Fairguneis might well have been a forerunner of Thonar (Karl Helm, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* II, pp. 40-41). The problem is made more complicated by the fact that the word usually interpreted here as daughter, "mær", can also mean "wife" or even perhaps "lover", which readings may even be more likely, given that Loki is using the description to start off an attack on Frija's chastity.

Frija's own name comes from an Indo-European root meaning "beloved", and is probably related to the modern English word "frig" through this root, though neither is derived from the other. De Vries also mentions the possibility that the goddess' name could derive from the Germanic *frī-*, encompassing the meaning of "belonging to the sib, protected" (*Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* II, p. 305), which seems more characteristic of the goddess.

Of all the goddesses, Frija is the most motherly. In his lament "Sonatorrek", Egill Skalla-Grímsson uses the kenning "Frigg's descendants" as a general term for all the dwellers in the Ases' Garth; she is the closest thing to an All-Mother the Northern folk know. When she appears in myth, her works are twofold: to care for and protect her children or favourites, and to keep the bonds of society strong. In this she is often set against Wodan, who has his own favourites and who is little concerned with the bonds of society.

Although Frija is a goddess of social order, she is sometimes accused of unfaithfulness to Wodan. In *Gesta Danorum*, Saxo accuses her of submitting to a servant's embraces in order to get him to take the gold from the statue of "Othinus" for her own jewelry, whereupon the god departs in a fit of pique at the double insult to his image and his bed. Aside from Saxo's obviously euhemeristic use of statues and servants, the basic idea - Wodan's woman giving her body to someone of lesser status for jewelry - is suspiciously similar to that of the *Sörla þáttr* account of Freyja sleeping with the four dwarves for Brisingamen. This has sometimes been suggested to imply that Frija and the Frowe were originally the same goddess. However, Saxo does not seem to have known of Freyja's existence, and given his tendency to moralize at every turn (especially about the gods) it is unlikely that he could have left such a fruitful field as Freyja's sexuality unploughed. Further, the reference to one deity despoiling the shrine of another is almost certainly not authentic: whatever the original mythological basis may have been, Saxo must have seriously altered it. It seems likeliest that, if there is any relationship between the two myths, Saxo simply attributed his highly diluted version of the story to the goddess he knew as Óðinn's wife.

In *Lokasenna*, Loki accuses Frigg of sleeping with Óðinn's two brothers, Vili and Vé. According to *Ynglinga saga*, Óðinn has been away so long that his two brothers take his realm and Frija with it; in Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*, it is told that the god was actually exiled by the other deities. In this tale, Frija appears as the queen whose person is one and the same with rulership: she is wedded to the god who holds the realm, whoever that may be. Infidelity does not come into the question. Frija's association with Venus, which has sometimes been used to support depictions of her as being lustful and/or originally the same goddess as the Frowe, stems directly from the Germanic translations of the weekdays, in which "Venus" was the only goddess offered for translation; there is no reason to take it as showing anything about Frija's character.

Frija has no direct battle-aspects - she does not, like the Frowe, go to the battlefield to choose the slain - but she is able to ward those who do go to fight, her blessings keeping them whole and safe. She can also bless and ward one at the beginning of any dangerous faring, as she does for Wodan at the beginning of *Vafþrúðnismál* with the words, "Heill (holy/lucky/whole/healthy) fare you, heill come you back, / heill be you on the way." One of her few by-names is Hlín,

"Protectress". Under this name, the linden, which was the wood used for Germanic shields, may be seen as holy to her. Frija may also shape the turning of the battle by her spinning from afar, and by the way in which she moves the warriors to go or stay. A human reflection of this aspect appears in *Laxdæla saga* (ch. 49): the heroine Guðrún, having brought her husband to kill her beloved Kjartan, greets him after the deed with the words, "Great morning-work has taken place today: I have spun twelve ells of yarn and you have slain Kjartan". Her earthly spinning shows forth the way in which she has worked to spin the dooms of the men around her, and perhaps (though this is not stated in the saga) worked with the craft of her spinning to make sure the battle went as she wished.

Frija's own dwelling-place is called "Fensalir", "Fen-Halls". This hints that she may be one of the goddesses who was worshipped in the boggy and marshy places of the northlands, and that gifts to her should be cast into the waters. H.R. Ellis-Davidson mentions that "In Scandinavia, locks of hair, gold rings, and various women's ornaments have been found at offering places in use before the Viking Age, and also traces of flax, together with instruments for beating it...but...such objects as cheese or bread would leave little trace in earth and water" (*Lost Beliefs of Northern Europe*, p. 117). Though Frija is not one of the Wans, her might clearly overlaps with theirs in this way.

Frija is a goddess of human fruitfulness, called upon for the getting and bearing of children. As the careful housewife and mother, who knows whether children can be fed and clothed with the resources at hand or not, she might also be called upon to lend her spiritual help to ensure the success of earthly means of fertility control and family planning. Frija is never spoken of as making the fields fruitful - her realm is within the walls, the realm of the home and hearth and all those who dwell there. Her only tie to agricultural fruitfulness comes through her Continental shape as Perchte/Holda/Fru Gode, leader of the Wild Hunt (together with Wodan). Although Frija is not a goddess of riches in general, those who want help in buying a house, making home repairs, or taking care of their families would likely do well to call upon her. Frija's magic is that of spinning and weaving, which were deeply important to the Northern folk; and it is through this craft that her deeper ways may most easily be learned. The woman's spindle was the weapon matching the man's sword, for it was a tool of great might with which the wise spinner could wreak long-lasting weal or woe, and the Spindle is as much Frija's sign as the Hammer is Thonar's or the spear Wodan's.

The Eddas do not mention Frigg as a spinner, but the Swedish name "Friggerock", Frigg's Spindle (or Distaff), for the constellation which southerners named "Orion's Belt", shows very clearly that spinning was one of this goddess' greatest works. In this connection, de Vries also mentions the Norwegian belief that chains may not be cut through on a Friday ("Frigg's Day") because this will make the weaving unsuccessful (*Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* II, p. 304). Frigg's working as spinner and weaver ties in with her character as the one who "knows all ørlög / though she says it not herself" (*Lokasenna* 30). In this way, her spinning is very like that of the Norns.

In German folklore, spinning is one of the greatest border-deeds - a deed of might which draws the sight of the great holy ones. This is especially the case in regards to the southern German goddess Perchte or Berchte ("the Bright One"), who, as spoken of below, is likely to be Frija herself. This goddess makes sure that spinners work hard during the year, but leave off on the eve of the Yule-season's twelfth day. In *Teutonic Mythology* (I, 274-275) Grimm quotes Börner's *Folktales of the Orlagau* for several instances in which Perchta has been offended and gives the offenders empty reels to fill in an hour's time. Interestingly, she is easily satisfied - in one case, with tow-wrapped reels over which a few lengths of thread have been spun; in a second, with a few rounds spun on each reel and cast into the brook that ran past the house. What matters most here is clearly the holy act of spinning as a gift to the goddess, which restores the frith between herself and humans. As with Frigg in Norse mythology, the German spinning goddess appears as the enforcer of the social norms which also strengthen the oneness of the Middle-Garth with the other realms of being: the needful work of the year and the needful rest and rejoicing of the *Weihnachten* (German "Holy Nights" are alike in worth, and the one who flouts either gains the wrath of the goddess. The German Holda is said to be the giver of flax to humans, who taught us the crafts of spinning and weaving. Grimm tells us that, "Industrious maids she presents with *spindles*, and spins their reels full for them over night; a slothful spinner's distaff she *sets on fire*, or *soils* it...When she enters the land at Christmas, all the *distaffs* are well stocked, and left standing for her; by Carnival, when she turns homeward, all spinning must be finished off, and the *stoffs* are now kept out of her sight" (*Teutonic Mythology*, I, 269-70).

As the spinner, Frija appears in Austria under the thinly Christianized guise of "St. Lucy" or *Spillelutsche*, "Spindle-Lucia", who, like Perchte, punishes those who have not spun during the year or have spun on her chosen feast-days. This "santeria"-identification of Frija and Lucy appears also to have been applied in Denmark, where St. Lucy's Night (December 13) was both a night of oracles and the night on which the year's spinning should cease (Liutman, *Traditionswanderungen Euphrat-Rhein* II, 652-57). In Sweden, the prettiest girl of the house traditionally appeared as "Lussi" or the "Lussi-Bride" between 1 and 4 AM on Lucy Day. The chosen maid, dressed in white with a red scarf and a crown decorated with crow-berries and nine burning candles, would walk among the men to wake them up with a life-bringing drink of *glogg* (spirits with herbs, honey, syrup, or sugar, sometimes set on fire); or she might bring that very holy Scandinavian drink of new times - coffee - and pastries (Feilberg, *Jul* I, p. 169). As Ostara brings light and life to the outside world at her feast, the bringer of light and life to the household in the depths of winter is likeliest to be Frija, the keeper of the home and the fires of the hearth.

A figure which may be Frija the Spinner also appears on several bracteates: on the bracteate from Oberweschen,

she holds a full-wound drop-spindle; on the bracteates from Welschingen and Gudme II, she holds something that may be a distaff.

As both spinner and mother, Frija may also be seen as the queen of that host of lesser "norns", or idises, who set the *ørlög* of a child at birth. Though Freyja's name "Vanadis" ("Idis of the Wans") has led many to think of her as the chief of the idises, it seems more likely that this is Frija's role, as these womanly ghosts are basically motherly wights and work for their children in the ways that are most usual for Frija (see "Idises").

German folklore does not mention Frija, but the names Perchte/Berchte and Holda ("the Gracious One") sound suspiciously like titles given to the goddess to keep from speaking her name - either from christian suppression or from fear of drawing the attention of her wilder side. "Holda" is especially likely to be a title, as both "holde" and "unholde" were used in Middle High German as generic terms for, respectively, well- and ill-meaning spirits. These figures of German folklore have much in common with the Frija we know from Norse myths. Their social function and role as spinners has already been spoken of. Like Frija, they have watery homes: the German Holda is particularly said to dwell in wells or lakes, and newborn babies are supposed to be fetched out of "dame Holle's pond". Both Holda and Berchte make their rounds with the ghosts of unborn or young children in their train, which also fits in well with Frija's role as the Northern mother-goddess.

The German folklore may also cast some light on sides of Frija that have not survived in Norse myth - most particularly, her place in the Wild Hunt. On the Continent, the Hunt is not only led by Wodan or Wod, but by Holda, Perchte, or "Frau Gode" (Mrs. Wode) - Wodan's wife. Here the goddess appears in her wildest shape, swinging her whip as the folk run masked and screaming through the fields with the ghosts running among them. The ritual elements of the Wild Hunt/Perchtenlauf are spoken of under "Yule". For now, it is enough to say that here, we may also see Frija, not only as Wodan's quiet spouse and homemaker, but also as his female counterpart in all the wild rites of the Yule season, when all the year's spinning is done and she has put off her apron and unbound the ties of ordinary life for the appointed time.

All workings having to do with home and hearth fall under Frija's rule. The most ordinary tasks such as cooking and cleaning are holy to her, and a well-made meal or a well-scrubbed kitchen are sure to bring her blessing. She is also the one who brings frith and joy within the wedding: Friday, though it is thought unlucky for most things in Germanic folklore (perhaps because Christianity was particularly hostile towards goddesses?) was still thought the best of days for a marriage. Indeed, we see that even when Frija strives against Wodan, it is not by force that she wins her will, but by subtle workings.

The birch is the tree which *Ásatrúar* most associate with Frija. In Northern folklore, this tree is seen as a fair white maiden for reasons which should be clear. It is used for cleansing both body and soul, especially in the sauna. In *Leaves of Yggdrasil*, Freya Aswynn mentions that in Holland, naughty children got birch branches from "St. Nick" (who goes about in a big cloak with a staff and a wide hat in that country); and birch branches were also placed above the door of a newly-wed-couple's house to bless them with fruitfulness (pp. 68-69). Dianne Ross suggests that in our times, runic inscriptions invoking the Birch Goddess could be carved into limbs and the limbs tied to the child's crib or stick horse.

Other trees which may be associated with Frija are linden ("basswood" in America), as told above, and beech, because its name "book-tree" links it with the rune perthro, the well of Wyrd, and Frija's role as a seeress. Her herbs are motherwort, mugwort, yarrow, and all those herbs which work on the female system and organs. Flax has already been spoken of; we will mark that linseed oil is often applied to runic talismans after the runes have been carved and reddened, suggesting, again, the relationship between Wodan and Frija. In Mecklenburg, on Woden's Day (Wednesday), all work in flax or having to do with sewing or linseed was avoided, lest Woden's horse trample it down!

Although there is no Norse record of any animals of Frija, the goose is most associated with her in modern times. Dianne Ross has argued convincingly for seeing the traditional "Mother Goose" as the last reflection of Frija. The geese also had a special relationship with the frowe of the hall: in "Sigurðarkviða hin skamma", it is told how Guðrún's distress over Sigurðr's death was mirrored by the rattling of her cups in the cupboards and the crying out of her geese. Wagner has Frija's wain drawn by sheep or rams (*Die Walküre*), and suggests, "Sacrifice sheep for Fricka, so that she will give a good marriage" (*Götterdämmerung*). Since the sheep is the source of the spinner's wool, it seems reasonable to see it as tied to Frija's might in much the same way as flax is. The cow, the source of milk and life from early days, might also be associated with Frija. Milk is surely the drink most traditionally given to the little wights of the home, and in modern times, it has been found that Frija herself may be toasted and blessed with milk just as well as with alcohol (unlike her husband, say...).

Colours associated with Frija in *Ásatrú* practise today are light blue and white. Several folk have felt in modern times (independently of one another) that her favourite jewels are made of silver and polished rock crystal, a combination of which many women of the Migration and Viking Ages were certainly fond. Many Germanic women of the Migration Age also went about with a sphere of silver-framed rock crystal dangling from the front of their belts; the center of that fashion seems to have been the Rhineland, though they are common in Alamannia and have been found as far south as the Lombardic area of Northern Italy and eastward to Hungary. These crystal balls were often worn cradled in the bowl of a (often perforated) silver spoon (Owen-Crocker, *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 58). It is generally accepted that they were amulets of some sort, perhaps used for scrying; the specific identification of them with Frija is based on modern intuition, extrapolation from her role as a seeress, and the fact that these amulets were also a particular mark of womanly status.

Although there is no historical evidence for it, those who wish a ritual gesture to use as a sign for Frija (as the walknot is traced for Wodan, the Hammer for Thonar, or the sun-wheel for the Wans) might use a spiral to symbolize the turning and winding of the spindle.

Together with Frija, there are the many goddesses whom Snorri lists in the Prose Edda. Some seem to be handmaidens or hypostases of Frigg; others appear independently. Very little is known about these goddesses except the names which Snorri gives us; however, more and more work is being done with them now to rewin the lore which is lost forever from the sources our forebears left us. This would not be acceptable in academic or re-enactment circles, but our troth is not a matter of pure historical recreation: it is a living and growing religion.

Sága

Sága is mentioned in *Grímnismál* 7 as having one of the great halls in God-Home, Sökkvabekkr ("Sunken Benches"), where "cold waves ripple above; there Óðinn and Sága drink through all days, glad, out of golden cups". This hall has often been compared to Frija's Fen-halls - especially since Fensalir is not mentioned in the *Grímnismál* list - and Sága herself taken as another side of Frigg. She has her own personality, however. Her name is not the same word as the Icelandic "saga", but it is closely related; she is clearly the goddess of story-telling, who remembers old tales. It is meaningful that her hall is underwater: the streams of the Well of Mímir must flow around it.

There are some who think that Sága is likely to be the patron goddess of Iceland, where all the songs and stories of Scandinavia were written down and kept safe through the many years to our time. It is sure that she has been kinder to Iceland than any other deity has been in the last few centuries; her gifts have been their greatest comfort and their greatest pride.

Those who wish help in writing stories should call on Sága and Wodan together, filling two golden cups with mead and sipping from one in one deity's name while leaving the other cup for the other.

Eir

Eir (also Iær, Aer) is mentioned once by Snorri and appears once in *Svipdagsmál*. Snorri tells us that she is "the best of healers"; in *Svipdagsmál*, she is one of the maidens on a mountain called "Lyfja" ("to heal through magic" - de Vries, *Wörterbuch*, p. 369), of which it is said that it "has long been a pleasure for the sick and wounded; every woman will become whole if she climbs it, though she has a grievous illness". The other women also have names suggesting works of weal, such as "Hlíf" ("Protection"), "Blíð" ("Blithe"), and Frið ("beautiful, peaceful") and it is said of them that they offer help to those who sacrifice to them.

According to de Vries (*Wörterbuch*, p. 97), Eir's name is originally derived from words meaning "honour" or "worship" (related to modern German *Ehre*); it is also seen as the Old Norse noun *eir*, "graciousness - mildness - help". Related to it is the verb *eira*, "to care for; to help or please". There is also a word *eir* meaning "copper"; though this word is not etymologically related to the goddess-name, the healing might of copper rings and bracelets has long been known in folk-medicine, so that this metal might well be thought of as particularly hers.

More and more folk are becoming interested in Eir, and surely her healing might is much needed in the world today. Eir is clearly the particular patron of all those who work with any form of health-care or healing, but anyone who needs healing should call on her. Kveldúlfur Gundarsson's personal opinion is that Eir is likely to be a goddess who prefers the gentler and slower "alternative" methods of healing, such as aromatherapy, herbalism, and massage, together with emotional counselling and balancing; that her way of healing only uses the more drastic medical means such as surgery and antibiotic treatments in acute cases when the condition is too dangerous or extreme for the patient to heal safely without intervention, and even then, the greatest care is given to such things as nutrition and the patient's spiritual and emotional state. Gefjon mentions that Eir is by no means a foe of technology when it is rightly applied - all healing tools belong to her - but her focus is on prevention more than cure, care and tending to encourage natural healing rather than *unnecessary* drastic intervention (as opposed to the necessary sort, of which she is also the patron).

As much of the healing lore of our forebears was magical, we may well guess that Eir is a patroness of such magic - that her charms work on the soul and mind as well as the body, to bring about truly holistic healing. As a goddess who is both a spiritual and a physical healer, Eir is especially good to call on for those who need help in dealing with addictions.

Eir must also have been thought of as something of a shaman, since the Anglo-Saxon charm spells show us that many sicknesses were considered to be the workings of alfs, dwarves, witches, or even the Ases (Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*); in fact, the word "elf-shot" is known in all the Germanic languages, and *Hexenschuss*, "witch-shot", is still used in rural Bavaria to describe serious pains in the bones and joints. The healer was one who knew not only the plants to help with such a sickness, but the way to magically prepare them and apply them so as to drive out the evil wights or the "shots" they had left in the patient's body - and who was able to deal with health-threatening wights in the soul-world as well as working in the Middle-Garth.

Gefjon (craftswoman of Gefjon's Arðr) adds, from her own work with Eir and her understanding of the goddess,

that Eir does not see death as a great foe, nor life at all cost as a prize. She is a goddess of natural processes, which include the loosing given by death when the due time comes. Her care is less for length of life than for its quality.

The priestess Siegróa Lyfjasgyðja has worked with Eir (using the altered spelling Iær) and gotten much lore from her through trance and inspiration. Such lore must stand on its own worth; some may choose to heed it and some may not. It is certainly the only way left to find out more than the small scatterings which have survived from the time of our forebears, but of course, care must be taken to be sure that the myth-making or -discovering of today does not cloud our view of that which we know from the past. It must also be remembered that the god/esses have many aspects, and may appear in one way to one person and a different way to another. Both visions and understandings are equally true, and neither stands as the total definition of the deity.

According to Siegróa's personal revelations, Iær is an elder goddess, born from the ninth teat of the cow Auðumla, and the first of midwives who helped at the birth of the Æsir. She was once in conflict with the male gods, a conflict resolved by the works of Sif; she is now especially championed by Thonar and Höðr (on whom she has bestowed personal favours). As a Goddess of Healing, she cannot take revenge or become involved in bloodshed. To obtain the protection she could not afford Herself, she took refuge with Frigga and her women and lent Frigga her energies in Healing and wortcunning. She may be called upon when there is need, for she will never stint her aid to any, be they thrall or thane, Æsir or Overlord; and asks the same of her priestesses. Siegróa says that Iær wishes her priestesses to be chaste to aid the flow of the healing energies, and wants them to abstain from the flesh of animals, milk, alcohol, and fruit when they call upon her; also to be cleansed with smoke and sauna. Her healing-lore, as she has shown it forth, is especially concerned with the use of runes and herbs. Iær's holy colour is green; her runes are Berkano, Laguz, and Uruz, and her priestesses also wear Kenaz as light-bearers. Cows are especially holy to her, as is the raven; she seems also to have some connection with the birch-tree. Siegróa sees the goddess herself as being dressed in a dalmatic of white brocade, adorned with ropes of pearls and sometimes amber. Gefjon also sees green and white as her colours.

Both Gefjon and Siegróa perceive Eir as being somewhat slow to speak, though for different reasons. Certainly she seems to be a goddess who has little patience with needless jabber, who communicates only when she has something important to say - who, like Frija, watches in silent wisdom much of the time.

The runes which Gefjon feels to be closely tied with Eir are Laguz and Jera.

Gefjon

Gefjon is less well-known than Frija or the Frowe, but better-known than most of the goddesses. Snorri opens the "Gylfaginning" section of the Prose Edda with the story of how the Swedish king Gylfi rewarded a wandering woman who had entertained him with as much land as four oxen could plough in a day and a night. The woman, however, was the goddess Gefjon. From the north in Etin-Home, she brought four oxen who were the sons of herself and an etin, and set them before the plough, ploughing out the ring of land which is now the island Zealand. This tale dates back at least to the early part of the Viking Age, as Snorri quotes a fragment of it one of the first known skaldic poets, Bragi inn gamli. Gefjon is the patroness of Zealand, and near the statue of the Little Mermaid in Copenhagen stands a huge fountain which shows the goddess whipping her four oxen onward, with water frothing around their feet and great bronze serpents writhing before them. In the version of the story which Snorri tells in *Ynglinga saga*, he adds that after this, Gefjon married Óðinn's son Skjöldr and they dwelt at Lejre, which is the ancestral seat of the kings of Denmark. Here, we may perhaps see the idea that the king is wedded to the goddess of the land - though Skjöldr himself (the same figure who is called Scyld Sceafing in *Beowulf*) is as much an ancestor-god as a king. In *Lokasenna* 20, Loki also accuses Gefjon of laying her limbs over "the white youth who gave (her) a piece of jewelry".

Despite all this, Snorri also tells us that Gefjon "is a maiden and is attended by those who die maidens". The word maiden (ON *mær*) does not necessarily mean a virgin, but rather a young woman (*mær* can also mean "daughter" or even "wife"); there is no evidence that the Norse placed special value on virginity. Gefjon is clearly the goddess of young and shy women, however: in the *Völsa þattr* section of *Óláfs saga hins helga*, the young farmer's daughter, when she must take up the dried horse phallus Völsi, swears that "by Gefjon and the other goddess, I take the ruddy phallus because I must". It may seem strange to think of a goddess of fruitfulness as also the goddess of unmarried women; but a woman of the age between puberty and marriage embodies all the potential fruitfulness of which Gefjon, as a land-goddess and plough-goddess, is the warder and tender. It seems likely that she is the goddess who sees to it that women are not wedded before they are ready to be wives and mothers, or involved with men against their will; she is particularly the warder of teenaged maidens through all the difficulties young women face. She must also have been seen as a virgin herself at times; Mundal points out that "In translations of Latin legends the name Gefjun is rather consistently used to translate the name of the Roman goddess Diana" and suggests that she was much more important, at least in the last phase of paganism, than the literary sources seem to show ("Gods and Goddesses with Reference to the Female Divinities", p. 309).

Gefjon is also a seeress: in *Lokasenna* 21, Óðinn says of her that "I know that she knows all ancient orlög's just as well as I do".

The name Gefjon means "the giver", and is very like one of Freyja's *heiti*, Gefn. As a plough-goddess, she is surely

a goddess of fruitfulness; Turville-Petre and Ellis-Davidson both compare her ploughing to the Anglo-Saxon plough-charm which begins "Erce, Erce, Erce, mother of Earth". Today, she is sometimes thought to embody the might of woman as the first source of food and life, perhaps being the Norse reflection of the archetype which the Celts expressed as the ever-full cauldron of food and drink. Although there is no similar cauldron in Germanic myth (with the possible exception of the one in Valhöll where the flesh of the ever-regenerating boar is seethed every day for the einherjar), the name Ketill (manly)/Katla (womanly), "kettle" or "cauldron", was very common among the Norse, and was probably of magico-religious origin: the manner of cooking sacrifices at the holy feasts was always by seething in a cauldron (see "Things and their Meanings"). The image of the ever-full cauldron might perhaps also be read from the name of Fulla (below).

Fulla

According to Snorri, Fulla "is a maiden and fares loose-haired and with a gold band around her head; she bears Frigg's casket and looks after her shoes and stockings and knows secret rede with her." In its list of magically-skilled god/esses, the Zweite Merseburger Zauberspruch tells us, "then chanted Frija and Fulla her sister"; it seems that Fulla held a higher place in earlier knowledge than with Snorri. Snorri also mentions particularly, however, that the gifts Baldr's wife Nanna sent to the Ases' Garth from Hel included a linen robe and many gifts for Frija, and finger-gold for Fulla", so Fulla's special place beside Frija had not been wholly forgotten.

Her name, just as it seems, means "full", suggesting that she is a goddess of riches and fruitfulness. It can also be read as stemming from the Old Norse word for "cup" (*full*), hinting that she may be the bearer of a cup or cauldron. As the bearer of Frija's casket, she is responsible for the jewels of the other goddess - and, if the life of the god/esses mirrored human norms, as is thought likely, she would also be responsible for the gold and blessings which Frija wishes to give.

Frija's other women

Of the rest of the goddesses listed by Snorri, we know nothing except what he tells us. Sjöfn "greatly cares to turn the thoughts of humans to love, of men and maids; from her name affection is called *sjafni*...Lofn, she is so mild and good to call on, that she gets leave from All-Father or Frigg for folk to come together, women and men, although it is banned or denied. Vár, she listens to the oaths of humans and private speech which is contracted between women and men; for this reason these speeches are called "varar"; she also revenges those which are broken...Vör, she is both wise and enquiring, so that no part may be hidden from her; there is a saying, that a woman becomes aware (*vör*) of something, when she learns of it....Syn, she keeps the doors of the hall, and locks them before those who should not go in, and she is set as a defender at the Thing, before those speeches which someone wants to prove untrue. For this reason there is that saying, that a denial (*syn*) is set before that which someone wishes to say no to...Hlin, she is set to protect those humans who Frigg will save from certain dangers; for that reason there is a saying, that whoever saves himself finds a refuge (*hleinir*)...Snotra, she is wise and prudent; and from her whoever is wise, woman or man, is called *snotr*...Gná, Frigg sends her through various worlds on her errands. She has a horse, which runs over air and water, which hight Hófvarpnir (Hoof-Tosser). From Gná's name it is said, that that towers (*gnæfi*) which fares high up."

In modern times, Syn is seen as dressed in gray, with either a broom or a sword; for clear reasons, women often call on her as a warder in magical workings and for protecting their homes.

Hlin is given as a name for Frija herself in *Völuspá*, and is clearly an aspect of the goddess.

Snotra is now thought to be especially concerned with manners and proper behavior, and is good to call on when there is a chance that a feast might get too rowdy.

Gná, the aërial messenger, is the goddess to call on to make sure that important items sent by airmail get to their destination on time.

Iðunn

Iðunn is well known as the keeper of the apples of youth, which she feeds to the god/esses to keep them young and strong. The only tale of her is the one recounted in the skaldic poem *Hauslög* (ca. 900) and the Prose Edda. To redeem himself from the clutches of the etin Thjazi (father of Skaði - see "Skaði, Gerðr, and other Etin-Brides"), Loki lures her out of the Ases' Garth and Thjazi, in eagle-shape, swoops down and snatches her. Without her, the god/esses quickly begin to fade; but they hold a meeting and find out that Iðunn was last seen with Loki, from whom they eventually get the truth. Loki then borrows the Frowe's falcon-coat and goes to find Iðunn, changing the goddess and her apples into a nut and flying away with them. Thjazi, as an eagle, pursues him, buffeting Loki with the wind from his wings. When Loki lands in the Ases' Garth, the other gods set a fire on the walls which sings Thjazi's wings and forces him to earth so that he can be killed.

Iðunn is clearly the embodiment of the might of new life, that which keeps the worlds strong and fruitful - a trait she shares with the other goddesses desired by etin-men, the Frowe and Sif. Her very name either means "the renewing one"

or "the active one" (de Vries, *Wörterbuch* p. 283); a related word, "iðiafroenn" (renewed-green), is used for the new-born Earth after Ragnarök (*Völuspá* 59). Her tale is close in many ways to the "Spring Goddess" model of Gerðr, Menglöd, and Sigrdrifa: the shining hero must pass into Etin-home, defy or slay an etin, and cross a ring of fire to claim the maid. Some may raise their eyebrows at the idea of Loki as "shining hero", but not only is he likely to be a fire-being, but he actually seems to symbolically take Balder's place in the following tale of Thjazi's daughter Skaði. Turville-Petre also compares Loki's theft of Iðunn to Óðinn's theft of the mead of poetry (*Myth and Religion*, p. 187).

Both apples and nuts are signs, not merely of fruitfulness, but specifically of life springing forth again from death: their meaning of is spoken of more fully in the chapter "Things and Meanings".

Today, Iðunn is called on specifically as the goddess whose might brings the elder Troth forth "iðiafroenn"; for this reason, a form of her name is used for the Troth's official magazine, *Idunna*.

Colours associated with Iðunn are gold and light green.

Sif

Sif is the wife of Thonar, the mother of Wulþur (by an unknown father) and Trude. Snorri mentions in his prologue to his Edda that her parents are not known, but she is a prophetess. This probably comes from his false etymology of "Sif" as being derived from the Classical "Sibyl", but it is not unlikely that she, like other goddesses such as Frija and Gefjon, may also be a seeress.

Sif is best known for her long gold hair, around which the one myth in which she appears - Loki's cropping of it and the forging of the treasures of the gods - centers. It is often thought that her golden hair is the embodiment of the fields of grain, which, when ripe, look very much like long golden hair rippling in the breeze; in England, it used to be thought that the summer lightning was needed for the crops to ripen, which speaks of the relationship between Sif and Thonar. It is worth marking that in saga descriptions of women as attractive, the one physical feature which seems to define beauty is the woman's hair (most ideally, long, straight, golden hair such as Sif's) - other bodily characteristics are almost never mentioned. For instance Helga in fögr (the fair) is described with many superlatives as the fairest woman of Iceland, but the only thing said about her actual looks is that her hair was so long that she could completely wrap herself in it and was as fair as gold (*Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, ch. 4). Aside from that, descriptions of a saga-woman's physical beauty were wholly confined to her clothing (Jochens, Jenny, "Before the Male Gaze: the Absence of the Female Body in Old Norse"). Sif, with her gold hair, can thus be seen as the fairest of the goddesses and the very embodiment of the Norse ideal of female attractiveness. More than this, we know that hair was a very meaningful sign of both life-force and holiness among the Germanic peoples: for a man, it was particularly the emblem of a king, priest, or one dedicated to the god/esses; for a woman, it was the very symbol of her being. When Loki crops Sif's hair, it is not only an unmatched insult, it is an attack against the life-force of the Ases' Garth similar to the theft of Iðunn or the offering of Freyja in marriage to an etin: Sif's hair, Iðunn's apples, and the Frowe's womb are all embodiments of the same might. It may be significant that the etin

Hrungrnir, when boasting in the halls of the gods, threatens to carry away Freyja and Sif for himself; it is these goddesses (and perhaps Sif's daughter Trude, as spoken of below) that draw the interest of the manly wights of the Outgarth. Loki also expresses a certain claim to Sif in *Lokasenna*, saying that he has slept with her (and, again, no one can tell him that he is simply lying); it is not impossible that his cropping of her hair could have been a way of boasting of this deed. It has also been suggested that Loki's deed could, on a natural level, be seen in the practice of slash-and-burn agriculture, and there may be some truth in this, though we must remember that it is this world which mirrors the worlds of the gods, not their world which is explained simply by happenings in ours.

The rowan is probably Sif's tree: as mentioned in "Thonar", we know that the Lappish version of the thunder-god, Hora galles or "Þórr Karl", had a wife named "Rowan", to whom the tree's red berries were holy, and that Þórr clung to this tree against the flood of Geirröðr's daughter. Turville-Petre concludes from this that, "Probably the wife of Thór was once conceived in the form of a rowan, to which the god clung", also making reference to the special reverence given to this tree from the settlement of Iceland to the present day (*Myth and Religion*, p. 98). We may also note that the rowan is first crowned with white - "fair" blossoms, then loses them, but in their stead gets bright red berries; since, as we will remember, the Germanic people often spoke of gold as being "red", this could likewise be seen as showing the cropping and replacement of Sif's hair. If Sif is indeed the rowan-goddess, this sheds a little more light on her relationship with Thonar and the way in which the two of them work together. The rowan is first and foremost a tree of warding against all ill-willing magic and wights of the Outgarth: next to the hallowing and battle-might of Thonar's Hammer, we thus have the hallowing and magical might of Sif's rowan. The two of them can be called on together as warders against all ill. Sif is never seen as a warrior, nor are any weapons ever attributed to her, despite the image put out by a certain popular comic-book.

Her name is related very closely to the word "sib", the kin-group. This suggests that she is very much a deity of the clan and warder of the home and family, just as her husband is.

Laurel Olson, who works closely with Sif, mentions that:

She understands grief and loss from personal experience and is understanding in the extreme. She is (physical

plane) wealth and prosperity, more so, I think, than Freya. She says she sleeps in winter beneath a grey and white cloak Frigga wove of rams' wool. She loves all things gold or golden coloured. She favours spring green, sky blue, berry red, autumnal gold (as opposed to yellow), and white.

As offerings she likes cooked barley with honey and butter, fresh berries or berry strudel, and spring flowers. She also likes gold jewelry and amber anything."

Trude (Þrúðr)

Trude is the daughter of Thonar and Sif. Her name means "Strength". She is listed among the walkurjas who bear ale in Walhall in *Grimnismál* 36; her name is also used in walkurja-type kennings, suggesting a battle-role, and was a very common second element in Germanic women's personal names such as Gertrude/Geirþrúðr.

Like the Frowe, Sif, and Iðunn, Trude is also desired by sundry wights of the Outgarth or underworld. In *Alvíssmál*, the dwarf Alvið (All-Wise) has come up to the Ases' Garth in hopes of claiming her as his bride, and in Bragi's *Ragnarsdrápa* (early 9th century), the giant Hrungrnir is called "thief of Þrúðr", which suggests that there may have been a different story leading up to the battle between Þórr and Hrungrnir than the one Snorri tells. In *Haustlög*, Þjóðólfr or Hvini tells of the battle, but not its prelude; there are no older sources for Snorri's version, making it quite possible that the duel could have been motivated by the abduction of Þórr's daughter, rather than simply by the etin becoming drunk and disorderly in Ásgarðr. Snorri does in fact have Hrungrnir threatening to carry off Freyja and Sif, but, out of ignorance or editorial policy, does not mention the theft of Þrúðr.

This role suggests that she, like the other goddesses who draw the desire of etins, is one of the female embodiments of the life-force of the cosmos. As she is the grand-daughter of Earth, daughter of Sif and Thonar, this is hardly to be wondered at. Being the daughter of one of the most beautiful of the goddesses, as well as the strongest of the gods, she must be both very fair and very mighty. Today, she is sometimes thought of as having lovely hair of a bright reddish-gold colour.

She and her two brothers Móði and Magni may also be seen as the bearers of Thonar's great gifts to humans: Strength, Bravery, and Main-Strength.

From his own workings and research, Larsanthony K. Agnarsson offers another perspective on this goddess, one which fits well with her role as daughter of Thonar and Sif:

Thruð is an obscure goddess and little is known about her other than (that) she is the daughter of Þórr and Sif. However, we in Skergard give her much more credit than that.

Thruð is one of the more prominent of the Asynjur in this modern day and age. She is the youngest goddess among the Asynjur.

The young gods and goddesses are very important in our modern world. Since the gods have evolved as we have, the youngest of them are more prominent in this day and age. This does not mean that the elder gods are fading from importance. What this does mean, however, is that the younger gods and goddesses are just as involved in our lives as their parents, if not more so.

As Sif represents the "Gatherer of Grains", Thruð represents the work behind sowing the fields and the labors of organized agriculture.

Before the coming of Thruð, mankind simply gathered berries and nuts to survive, ignorant of sowing fields, planting crops, or the inequity of modern agriculture.

As humanity continued to evolve, Sif taught Thruð the aspects of gathering nuts and berries, and from her grandmother Fjorgynn (Jord) she learned the ways of the soil. When Thruð came of age, she taught humans the importance of working with the Earth, that is, agriculture. She also taught mankind how to use what they grow, and how to grind grain to make flour for baking bread. Thus, Thruð is associated with the hearth, because she spends many hours there cooking, baking, and keeping the fire. As the fire-keeper and bread-baker, her colour is orange (not to mention that Red and Yellow make Orange; i.e. Þórr and Sif combined). What time not spent cooking, she spends in the fields, sorting the Earth from the stones and rocks.

Thruð is often seen as a large, strong woman whose hair is pulled back, but nevertheless messy. Her clothes are generally torn and dirty; as a labouring woman, she is too busy to notice her conditions.

Because of her strength, she is likened to a giantess. Rocks and stones that are sacred to her are the ones turned over with the plow.

Other colours which have been associated with Trude are bright red and gold.

This goddess also appears as one of the main characters in a charming work of Heathen educational fiction (early teenage-level, Danish language), Lars-Henrik Olsen's *Erik Menneskesøn*.

Hella (Hel, Hell, Hölle, Halja, *Haljon)

This goddess was known to all the Germanic peoples, including the Goths: a Gothic word for "witch" was *haljoruna* - Hella-runester. She must have been the goddess of the underworld from a very early time, as her name is given to that land in all the Germanic tongues. The name itself stems from a root meaning "to hide": she is the concealer. Simek compares the description of the road to Hel as "down and to the north" to the burial mounds of European megalithic culture, which "always have their entrances to the south and the burial chamber to the north...also the north-south orientation is predominant in Bronze Age ship settings and Vendel and Viking Age ship graves". He strengthens his identification of Hel with these family cairns by pointing out that the Old Irish cognate to her name is *cuile*, "cellar", which is a reasonable development from the mound-covered rock-chamber (*Dictionary*, pp. 137-38).

Hella is a rather ambiguous figure in the Norse pantheon: as ruler of the Underworld, she has the status of a Goddess and queen; as Loki's daughter, sister of the Wolf Fenrir and the Middle-Garth's Wyrn, she appears as a demonic figure. The belief in Hella as ruler of the underworld is likely very archaic; the belief that she is part of Loki's monstrous family goes back at least to the ninth century, appearing in the skaldic poem *Ynglingatal*, where it says "I tell no secret, Gná-of-Glitrir (the horse-goddess - Glitrir, "glistening", is listed as a horse-*heiti*, and one goddess' name is often substituted for another in kennings) has Dyggvi's corpse for her delight, for the horse-idis of the Wolf and Narvi chose the king, and Loki's daughter has the ruler of the folk of Yngvi as her plaything". Although it has been suggested that Hella as a person is late and perhaps even post-heathen (Simek, *Dictionary*, p. 138), her appearance in this poem makes it clear that she was firmly established as a free-standing personality in the Viking Age. It may be particularly noted that it is implied in *Ynglingatal* that the dead man will receive the personal favours of Hella, a theme which also shows up in Saxo's version of the Balder-story, where Balder dreams of the embraces of "Persephone" (Hella). Grimm, citing the great many Hella-based place-names of continental Germany, as well as her appearance as "Mother Hölle" in German folklore, is of the opinion that she may well have preceded many of the other deities, and perhaps even that the name and idea of the realm devolved from the goddess herself. As a matter of fact, the older the versions of the Germanic Goddess of Death are, the less "hellish" and more godlike she appears.

The Goddess Hel is sometimes represented as a personification of Death, with the Wolf and Serpent as Pain and Sin, respectively. This is another pretty mediæval (or even Victorian) sentiment - surely death, a natural part of the cycle of life, is not equivalent to *sin* (in the christian sense - in the original sense, as Gert McQueen has pointed out, "sin" meant only "being"). This is part of the need felt by some for all three of Loki's children to represent awful monsters of some sort. But Hel always stands out from the other two. Instead of being bound or imprisoned, Hel is given rule over her own realm. In the Baldr story, she stands as an equal with the Æsir, refusing to give in to their demands unless on her own terms. She is very possibly an older concept, that of the Death Goddess, which was stuck into a later myth-cycle in a convenient place, as happens to so many other deities. Death is too ancient and primal a concept to be such a late-comer into a pantheon.

As a goddess of death, Hel is not only the receiver of the dead, sometimes she comes herself to claim them. This is spoken of in the quote from *Ynglingatal* (above). During the Black Plague, which ravaged Norway and other parts of Scandinavia to an even greater degree than the rest of Western Europe, Hel was said to travel the countryside with a broom and a rake. In villages where some survived, she was said to have used the rake; if a whole community perished, she had used her broom.

However, generally she is simply the keeper of the souls of the departed, welcoming them into her house, which was viewed as a sort of inn for the dead, and holding them with an inexorable grip, on no account giving up anyone once she had them. This idea of the Death Goddess being un pitying and immovable, never giving back one she has taken, is certainly apparent in Hel's refusal to let Baldr go. The giantess Þökk in the Baldr story, who refuses to weep for him, is often supposed to be Loki, making double sure Baldr stays dead for his own evil reasons. But the claim could be made that she is Death herself, the one being who would feel no need to weep for Baldr. "What Hel has, she may keep", Þökk says. Hermóðr does not understand Hel's hidden meaning when she says all things must weep for Baldr to prove he was universally mourned. What she means, perhaps, is that all the worlds may wish Baldr back, but death herself will remain inexorable.

The ancient death Goddess was often pictured as having gaping jaws and a ravening wolfish nature (which is reminiscent of Hel's brother Fenrir, whose jaws, when open, stretched from Heaven to Earth). The Norse Hel is pictured as a woman of very stern demeanor and parti-coloured - sometimes half black or blue and half white, sometimes half corpse flesh and half living, by which, as Snorri puts it in his Edda, "she is easily recognized" (no doubt!). Sometimes it is suggested that her upper half is white/living and her lower half is black/rotting, but one may well suspect that this has more to do with the neuroses of modern society than with the beliefs of our ancestors; Karter Neal, who has done much work with this goddess, says that she always sees Hella's two halves as being right side/left side. An interesting point to bring up here is a passage from ibn Fadlan's descriptions of the Rus, where a corpse is buried temporarily in the frozen earth while preparations are made for the funeral; when it was dug up, the cold had turned the flesh black. The Norse were also surely aware of the phenomenon of *livor mortis*, which, after a few hours, causes the skin of whatever parts of the body are lowest to take on a bluish-purple hue. The dead are either described as *helblár* (Hel blue/black) or *nábleikr, náfölr* (corpse-pale).

This two-coloured aspect can symbolize death's two sides - ugly and peaceful. It may be worth noting that those dead who do become *helblár* are usually those who walk as draugar after their deaths - the evil dead, in other words.

Leaving scholarly speculations for more mystical ones, I (Alice Karlsdóttir) have done a series of meditations on Hel over a few years, trying to find out what sort of deity she is, and have seldom seen her as two-coloured. She appears either all hideous (which seems to amuse her greatly as being a huge joke on everyone), or all beautiful, with very pale skin, hair, eyes, and garments, and always with her crown on. Death appears fearsome and ugly to the living, for we see it as an end to all we know and love, often accompanied by pain and fear. But if death is a part of life and the natural cycle of things, and if the soul continues in another life afterwards, might not Death appear beautiful to one who is dying, a welcome release from pain, a doorway to a new existence? When death is truly accepted and understood, it loses its hideous face. Perhaps this is what Hel's two-faced quality represents. There are as many references to beauty in her realm as ugliness. It comes down to whether we are going to be willing to accept death or not, but willing or not, we must face her sooner or later.

Hella's chief animal is the horse; the Scandinavian belief in the *helhest* is spoken of under "Soul, Death, and Rebirth". She is also seen as a three-legged white goat; another folk belief was that Hel had a huge ox which went from place to place during times of sickness and whose breath caused people to fall down dead.

Hella's colours are black or deep blue-black and white. Runes associated with her in modern times are Hagalaz, Berkano, and Isa.

Sunna (Sól)

At least from the beginning of the Iron Age onward, the Sun was always seen as a goddess by the Germanic folk, while the Moon was a god, her brother. While there is little surviving evidence for Moon-worship, there is more for worship of Sunna. In his article "Folklore in the Icelandic Sagas and the Blót of Guðrún Ósvífrsdóttir", Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson has shown that it is very likely that the passage in *Laxdæla saga* where it is described how Guðrún rose early on the day of the killing of Kjartan, "er sólu var ofrat" (normally translated as "when the Sun got up" - lit. "when the Sun was lifted *or* offered to"), actually tells of an offering to the Sun - originally probably made by Guðrún herself. He comments that "it is worth remembering that at the Conversion, people were for the time being permitted to sacrifice in secret, this not being considered a punishable offence unless witnesses were present...A sacrifice that took place before everybody else woke up would therefore not have been seen as an offence at this time" (p. 264). If he is correct, this would suggest that Sunna received offerings on special occasions: Guðrún wishes to talk her husband and brothers into killing the hero Kjartan and make sure that the slaying will be successful, and thus she makes a blessing to the Sun. The first brightness of dawn was often seen as a sign of sig: after Hákon the Great's blessing to Óðinn (*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar, Heimskringla*), he sees two ravens, which he takes as an omen that he will have "dagrád til at berjask" - that is to say, "dawn", or victory, for his battling. When Guðrún's dawn blessing is thought of in this context, it suggests that Sunna herself may be seen as the one to whom sig-offerings are made.

Sunna is also able to bless the dying: in *Landnámabók*, it is mentioned that Þórkell Þórsteinsson "had himself borne out into the rays of the Sun in his Hel-sickness". Jón Aðalsteinsson sees the follow-up to this in which Þórkell "commended himself into the hands of that god who had shaped the sun" as a christian addition to an authentic tale of a Sun-worshipper's death (p. 263). She is, of course, the foe of all those wights who dog the dark death-paths - etins, trolls, and ill-willing ghosts - and the blessing of her light at death might have worked in much the same way as the little Þórr's-Hammers used as grave-amulets.

Sól is listed among the goddesses in Snorri's Edda: she has either two horses, Árvakr and Alsviðr, or one, Skin-faxi (Shining-Mane). The image of the horse drawing the Sun's wain goes back at least to the Bronze Age; the best-known example is the well-known Trundholm sun-wagon (spoken of under "The Bronze Age"). Parts of a like piece were found in the Tågaborg mound in Helsingborg (Gløb, *The Mound People*, p. 103).

The Old Norwegian Rune-Poem's lines, "(Sun) is the light of lands; I lout (bow) to the holy deeming" also suggest that the Sun was seen as a greater goddess than the myths show her to be, as do the various descriptions of her in the Elder Edda: she is *skirleitt goð* (shining-faced deity - *Grímnismál* 39), *heið brúðr himins* (glorious bride of heaven - *Grímnismál* 39), and *skínandi goð* (shining deity - *Grímnismál* 38, *Sigrdrífumál* 15). Jón Aðalsteinsson also cites Skúli Þórsteinsson's poem about the sunset: "Glens beðja veðr gyðju / goðblíð í vé siðan / komr gótt, með geislum, / gránserks ofan Mána" - Glen's (the gleaming one's) god-blithe wife treads with her rays into the goddess' wih-stead; afterwards the mild light of gray-sarked Máni comes from above.

Finally, there are the many folk practices which suggest the worship of the Sun, such as the lighting of wheels and dawn-fires at (variously) Yule, Ostara, and Midsummer's (spoken of further in the chapters on those blessings), and the folk custom of rising early to "see the Sun dance" on Ostara, May Day, or Midsummer's. It is thus clear that the Germanic folk did worship the goddess Sunna, and probably that she was seen as more than a mere personification of the shining light in the sky: that she herself was, in fact, seen as the source of light, life, and sig.

Sunna's colour is gold, though she is sometimes also thought of in modern times as being white-clad. Those who live in more southerly climates, where she is not the mild maiden that she is in the North, also see her as an etin-maid or a furious sow in the summertime; in *Runelore*, Thorsson cites the German saying "Die gelbe Sau brennt" (the yellow sow burns) for an especially hot day.

Contributors

- Alice Karlsdóttir, from "The Lady Death", in *Idunna* IV, 4, #17, Yule-Month 1992 C.E., pp. 2-7 (nearly all of "Hella"; note that parts of this article are also reproduced under "Soul, Death, and Rebirth").
- Gefjon
- Stephan Grundy, from "Freya and Frigg" (Ellis-Davidson, H.R., ed., *Images of the Goddess* - forthcoming from Routledge; title may be subject to change)
- Kveldúlfur Gundarsson, Warder of the Lore, from "The Spinning Goddess and Migration Age Bracteates" (unpublished article)
- Melodi Lammond (for Sága)
- Larsanthony K. Agnarsson, Elder-in-training, "The Goddess Thruð", from *Fjallabók* #1.
- Karter Neal
- Laurel Olson
- Diana Paxson, Elder
- Siegróa Lyfjasgyðja (for Eir)
- Dianne Luark Ross, Elder, from "The Birch Goddess", *Idunna* vol. II, #2, October 1989

Chapter XIV

Thonar

(Þórr, Thunar, Donar, Donner, *Thonaraz)

Of all the gods of the North, Thonar is likely to be the best-loved and, together with Wodan, is the best-known - he has always been one of the most beloved and called upon deities. He is the champion of Asgard and Midgard against the chaos and destruction of the thurses His Hammer is the sign of the true, worn as the emblem of the troth of our folk even by those who are given to other god/esses. Few indeed are those who do not hold some love for old Redbeard - the Friend of Men, the Middle-Garth's Warder, whose Hammer-blows are ever turned outward to protect humankind from all the threats beyond the Middle-Garth's walls and whose mighty mod is seen in the raging of the storms from which his name - "Thunder" - comes.

The image of Thonar as a fighter is reinforced by scholars, such as Dumézil, who try to categorize all of the god/esses into the narrow tripartite system, invariably classifying Thonar as just a warrior, and not a very bright one at that. But Thonar is more than just a strong brute who wars against chaos. He delivers the summer rains that make the crops grow; he hallows important occasions and ceremonies, and he gives strength and support to those who follow the old path.

Thonar is the son of the Earth and Wodan. He is the strongest of the gods, and, as seen in *Lokasenna*, the only one who can intimidate Loki. He appears as a big man with a red beard - sometimes young, sometimes as the old "Þórr Karl"; his eyes are fiery. He drives a wain drawn by the two goats Tanngnjóstr ("teeth-grinder") and Tanngrísniir ("teeth-gnasher") - like the founder of Normandy, Göngu-Hrolf, he is too mighty for a horse to bear him, and must go on his two feet or in this wagon, even when he fares between the worlds where the other god/esses ride their steeds. He wears iron gauntlets and a belt referred to as *megingjörð* (the girdle of main); he carries the magical staff called Gríðarvölr (Gríðr's staff). Although Snorri says that Þórr had possessed his own strength-belt and gauntlets before the giantess Gríðr gave him these items of hers, it seems more likely that she was the original source. He has a tremendous appetite for food and drink; and where-ever he is, he will come when his name is called. He is married to the goddess Sif, on whom he fathered the maiden Trude (Þrúðr); he also has an etin-concubine, Járnsaxa, on whom he fathered his sons Móði and Magni.

Thonar has often been described as the "common man's patron", which many of the folk who follow him have found accurate. As Hawkmoon says, "(Thorr's) solutions to problems are direct. If he intends to aid you with something, you are made aware of it directly. One night, after invoking Thorr, I left the blot bowl standing on the harrow with a goodly amount of stout (Guinness) poured into it (several other folk have, quite independently of each other, felt stout to be Thonar's drink - KHG). No animals were about, and the room was not disturbed. Yet, when I woke in the morning (some 6 hours later) the stout was gone. It had obviously been drunk, as there was no residue in the bottom, as there would have been had it dried up. Welcome to the twilight zone, right? Yet, in a few days, the situation that I had sought Thorr's aid for was resolved very much to my satisfaction. If that's not direct dealing, I don't know what is...I have always felt it easy to speak to Thorr. Whereas Odhinn enjoys a little theater in your ritual, Thorr seems to like it when you just say what you want and get it over with."

Although Thonar has sometimes been put forth as a rather simple god - not given to much thought, more like the giants than the other gods in his great appetites for food, drink, and battle, and hardly a match for the wits of Wodan and Loki - to see him as limited in wisdom or lacking in the rich layers of complexity which make up the other god/esses is to greatly misunderstand him. True, where Wodan is a deep-thought and devious god, Thonar is simpler and more straightforward - less prone to seek out the deeper levels of things, preferring to deal with what is already evident. Thonar's wisdom is the wisdom of common sense, which some might call the greatest of all. When Wodan sees a problem, he deals with it through subtlety; Tiw might work his way through a maze by patience and rational judgement, but Thonar simply smashes down the walls, which may even be more rational in the end - after all, everyone knows that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. Thonar's wisdom is seen, for instance, in the tale of his journey to the giant Geirröðr. Trusting that his friend Loki is as true as he himself (naïve, but understandable, given Thonar's own total trustworthiness), Þórr has gone off without his Hammer; but the etin-frowe Gríðr, mother of Víðarr, gives him a staff, gauntlets, and belt of might. While he is crossing a river with the help of these items, the river suddenly swells into a great flood. Þórr looks up to see one of Geirröðr's daughters standing across it, causing it to rise with her urine and menstrual blood. He then says, "A river must be stemmed at its source", and throws a large rock at her. Þórr shows a similar sort of sensible wisdom in the Eddic poem *Alvissmál*, where he deals with the dwarf who has come to take his daughter by challenging the rock-dweller's wisdom. Alviss (All-Wise), distracted by this challenge, recounts lore until daylight, when the first rays of dawn turn him into stone. Thonar's purpose here is not, like Wodan's in *Vafþrúðnismál*, either to learn the other's wisdom or to show off his own: he simply wants to get rid of the dwarf (presumably it is important for him to do this without breaking the frith of the Ases' Garth, where the poem is set), and does so with the simplest means available to him - letting Alviss trip over his own

knowledge. Also, we should not forget that Thonar is called *djúphugaðr* - the Deep-Souled or Deep-Thinker. He may not be as swift with words and subtle ploys as some deities - but his essential wisdom is no less than theirs.

Perhaps surprisingly, there are also some shamanic elements to Thonar's character. His journeys to the Outgarth, in the course of which he either battles with ill-willing wights threatening the community or brings back objects of power (the cauldron for Ægir's brewing, his own Hammer, the staff, belt, and gauntlets given him by Gríðr), are very typically shamanic activities. His possession of staff and gauntlets is particularly interesting since these are the items used by Icelandic witches in their *gandreið* (magical riding or wand-riding) and, particularly the staff, are generally characteristic of shamans. In one case, his reclaiming of his Hammer, Thonar even has to cross-dress as a necessary condition of his success, which is also a major element of shamanic practice. In this aspect, Loki often seems to act as his not wholly trustworthy guide/ally spirit who is native to the world beyond the garth. This side of Thonar has been little explored. It is, however, worthy of note that the Korpbron runestone (put up by a Heathen in an unfriendly area, as shown by the fact that this part of the inscription is put in coded runes inside a cross) calls "siþi Þur" - "Þórr, perform seiðr!" This suggests two things: firstly, that the image of seiðr as "unmanly" which Snorri gives us so specifically in *Ynglinga saga* may not have existed in Heathen times (or even as late as the period of conversion from which the Korpbron stone stems); and secondly, that Thonar had his own connections with magic.

Thonar's greatest might in the religious/ritual sense, however, was that of hallowing. The Hammer is laid in the bride's lap at a wedding "brúði at vígia" ("to hallow the bride" - *Þrymskviða* 30); Snorri tells us of how he swings it over the bones and hides of his devoured goats to bring them back to life and of how he blesses Balder's pyre with it. The latter mention is particularly interesting given the common use of Þórr's-Hammer amulets in Viking Age burials (see "Burial Rites"). It is Þórr, not Óðinn, who is called on to hallow the runes of the stones from Glavendrup (ca. 900-925) and Sönderkirkeby (late 10th century) with the inscription "Þor uiki (þasi) runaR" (Þórr hallow these runes); the late 10th century Verring stone ("Þur uiki þisi kuml" - Þórr hallow this memorial-marker), and the Velanda stone of the same approximate date ("Þur uiki" - Þórr hallow) (Baetke, Walter, *Das Heilige im Germanischen*, p. 113). These stones may well be Heathen reactions against the newly-set christian runestones; however, this does not lessen the meaning of the consistent choice of Þórr, rather than Óðinn, as the hallower of the runes. The *Þórsheiti* "Véurr", which de Vries interprets as "warder of the wih-stead" also appears in the 9th century Rök stone's inscription, as the cultic title of a man named Sibbi (see the discussion of the Rök stone below). The belief in Thonar as Hallower is not limited to the Norse materials, however: the Nordendorf fibula (from Southern Germany, 6th century C.E.), calls on "Wigithonar" - Hallow-Thonar (together with Wodan and "Logathore"). This suggests strongly that Hallower was one of Thonar's roles from the earliest times, and common to the understanding of all the Germanic peoples. For this reason, the Hammer-sign is used as the general sign with which true folk hallow food and drink, blessings to the god/esses, and so forth. Moreover, the hallowing performed by Thonar is not that of making something *holy* - blessed in the sense of being part of the Middle-Garth, but attuned to the other worlds - but that of making something *wih* - so filled with might that it is set apart from the ordinary world, becoming a part of the world of the god/esses.

Although always mighty among the folk, Thonar seems to have risen to his greatest heights in the latter part of the Viking Age, when he was called on more and more as the warder of the troth against the invading "God" and Christ of the South. The battle was one of "Red Þórr" against the "White Christ" - a comparison which carried a subtle insult to the latter. To be "red" meant not only literally to have red hair (a sign of fierceness, which Germanic warriors sometimes achieved through dyeing their hair, as reported by), but to be strong-willed, hot-tempered, and battle-mighty - while to be "white" could mean, as well as the complimentary meaning of fairness, to be weak-willed and cowardly (comparable to calling someone "lily-livered"). When the christian missionary Thangbrand came to Iceland (at the bidding of Óláfr Tryggvason), the skald Steinunn (who may well have been a priestess of Þórr) made several verses showing clearly that Þórr was the warder of the Heathen ways. She praises the god for wrecking Thangbrand's ship, and also says to the missionary, "Have you heard that Þórr bade Christ to a holmgang, and he did not trust his own strength enough (*treytisk*) to battle with Þórr?" (*Brennu-Njáls saga*, ch. 102) The Þórr's-Hammer pendants which are so common in the later part of the Viking Age have often been suggested to be the Heathen answer to the christian cross, just as the "Þórr hallow" runestones may have been a reaction against christian practice: it was clearly he in whom our folk trusted against all malign spiritual influences, trolls and missionaries alike. The various sagas of the two christian Óláfrs mention great statues of Þórr; although their descriptions may have been somewhat based on antiquarian fancy, Adam of Bremen's description of the temple of Uppsala also has a statue of Þórr in the highest place (above Freyr and Óðinn). Turville-Petre mentions that "the evidence of the place-names does suggest that the public cult of Thór increased greatly in Norway during the ninth and tenth centuries" (*Myth and Religion*, p. 92).

Much is known of the worship of Thonar. *Eyrbyggja saga* describes how his image was carved on the house-pillars of his "beloved friend" Þórólfr Mosturskeggi; *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* (*Flatexjarbók*) mentions that Eiríkr, the son of Hákon the Great, had an image of Þórr on his ship-pillar, and *Fostbroeðra saga* speaks of a chair on which the god was carved. One of the best-known pieces of Viking Age art is the little Icelandic statue which appears to be Þórr sitting with his Hammer on his lap; the original of this was probably carried in a belt-pouch by a worshipper of the god.

There are a couple of references to human sacrifice given to Thonar: *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Landnámabók* tell how

such folk had their backs broken on a great stone. These were not, however, battle-captives or holy kings; rather, they were "sentenced to sacrifice" - that is to say, this sacrifice was probably the hallowing of a criminal death-penalty, rather than an act carried out for the chief purpose of praising or thanking the god, as was likely the case with, for instance, the Wodanic slaying of battle-prisoners. More likely was the sacrifice of goats: the account of how Thonar was able to kill his goats, eat them, and then bring them back to life again with his Hammer was probably mirrored in actual sacrifices (Simek, *Dictionary*, p. 321). He may have gotten other animals as well: *Flóamanna saga* (ch. 20) tells how Þórgils Þorðarson, upon forsaking the troth of his forebears, dreamed that Þórr visited him and was angry. That night Þórgils' best boar died; the next night an old ox of his was found dead. Þórgils would not let anyone eat of the meat, but had the boar buried - clearly seeing that the god had taken his own sacrifice.

Thonar was a mighty fisherman: his best-known fishing trip was the one on which he fished up the Middle-Garth's Wyrm ("Hymiskviða"), but he was also the one who caught Loki in salmon form. In *Bárðar saga* (ch. 8), Þórr appears as a red-bearded fisherman, helping Ingjaldr against a storm raised by a troll-woman.

The oath-ring was especially holy to Thonar, and many of the Hammers have rings soldered to the top - not as jump-rings for stringing a chain through, as they are set in the wrong direction, but probably as images of this oath-ring. It has often been suggested that the "all-mighty Ase" of the Icelandic oath-taking formula from *Landnámabók* was Þórr (though other gods, most notably Óðinn and Ullr, have been put forward as well).

The "god-nails" described in *Eyrbyggja saga* may well have been used for striking holy fire, and thus been likewise seen as signs of Þórr. They were set in the pillars that bore his image; one may guess that they might have been struck into his forehead, in memory of the fragment of Hrungrnir's whetstone which stuck there after the god's hammer had shattered it. The Stone Age tools which the Germanic folk thought of as thunderbolts were called "Ukko's nails" in Finland - the nails of the Finnish god of thunder, who seems to have absorbed many of Thonar's characteristics. This could well lend strength to the idea that special, hallowed nails were used for striking lightning-sparks. The pairing of iron Þórr's-Hammers with miniature fire-steel amulets (see "Burials") also suggests strongly that the fire struck by flint and steel was especially holy to this god.

The Rök stone (ca. 800), though often thought to be a memorial inscription for a dead youth named Vamoþ, can also be read as an initiatory document describing the hallowing of a young man. Höfler saw it as being probably Óðinnic, due to the invocation of the great hero Theoderik. However, Theoderik is described as "þurmuþi" - "bold as Þórr" (or literally, having the mod of Þórr - it should, perhaps, also be noted that "Þórmóðr" was used as a Norse personal name as well) on the Rök stone. The last part of the inscription, as interpreted by Henry Kratz, reads: "Now let someone tell us the memorable matter, about the initiation...I shall also tell this memorable matter: which of the Ingoldings was rewarded by the sacrifice of a woman. I shall also tell this memorable matter: to which warrior the son was born. It is Vilin. He could fell a giant (*iatun*). It is Vilin. May much good arise from this. I shall tell another memorable matter: Þórr! Sibbi, guardian of the temple (*uiuari*, or "Véurr"), at the age of ninety instructed him (i.e., Vamoþ) in the mysteries." ("Was Vamoþ Still Alive?", p. 29). The references to Þórr, to the etin-felling, and the title "Véurr" given to the old Sibbi (or "kinsman", which could also be the meaning of the name), suggest strongly that if Höfler and Kratz are correct in seeing the Rök stone as an initiatory document, it described an initiation within the cult of Thonar.

Firstly, and all the way to the present day, Thonar is known as the god of thunder. Turville-Petre mentions that Old English words for thunder include "ðunorrad" and "ðunorradstefn" - Thunor's/thunder's travelling - which he compares to the Icelandic "reiðarpruma", "reiðarduna", and "reið", "which seem to imply that thunder is believed to be the noise which Thór makes while travelling in his chariot" (*Myth and Religion*, p. 99). His weapon, of course, is the Hammer "Mjöllnir"; the etymology of this name is not clear, but it is likeliest to be related to Slavic and Baltic words for "lightning". As early as the Stone Age, miniature axes of flint and amber were being used as amulets; in the Bronze Age, we have rock-carving images of a god with a huge axe, and it is thought likely that the axe was the original weapon of the Northern thunder-god, from which the Hammer developed. Turville-Petre mentions that the Lappish thunder-god appeared on shamans' drums with either a hammer in each hand, or a hammer in one hand and an axe in the other (*Myth and Religion*, p. 98). The latter rendition suggests the possibility that the Lapps could have maintained the older and the newer images of axe and hammer simultaneously. Stone Age axe-heads were seen as the embodiments of thunderbolts in all the Germanic countries, and used as mighty amulets from the Bronze Age onward to protect a house against all ill, especially fires and lightning-strikes (a use which suggests that true folk might do well to attach iron Hammers to the tops of their houses' lightning rods).

To the Germanic folks, thunder had two purposes: it brought fruitfulness to the fields (Adam of Bremen mentions that this was particularly a function of Þórr, and the many agricultural place-names with "Þórr" as an element strengthen this understanding) and it showed the might of the god battling against the etin-kin. As Audthryth points out,

It is unfortunate that modern civilization is so cut off from nature and the weather. We have insulated ourselves so much from the outdoors that, generally, inclement weather or a bad harvest becomes little more than a nuisance. If we get snowed in, it only takes a few days or most for the snowplows to make the roads passable. If a crop fails, it means higher prices at the store, not starvation. I think that this detachment makes it hard to remember sometimes that Thor plays a big role in both the weather and the growing of crops.

Thor was called upon by our ancestors to bring the summer rains and lightning that made the crops grow, while

warding off the destructive hail. In many parts of Scandinavia, it is still believed that the grain will not ripen without the energy of summer lightning Thor is also able to quiet the seas when storms blow up. It was Thor that our ancestors called upon to calm the waves and bring them safely into port. Personally, I always feel the might of Thor when a storm blows down off the mountain or in from the sea.

The belief in thunder hunting trolls lasted a long time: a folktale from Sweden tells how a thunderbolt knocked a big black thing out of a crofter's chimney; the thing rolled off towards the lake, when the thunder hit it again and it disappeared. A man with the Sight who was there said that the thing was a troll, and that the thunder had knocked one leg off when it hit the chimney, then killed it by the lake (Simpson, *Scandinavian Folktales*, pp. 185-86). Thonar is best known in the holy tales of the North as the fighter of giants, without whose battles there would be no humans left on the earth: for his deeds against the wights of the Outgarth, he received several skaldic praise-poems (such as *Þórsdrápa*, which tells the story of his visit to Geirröðr in some of the most complex skaldic language surviving - showing that Þórr had the great respect and love of at least one of the finest minds of the Heathen era).

Despite Thonar's role as a warrior, however, he is not a war-god; he is never shown as taking part in any of the battles of humans. He is a monster-fighter only, though he can be called upon for protection in any circumstances. Hawkmoon mentions that "I frequently invoke him when leaving the house for any serious period of time (more than 1 day). Also, my Hammer (pendant) is of great comfort to me on a daily basis. Thorr, to me, is the defender of the family and the clan, and invoking him for such defense can be very powerful indeed". As one who often travels into the Outgarth, Thonar as the warder of travellers is an especially good god for wayfarers to call upon. Fairly recently, an Ásatrú woman who was normally devoted to Freyja felt a sudden urge to hang her Hammer on her rearview mirror before beginning a long night drive; on the way, she was hit from behind by a drunken truck driver and her little car was totalled - but she survived with nothing worse than a few bruises. In the old days, Thonar was especially called on against storms at sea; *Landnámabók* mentions that Helgi inn magri "trusted in Christ, but called on Þórr for sea-faring and hard plights" (*Sturlubók* 218).

Thonar is, of course, the god of might and main, and according to *Hákonar saga ins goða*, those who trusted in their own might and main Hammer-signed the ritual cup and drank to Þórr when others toasted Óðinn. Thonar's might is not only the might of the body, but the might of the soul and will. Something of Thonar's power can be seen in the dedication of weightlifters or other intensely physical people, who make every test of their body a test of their will - of their total being - and are always seeking to become stronger in every way. Followers of Thonar tend to be strongly self-reliant, even more so than most true folk: Hawkmoon mentions that "It should be noted that Thorr encourages you to do it yourself if you can. If you go running to him every time you have a little problem, you're likely to find that he isn't listening very often. However, if you've tried your best to take care of it yourself and can't get anywhere, he will usually help you out, although his assistance may not take the form you would like! I find that this is true with all the Norse deities, but most evident with Thonar". Audthryth concurs: "Thor can be counted on to provide strength and comfort when things get rough, though it is NOT the same kind of support that christians claim their Christ gives. To me, the christian epitome of the support they expect is the poem 'Footprints in the Sand', where their Christ carries them through hard times. Do not expect Thor, or any of the God/esses for that matter, to carry you through hard times like a weak babe in arms. I have always seen the support that I have received as more along the lines of someone watching my back for sneak attacks and making helpful suggestions."

Thonar is also particularly a god of the homestead, to be called on when seeking and blessing a new dwelling. This was done by several of the Icelandic settlers, as described in *Landnámabók*: Kollr (*Hauksbók* 15) prayed to Þórr to show him a stead, as did Kráku-Hreiðarr (*Hauksbók* 164) and Helgi inn magri (*Sturlubók* 218); Þórólfr Mosturskeggi was guided to land by his Þórr-pillars, and Ásbjörn Reykretillsson "hallowed his land-taking to Þórr and called it Þórsmörk" (*Melabók* 8).

Although Thonar, unlike Wodan and Fro Ing, seldom or never appears as the father of human lines, many true folk see him as fatherly, an awareness expressed by Hawkmoon: "I have always felt that Thorr had something to offer as a father figure as well, though not the sensitive father type that Freyr embodies, nor the stern all-father of Odhinn. Rather, Thorr suggests a more average sort of father. Although frequently stern, he sometimes shows great affection, often when you least expect it. I haven't anything, really, to back that impression up, but still it persists. Certainly his fiercely protective nature suggests the attitude of a father towards his children". Audthryth adds that "one of Thor's most important roles to me is the giving of strength and support. I know that in Heathen times he was sometimes referred to as 'Father Thor', and I have always assumed that it was because of the support and 'fathering' he gives, but I have only my personal experiences to support this belief. To me, Thor has always been one of the more approachable God/esses, especially when I need strength and support."

Aside from the oath-ring, Thonar is not particularly a god of law. In her article on Loki, Alice Karlsdóttir pointed out that Þórr often sets his own understanding of what is right above any desire for order. When the god meets with Hrungrnir in the Ases' Garth, he is all ready to bash the etin and does not care in the least that Hrungrnir is protected by Óðinn's invitation and the laws of guest-friendliness - Hrungrnir only saves himself by saying that Þórr would get no honour by killing him unarmed, and challenging the god to a duel on equal terms, which Þórr of course cannot resist. Hawkmoon points out that "Thorr's justice comes from his heart, from his moral and ethical sense of what is right and wrong. The law is

irrelevant to what is fair. One has to be cautious when consulting with this Ase on matters involving harm to members of one's own family or clan, as the actions he encourages are often way outside societal law and perhaps even over-reactive (despite being awfully satisfying)".

One side of Thonar which was less needed in the old days, but is coming very much to the fore now, is his role as warder of his mother, the Earth, against all who would harm her. Hawkmoon suggests, "Thorr, being the son of the earth, has always struck me as being the perfect deity to invoke when protesting some company that's destroying the environment. It makes for a really nice combination of his origins and his protective nature". This understanding of Thonar was spoken of at greater length by Will von Dauster in his article "A Song From the Wood", partially reproduced here from its original publication in *Mountain Thunder*:

A good friend of this author remarked recently that a forest's health could be improved by "thinning" it, cutting down "less perfect" trees so the remaining ones could thrive. This friend is not a pagan, and suffers from attitudes developed in the 1950's, when it was assumed that humans could improve anything by applying the Scientific Principle to all aspects of our environment. That attitude also presumed that humans had an obligation and right to bring "uncontrolled nature" to heel. An attitude born of a thousand years of Christian conditioning, of the idea that the Earth was under man's (sic) domain and stewardship. The arrogance of this thinking seems never to have occurred to my friend...

Although many Asatruar think of Freya and Freyr when they think of the woods, this picture is incomplete. According to H.R. Ellis-Davidson, Thor was often worshipped in sacred groves. Oak groves are said to have been popular. Massive old oaks tell us a few things about Thor's character. Oaks are long lived, and appear to get stronger with age and weathering. They are massive, solid, and are made of tough stuff; a hardwood much prized for its strength and durability. As a long-lived, strong tree, oaks must have towered above many surrounding trees, which would in turn attract the occasional lightning strike, further strengthening the association with Thor.

We know Thor is called the "Son of Earth". This helps solidify his identification with the forest, and nature in general. It may be a good idea to look more closely at the lessons the forest has to teach, in order to more fully understand the personality, character, and priorities of Thor.

Many or most of modern Asatruars tend to view Thor as a God of order. After all, he is the defender of both Asgard and humans. How does this impute order or law to his character? In our modern, urban-oriented world, the defenders of people are, for the most part, the local police. Police work within, or should work within, the framework of the Law, a codification of abstract principles of right and definitions of wrong. If Thor is the defender of humans, and tries to do the right thing, then he must certainly be a god of law, yes?

No.

...Asatru has at least one clearly defined God of law and justice; he is Tyr. Tyr is also a god of service, self-sacrifice, and if one might infer, patience. The stories of Thor exhibit many positive traits, but patience with the enemies of Asgard is not prominent among them. If Tyr is preeminent as a god of law and justice, and in olden times that more organized of conflicts, war, where or to whom do we look for the balancing character, the god who most involves himself with change, situations in flux, one might even say chaos? Look over the shoulder to the old man in the long cloak, looking through you with his one remaining eye from under his broad-brimmed hat...

If Odin is the god of change, and Tyr the god of law and order, where does Thor fit into this spectrum? Once again, by examining the lessons of the forest, perhaps more can be learned of the Great Defender, the Thunderer, the strongest of the gods...

The friend who would "improve the health of the forest" by killing a few selected trees does not understand what a forest is. A forest is not a park...The managed tree exhibit, with cropped grass, has as much to do with the forest as a painted portrait with the person it represents. The painter imparts her or his personality to the interpretation on canvas, much as people impart their idea of what a collection of trees should look like in a park. The painter removes or minimizes perceived imperfections from the presentation, just as the "forest manager" would remove trees perceived as defective from the woods. Just as with people, however, differences are not necessarily defects.

But what of the diseased, the dying, and even the dead trees? These are indicative of the health of the forest. "Huh?" Thinning a forest, as the friend noted, does improve the health of the remaining trees. The problems are, who decides what gets thinned, and what is done with the trees felled by humans? Regarding the first process, there is little that can be said against the process of *natural* selection. Those trees which are fittest, which are best situated, which are, well, toughest, survive. Those that aren't, don't. When humans interfere with this process, the overall health of the forest is, ultimately, weakened.

But what of the trees that are dead or dying? Removing a few, perhaps for firewood or construction, is probably not harmful. Removing them all, over a period of time, however, ultimately robs the forest of

fresh soil, born of the decay of the fallen trees. This, in turn, ultimately weakens the health of the forest. Deprived of the fertile soil, the nutrients needed for growth, the remaining trees are less fit to weather the vagaries of nature, of storms, winds, and disease...

Walking through the woods, one is struck by the "untidy" nature of it. Trees grow in random patterns, fall where they may, without any apparent order. Grass, flowers, and trees grow wherever they can, jutting out of rocks, even growing from the trunks of the fallen trees. While this disorder might resemble chaos, there is little chaotic about it. It is random, but follows a definite pattern of birth/growth/death/decay, a cycle which has gone on for millions of years. The order is that of nature, not humans. And perhaps here we gain some insight into the true nature of Thor.

Thor is concerned with the overall order of nature, the continuing, natural, living nature of the Earth, his - and ultimately our - mother. He is concerned with the larger patterns of life, larger patterns which within themselves allow for considerable randomness. This randomness does not in any way interfere with the progression of life, indeed, it is essential to it. Without variety, without the strict homogeneity of life forms, there is almost certain stagnation, inbreeding, and eventually, death.

This can be seen in the forest surrounding this cabin. The trees that grew here a hundred years ago, the old growth forest, were strip cut. Virtually all of the local forest is second-growth. Further, since they grew relatively quickly and made for good, straight logs, the native trees were replaced with an almost homogenous planting of lodgepole pines. As a result, the forest hereabouts is infested with predators and parasites that thrive on lodgepole pines, making for a sickly and disease-prone forest. In the areas where spruce and fir trees mix with aspens, the health of the forest is demonstrably better...

Randomness within the natural order is a part of Thor. Perhaps his tremendous strength results from this working within the order of nature. Indeed, people are stronger when living in harmony with nature, not poisoning their bodies with "managed", "harmless" chemicals, pollutants, and additives. Thor is not concerned with the petty or trivial temporary order people can impose on nature, with one important exception. Forcing the forest, indeed forcing the planet's ecosystems, to conform to our expectations and demands can, as has been described, interrupt and destroy the cycles of life which keep the earth alive.

What of the needs of people for wood? Wood is an excellent building material, ideal for furniture, houses, and countless other uses. True. The key concepts are farming and sustainability. When approached with respect for the cycle of life, trees can be a crop like any other, with the exception of the slow gratification which so annoys Americans. The US National Forest Service refers to "harvesting" trees in National Forests. If they had planted them, then perhaps this would not be as absurd a term as it is in their usage. Let's repeat it: to harvest, one must first plant. The other concept, sustainability, means, among other things, without the infusion of synthetic fertilizers and poisons.

When approached with respect for the cycle of life.

This is respect for Thor, and his nature. This means that approaching the forest, the cycles of life, without respect is to disrespect Thor. This is, simply put, unwise...

Thor, like nature itself, does whatever it takes to defend the lives of the forest, men, the way of the gods, and the gods themselves. You are, one way or the other, also a participant in the cycle of life. For some, this is enough. For others, it is better to actively participate in the process, to, like Thor, and with his help, defend the random order of nature, along with people and the good name of our gods.

Thonar's great foe is the Middle-Garth's Wyrn: he once fished it up and struck it on the head, but the giant Hymir with whom he was fishing became frightened and cut the line. He will meet it at Ragnarök, and the two of them will slay each other. There is some suspicion that originally Thonar was thought to have slain the Wyrn during his fishing-trip (Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion*, p. 76): one kenning for the god is "orms einbani" - single-handed Wyrn-Bane. Ulfr Uggason's *Húsdrápa* (late tenth century) describes him striking off its head on the waves, but Bragi's *Ragnarsdrápa* (early ninth century) has the Wyrn surviving: it is thus possible that two parallel versions of the story existed through the Viking Age.

As mentioned above, his chief animal is the goat. No surviving sources associate him directly with the bear, but bears, which represent strength and nobility in Germanic thought, are often thought to fit well with him. The two Wyrn-fighting stories of Thonar are also mirrored in the two versions of what Friedrich Panzer called the "Bear's Son" tale (a motif which appears in many of the stories of bear-heroes of the North such as Beowulf and Böðvar-Bjarki): in one, the Bear's Son slays the dragon or wyrn; in the other, the Bear's Son and the wyrn kill each other.

The eagle is not directly associated with Thonar in any of the surviving tales, but one of the best-known Hammers is the one from Skåne with an eagle's head beneath two great staring eyes (which remind us of the fiery glare of Þórr in *Drymskviða*). A similar piece was also found at Hiddensee near Rügen. The *Kalevala* tells us that Väinämöinen first struck fire by striking the talons and feathers of an eagle against a stone; the tribes of Northern Asia, whose shamanic tradition may well have influenced that of the Norse, also see the thunder personified as an eagle; and Thonar's Vedic correspondent,

Indra, takes the shape of an eagle as well (Unto Salo, "Agricola's Ukko in the light of archaeology", in Ålback, *Old Norse and Finnish Religions*, pp. 167-175). It is thus not unlikely that this bird has some ties to Thonar.

The swastika is also often seen as a sign of Thonar. Turville-Petre mentions that "The Lappish god Horagalles (*Þórr Karl* (Old Man Þórr - KHG)), who was adapted from Thórr, perhaps in the early Iron Age, is depicted, not only with a hammer, or two hammers, but also with a swastika. In Iceland a form of swastika was used until recently as a charm to detect thieves, and was called *Þórshammar*" (*Myth and Religion*, p. 84). It is generally accepted that this sign was the emblem of Thunar among the Anglo-Saxons (Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Paganism*, p. 115), who used it rarely on weapons, more often on brooches and funerary urns. In the latter case, it may have served the same purpose as did the little iron Hammer-amulets of the Viking Age burials. The swastika has been seen as showing the god's Hammer whirling in a circle - perhaps as the sign of hallowing.

The oak is the great tree of Thonar, and has, of course, been associated with holiness since the earliest times. There is also a plant, houseleek, which bears the name "Thor's Beard" and was planted on the tops of houses to prevent lightning-strikes. In his description of Þórr's journey to Geirröðr's hall, Snorri quotes a phrase, "The rowan is the salvation of Þórr" and has the god pulling himself out of the swollen river by one of these trees; the Lappish thunder-god has a wife called "Ravdna" (rowan), which suggests that this tree may have been closely associated with Sif (Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion*, p. 98).

As mentioned above, Thonar seems to be particularly fond of stout. Blessings made to him should include food as well as drink; *Brymskviða* describes how he (even while disguised as Freyja) gobbled down a whole ox and eight salmon as well as all the tidbits set out for the ladies.

Contributors

- Audthryth (article written for *Our Troth* - with effort far above and beyond the call of duty to get her work to the editor in time to appear here!)
- Will von Dauster, from "A Song from the Wood", in *Mountain Thunder* #10, Autumn Equinox 1993, pp. 7-10.
- Stephan Grundy, from "The Cult of Óðinn: God of Death?"
- Hawkmoon (article written for *Our Troth*)
- Jamey Hrolf Martin, from "Thor: Scion of Asgardh", in *Idunna* III, 3, Holymonth (September) 1991, pp. 26-27.

Chapter XV

Wulþur, Heimdallr, and Other Gods

Wulþur (Ullr, Wuldor, Wulþus)

Although his name means "Glory", Wulþur is something of a shadowy figure among the Ases. He takes no part in any of the Eddic myths; the only tale we know of him is that, according to Saxo, he ruled the Ases during the years of Wodan's exile. When Wodan returned and cast Wulþur out, he was able to travel over the sea on a bone risted with spells; the kenning "ship of Ullr" speaks of a shield, so it is possible that he may have also been seen as sailing on a shield.

Beyond this, Snorri tells us that he is the son of Sif and the stepson of Þórr, that he is such a good archer and skier that none can match him; that he is fair to look on and has a warrior's accomplishments; and that he is good to call on in single combat. He is given the names *öndur-Ás* (snowshoe-Ase), *boga-Ás* (bow-Ase), *veiði-Ás* (hunting-Ase), and *skjaldar-Ás* (shield-Ase).

As spoken of under "Skaði", Wulþur and Skaði bear a close resemblance to each other, sharing many of the same traits and overlapping in function; Schröder's suggestion that they may even be brother or sister (or half-brother and -sister) is discussed in that chapter. The resemblance between Wulþur and the Finnish hunting/forest god Tapio is also quite close, as may be seen in this traditional song:

"Take me, forest, for one of your men,
for one of your fellows, Tapio,
wilds, for your arrow-fetcher...

Take a man, teach him
to look up at heaven's arch,
observe the Great Bear
and study the stars!...

Lead a man on skis...
lead him to that mound
where a catch may be made, a
prey-task carried out"

(Lönnrot, ed, *The Kantelar*, pp. 85-86).

Several references in Eddic poetry suggest that Wulþur held a higher place in religion and ritual than his absence from the myths would seem to show. In *Grímnismál* 42, Óðinn speaks of "Ullr's favour, and all the gods"; in *Atlakviða in groenlenzca* 30, the oath-ring is called "Ullr's ring". His name is quite common as an element of Scandinavian place-names, being especially usual in Norway and the middle of Sweden. Turville-Petre compares this to the distribution of Týr place-names, commenting that, "It looks as if Ull in the north was what Týr was in the south" (*Myth and Religion*, p. 184). Turville-Petre also notes the place-names "Ullarfoss" (Ullr's waterfall) beside "Goðafoss" (the gods' waterfall) and "Ullarklettur" (Ullr's Cliff) beside "Goðaklettur" (p. 183), which hint that the formula "Ullr...and all the gods" was more than a poet's alliterative device.

Although there is little evidence for Wulþur south of Scandinavia, it is also possible that some memory of him lived through the English conversion: "Caedmon's Hymn" speaks of the *wuldurfadur*, which can be interpreted as either "Glory-Father" or, with the application of more imagination, "Father Wuldor". In either case, this poem seems to preserve several heathen god-titles and apply them to the Christian deity (Ström and Biezais, *Germanische und Baltische Religion*, pp. 102, 110), so it is not unthinkable, though not provable, that the Anglo-Saxons may have known this god. The Goths also had the word *wulþus* ("glory/majesty"), but we have no way of telling whether they knew it as a god-name.

Beside "Ullr", there is also a god "Ullinn", whose name is an adjectival formation meaning "the glorious one". This has often been compared to the Óðr/Óðinn doublet, most extensively by de Vries; there is no reason to doubt that they are the same god.

How and when our folk first learned of Wulþur is unknown. It has often been suggested that Wulþur may actually have been one form of the old "Sky-Father" or "Shining Father" of the Indo-Europeans; it has likewise been suggested that

he was a Finnish god whose ways were learned by the Northerners. In the natural world, his might is thought to show itself forth in the "glory" of the Northern Lights. His hall is called *Ýdalir*, "Yew-Dales", which goes easily enough with his role as bow-god. It also strengthens the belief that he is a god of winter, for whom the evergreen yew would clearly be holy. This tie between *Wuļþur* and yews also suggests that Saxo may have known of an older tradition when he says that *Ullr* was a sorcerer who could sail upon a bone. The yew was the most magical of trees, and four Frisian inscriptions were carved upon yew-wood, at least two of them specifically calling on the might of the yew - to make the surf submit, in one case; in the other, to ward off ill. This warding-might may explain part of the tie between *Ullr* and the shield, as well as his role as a god of single combat. The yew is also the tree of death, or rather of life in death; *Wuļþur* may share this aspect, as well, with the winter-goddess *Skaði*.

The third-century scabbard from Thorsberg had the name *wlþuþewaR*, "*Wuļþur*'s Servant", suggesting either that the sword belonged to someone with that name or that the sword itself was hallowed to the god.

As well on faring on snowshoes and skis, *Wuļþur* is also a rider, though apparently has no single steed with whom he is closely identified: the list of heroes' horse-names in *Kálfsvísa* ends with the line "*Ullr* (rode) various ones, but *Óðinn* (rode) *Sleipnir*".

Wuļþur has been associated with the Wans several times. H.R. Ellis-Davidson notes that his place-names are often near those called after Wanic deities, and tentatively compares the shield-kenning "ship of *Ullr*" to the story of Scyld Scefing (Shield Sheaf-Descended) in *Beowulf* and William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum (Gods and Myths*, pp. 105-106). De Vries also suggests strongly that *Ullr* had a special relationship with several of the Wanic deities: his place-names are paired with those of *Freyr* in Norway, *Njörðr* in Sweden, and there are also two *Ullr-Hörn* (*Freyja*) and two *Ullr-Dísir* pairs (*Religionsgeschichte* II, 157). These place-names are often formed with "meadow" or "cornfield", suggesting a fertility connection. In addition to these, there are three *Óðinn-Ullr* pairs where the names are associated either with an island or a lake; here, one might perhaps see a relationship to Saxo's tale of *Wuļþur* taking *Wodan*'s place for a time, then fleeing by water.

One explanation which has been offered for these pairings is the theory of an alternating Summer Ruler/Winter Ruler. Folk enactments of the battle between the personified Summer and Winter are quite common in the Germanic lands (though more usual at *Ostara*, when Winter/Death is driven out): it is not unlikely that in Heathen times, the might of particular god/esses could be seen in the two halves of the year, and the turning of the seasons as mirroring their cyclical conflict. Seen in this light, *Wuļþur* would stand as the Winter King - the god of the woods and the snowy ski-pathways - while *Fro Ing* would perhaps be the Summer King. This pairing of *Ullr* and the Wanic deities is also especially interesting in the light of the separated marriage of *Skaði* and *Njörðr*: there, too, a summer-winter alternation may easily be thought of.

Wuļþur's colours are the deep green of the yew tree's needles and the bright red of its berries.

Heimdallr

Heimdallr is the watchman of the Ases' Garth, standing on the bridge *Bifröst* which links the Ases' Garth with the Middle-Garth. *Snorri* tells us that he is called the white Ase, *Loki*'s foe, and the recoverer of *Freyja*'s necklace. "A sword is called '*Heimdallr*'s head'; it is said that he was struck through with a man's head...and ever since the head has been called '*Heimdallr*'s bane". He also goes by the by-names *Vindhler* (see below), *Hallinskíði* (etymology impossible), and *Gullintanni* ("Gold-Toothed"); his horse is called "*Gulltoppr*". He needs less sleep than a bird, and night and day are alike to him; he hears the grass growing on the earth and the wool on sheep. *Snorri* quotes a scrap from a poem *Heimdallargaldr* ("*Heimdallr*'s Magical Song" - now lost), in which the god declares of himself: "I am son of nine maids, I am son of nine sisters".

The meaning of *Heimdallr*'s name is disputed, but the first element is probably *heimr* ("world"). The second may be related to *dallr* (brightness); in this case, the name "World-Brightness" could be seen as a complement to the *Frowe*'s by-name *Mardöll*, "Sea-Brightness". An alternate form "*Heimdallr*" also survives, and in this case, the second element could be *dalr* ("bow"), so that the name would mean "World-Bow" - that is, the Rainbow Bridge.

In *Grimnismál* 13, we are told that "*Himinbjörg* (heaven-mountains) are the eighth, and there *Heimdallr* rules over the wih-steads. There the warder of the gods gladly drinks the good mead in the restful house". *Loki* says that, "For you (*Heimdallr*), was an ugly life laid out in earliest days. You must ever have a wet back, watching as warder of the gods" (*Lokasenna* 48).

We know little of *Heimdallr*'s elder kin. In the first line of *Þrymskviða* 15, he is called "whitest of the Ases"; in the second, it is said that "he knew well the future, like other Wans". However, the *Heimdallargaldr* description of the god as the son of nine sisters fits with the *Hyndluljóð* account of how a mighty one was born of nine etin-maids at the ends of the earth: "Gjálþ bore him, Greip bore him, Eistla and Eyrgjafa bore him, Úlfrún and Angeyja bore him, Imðr and Atla and Járnsaxa. He was made greater with the main of the earth, the spray-cold sea and holy boar's blood". Nine etin-maids also appear as the daughters of *Ægir* and *Ran*, though their names are very different. Still, given *Heimdallr*'s ties to the sea (spoken of later), the possibility of a connection is worth some thought. His father's identity is not certain: *Snorri* says that he may be called "son of *Óðinn*"; but he says the same of *Týr*, who is identified as the son of the etin *Hymir* in *Hymiskviða* 5, so this is at least a little dubious. *Turville-Petre* suggests that, since we know *Heimdallr* has been killed at least once and

will die again at Ragnarök, it is possible that his ninefold birth is a sequential process of nine lives (*Myth and Religion*, p. 152).

However, though Heimdallr's origins are confusing, his younger kin are very well-known indeed: the whole human race. The Eddic poem *Rígsþula* begins with the tale of how "a certain one of the Ases, who was called Heimdallr, fared on his way and forth to a certain sea-strand, came to a house-dwelling and named himself Rígr". The title "Rígr" is probably derived from the Irish word for "king". The poem itself tells of how he fathered the founders of the three classes of humankind: Thrall, the father of slaves, Carl, the father of free farmers, and Earl, the father of rulers. The process is not simply one of separation, though: it is a process of growth on the part of the human race. Thrall's parents are called "Great-Grandfather" and "Great-Grandmother"; Carl's are "Grandfather" and "Grandmother"; Earl's are "Father" and "Mother" - Heimdallr is clearly sowing a seed and tending it through the generations. A form of this tale goes back at least to the time of Tacitus, who reports the Germanic belief of the god Mannus who had fathered the three great tribes, Ingvaeones, Hermiones, and Istavaeones. In this aspect, Heimdallr appears not only as the watcher of the Rainbow Bridge, but as its embodiment: he is the first of the living links between the god/esses and all humankind. The beginning of *Völuspá* bears this out: the seeress begins with the words, "Hearing I bid of all holy ones, both high and low of Heimdallr's kin". "Heimdallr's kin" must at least include the god/esses and humans; perhaps the etins as well, if one thinks on his mothers.

Heimdallr is also a teacher, wise in all crafts and willing to give them to those humans who are able to learn them. *Rígsþula* shows him coming to Earl to teach his son runes and spur him on to win his inheritance; when Earl's son Konr has learned the runes well enough, Heimdallr gives up the title of "Rígr" to him. Both this reference and the title of the lost poem *Heimdallargaldr* suggest that Heimdallr is a master of magic. Harry Harrison and John Holm (in *The Hammer and the Cross* - fiction) present "Rígr" as the god of human invention and technological progress, which fits well with the picture given by this poem. It might also be suggested that Heimdallr is a good god to call on for academic help - perhaps even better than Wodan in subjects where wild verbal inspiration is not particularly needed.

Despite this, many Ásatrúar see Heimdallr as being rather aloof, not a god who often brings forth the sort of love that is given to Thonar and even Wodan. It may be that Heimdallr is particularly a god of high and rigid standards, who will help those who are able to better themselves, but has little patience with those who do not live up to their highest potential - though he is not totally demanding; even he relaxes by drinking mead in his mountain hall. However, he is very much a serious god, who shows no sign of having a sense of fun - unless one counts his suggestion in *Drymskviða* that Þórr be dressed as Freyja and take her place to reclaim the Hammer as an expression of humour.

It is, therefore, little surprise that Heimdallr should be Loki's mortal foe. According to Snorri, after Loki has stolen the Frowe's necklace, Heimdallr comes to win it back for her and he and Loki battle in the shape of seals (*Flatexjarbók* tells a different version of the reclaiming of Brisingamen, in which the Frowe arranges the Everlasting Battle of Högni and Heðinn; but since Snorri's version is supported and *Flatexjarbók's* is contradicted by Heathen skaldic poetry, it seems likeliest that Snorri preserves the truer tradition). He and Loki will also slay each other at Ragnarök. According to Brian Branston's interpretation, Heimdallr embodies the "good fire", fire as the useful servant, whereas Loki is the "bad fire", the dangerous wildfire: therefore they are deadly foes. Branston reads Heimdallr as a personification of the holy need-fire, seeing his name "Vindlér" as meaning "Turner" and referring to the process by which this fire is kindled (this is not etymologically correct - see below). He sees "Heimdallr" as a byname of Óðinn's brother Lóðurr, whose place in poetry he thinks Loki usurped during the later Viking Age (*Gods of the North*, pp. 137-147). Branston's argument for this, however, is based only on his firm and unsupported belief that Loki must always have been evil, and any helpful aspects Laufey's son had must have come from his assumption of Lóðurr's position.

Heimdallr owns a horn called Gjallarhorn (the Resounding Horn). He will blow it at the end of the age when Ragnarök has come, as said in *Völuspá* 46: "Mím's sons play, but the Doom is made known by the old Gjallarhorn. Heimdallr blows loudly, the horn is aloft; Óðinn speaks with Mím's head". Some have seen this aspect of Heimdallr as a Heathen interpretation of the Christian myth of Gabriel at Armageddon; however, the blowing of a horn at the start of a battle must have long been known in the North, so there is no reason to look for foreign models. In romantic artistic renditions of Heimdallr, he is shown with a Bronze Age luhorn; Viking Age purists would insist on a cattle-horn, but since all that is, *is* in the moment for our god/esses, true folk may see the Gjallarhorn as they will. It has been suggested (somewhat in jest) that Heimdallr might be the patron god of tuba players.

The *Völuspá* seeress also says that she knows where Heimdallr's "hljóð" is hidden, "under the holy, brightness-accustomed tree; she sees it sprinkled by watery falls from Valfather's pledge". This can only be read as meaning that the item is in the Well of Mímir, or perhaps Wyrð. There is some doubt about what the "hljóð" is. Hollander translates it as "horn", and if it is understood in that manner, then its coming forth at Ragnarök is greatly meaningful: it acts as the embodiment of the ørlög of the worlds, lying hidden in the well until the time has come for all the turnings of Wyrð to be fulfilled. Turville-Petre, however, interprets the "hljóð" as "hearing", comparing it to Wodan's eye: as Wodan, who sees all, has one eye deep in the Well, thus Heimdallr, who hears all, hides his hearing (perhaps even one ear) in the same place (*Myth and Religion*, pp. 149-150).

According to Grønbech's reading, Heimdallr, as a god of kinship, is especially the embodiment of the "feast-frith"; and the *Völuspá* phrase "Heimdallr's kindred" speaks of the folk gathered at the blessing. He suggests further that, "The

sanctity of the feast implied euphemia: ritual silence and devout attention, during the performance of the ceremonies and the chanting of the sacred texts; in the sacral language this euphemia is called *hljóð*, and *hljóð* is bound up with the horn of Heimdall, the symbol or incarnation of his authority" (II, p. 324).

Since Loki can take several animal forms, but Heimdallr is only seen as a seal, it is thought that he is especially associated with seals and/or the water. This association is strengthened by the possibility that his nine mothers may be the nine waves, together with the prevalence of folk beliefs about the ninth wave; the reference to him being strengthened by "the spray-cold sea" also upholds it. His by-name "Vindhlér" means either "Wind-Sea" ("Hlér" is a by-name for Ægir") or "Wind-Protection".

Turville-Petre argues strongly for the ram as Heimdallr's holy animal. The god's by-name, Hallinskiði, is a poetic word for "ram", and the ram is also called "Heimdali", a form which is seen for Heimdallr as well in a poem attributed to Grettir. The god may once have appeared in the shape of a ram, or it may be his beast as the boar was Fro Ing's and the goat Thonar's. Turville-Petre also mentions that the sheep may have been a particularly holy beast to the Germanic peoples (*Myth and Religion*, pp. 151-152).

Though he owns the horse Gulltoppr, there is no sign that the horse was thought to be one of Heimdallr's holy animals.

Plants associated with Heimdallr in modern times are angelica, ash, and yew. His colours are white and gold.

No traditional sign for Heimdallr is known, but the trefot may be associated with him. It is the sign of the Celtic Mannanan mac Lir, who has much in common with Heimdallr; it can also be seen as representing the three classes of humankind which he fathered - or the three realms of gods, humans, and etins which he brings together - or the three great roots of Yggdrasil which he, as warder of the Rainbow Bridge, watches over.

Bragi

Bragi, whose name means "the best" or "the foremost", is said to be the god of poetry; Óðinn tells us in *Grímnismál* 66 that he is the most awesome of skalds. Since we already know Wodan to be (to a much stronger degree, as nearly all the skaldic references to "poetry" attribute it to him) the god of that craft, Bragi's function in that role is a little puzzling. However, the first skald of recorded memory was the early ninth-century Bragi Boddason inn gamli (the Old). This fits with traditional images of Bragi having a long white beard in spite of his marriage to Iðunn; it could also be theorized that a human who had been accepted among the god/esses would have more need of her apples than the other deities. We do know that humans were sometimes taken up among the ranks of the god/esses: when St. Ansgar came to convert Sweden, one of the godmen at Birka had a dream in which the Ases appeared and said that if the Swedes wanted more gods, they would take the recently deceased king Eiríkr into their company rather than having a foreigner among them. It is, thus, often thought that Bragi may be the deified skald.

Another suggestion has been offered: that Bragi was gotten by Wodan on Gunnlöð during the three nights in which he won the mead of poetry. There is no evidence for this in the sources, but it seems a nice interpretation, and some may prefer it to the idea of a deified Viking Age skald. Certainly *Hávamál* and Snorri give us the image of the man flying away and leaving the woman weeping behind which is also seen at the end of *Völundarkviða*; and in *Völundarkviða* the abandoned woman is definitely pregnant.

Bragi does not appear in any Eddic myths, but he does exchange words with Loki in *Lokasenna*; in fact, Loki begins by attacking him, adding to what is clearly a standard formula - "Heilir æsir heilar ásynjor / ok öll ginnheilög goð" (Hail the Æsir, hail the Ásynjur, and all power-holy gods) the contemptuous "Except for one Ase who sits within, Bragi, on the benches". Bragi, seeing that Loki is looking for trouble, offers to give him his sword, horse, and armring if he will sit down and shut up. Loki replies that Bragi has neither horses nor arm-rings, for he is the wariest of battle and the most frightened of shooting, to which Bragi answers that if they were outside he would swiftly have Loki's head in his hands, and Iðunn has to calm her husband. Loki then mentions that Iðunn had laid her shining arms over her brother's slayer; whether this is a deed of Bragi's we know nothing about, or whether Loki is speaking of another event altogether, there is no way to tell.

Bragi is seen in the skaldic poem *Eiríksmál*: he compares the sound of Eiríkr (Bloodaxe) and his troops approaching Valhöll to the sound of Balder returning (to which Óðinn replies, "Witless words should wise Bragi not speak), and asks Óðinn why the god had not given Eiríkr victory, if he was the braver man. Óðinn replies with the famous words, "The gray wolf gapes ever at the dwellings of the gods", - an answer which has inspired many skalds, then and since. He also appears in *Hákonarmál*, in which he seems to act as a sort of herald, being the first to speak to Hákon as the slain king comes to Valhöll's door and to offer him the friendship of the *einherjar*. His role in the latter poem also strengthens the idea that he was once a human who was taken up into the ranks of the god/esses, as it is the legendary heroes Sigmundur and Sinfjötli who carry out the same act of greeting for Eiríkr Blood-Axe in *Eiríksmál*.

In *Sigrdrífumál*, "Bragi's tongue" is listed in the category of objects on which runes are carved. The same list includes Sleipnir's teeth, the wolf's claw, the eagle's beak, the bear's paw, the bridge's end, the sledge-straps, and a host of other items. These probably do not literally have runes risted into them, but are, rather, items of the greatest might through which the power of the runes flow. Blithely ignoring everything we know about Norse tradition, with only this stanza to go

from, Barbara Walker (*The Book of the Crone*, and other feminist rewritings of everything mystical) has recently invented a myth in which Iðunn, rather than Óðinn, was the original finder/keeper of the runes and carved them onto her husband's tongue. Since this contradicts all known sources and accords only with Walker's ideology, it can safely be dismissed.

The cup of oath-drinking is called *bragarfull*, which means "the best cup". Sometimes it is also referred to as "Bragi's cup", probably out of a false etymology which derives the adjective *bragr*, "the best", from the god's name. However, since songs and poems are often spoken at sýmbel, the "Bragi's cup" could indeed have gotten its name from the god.

Foseti

(Fosite, Forseti - Old Norse)

Snorri tells us that Forseti is the son of Balder and Nanna; in *Grímnismál* 15, it is said that "Glitnir (Glittering) is the tenth (hall), it is supported with gold, and silver thatches it as well; and there Forseti dwells most of the day and settles all cases." "Forseti" is also used as a poetic name for a hawk in the þulur (lists of poetic names and *heiti*). He does not appear often in Norse myths or place-names, but in eastern Norway there is a "Forsetalundr" (Forseti's Grove), which hints that he was at least sometimes worshipped in Scandinavia (Schwartz, *Poetry and Law in Germanic Myth*, p. 19). Forseti's worship is unattested to in Old English sources, but as the Frisians invaded England together with the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, it is a likely guess that he was known in at least some parts of England. Eric Wodening reconstructs his Anglo-Saxon name-form as *Forseta.

However, Fosite seems to have been the chief god of the Frisians, and we do have tales about him and his cult from that area. According to the legend "Van da tweer Koningen Karl ende Radbod" (of the two kings Charles [Martel] and Radbod), when the Frankish Charles conquered Frisia, he tried to get the Frisians to reveal their laws to him so that he could judge them. The twelve Foerspreken (fore-speakers) from the Frisian lands stall him twice, but then must admit that they cannot. They are set out to sea in a rudderless ship. Thereupon a thirteenth man appears in the stern, carrying a golden axe (a later, and rather weak, attempt to christianize the tale has been made at this point), with which he steers the ship to land. He then takes the axe from his shoulder and throws it to the earth. It casts up a piece of turf and an underground spring bursts forth. The twelve Foerspreken sit around the spring and learn the law from him. Schwartz reads the historical motivation as being a later interpolation, thinking it more likely that the Foerspreken are gods (corresponding to the traditional twelve Ases of Norse mythology) and that the legend was already old before the Frankish invasion of Frisia.

The association of this myth with Fosite is based on an event in the *Vita s. Willibrordi*. Willibrord is driven ashore on the island between Frisia and Denmark which is called "Fositeland". Everything there was hallowed to Fosite: the folk did not dare to touch the animals or disturb anything, and water could only be drawn from the holy spring in silence. The location, the special worship given to Fosite by the Frisians, and the description of an island with a hallowed spring all fit closely with the above legend. His spring itself may have been a place of capital punishment, as the "Life of Wulfram" states that condemned men were sometimes drowned in fresh or salt waters.

Schwartz also associates the spring as the font of law with the Well of Wyrd, where the Ases' deeming is done, and comments that "Both Frisian and Scandinavian accounts indicate that law is acquired by crossing over water...both the Frisian legend of the thirteenth god and Snorri's description of (the gods) crossing Bifröst indicate that a supernatural means is necessary to traverse water" (p. 23). Schwartz interprets the name Fosite as meaning "bridge-setter" (p.24), but the form "Forseti" seems to mean "he who presides" (de Vries, *Wörterbuch*, p. 139), as a judge over a court or a president or an assembly - a fitting name for a god the elder Heathens saw as governing law, arbitration, and judgement.

Colours associated with Fosite in the modern age are red and gold; the rune we associate with him is raidho. It is significant to note Forseti's association with precious metals (the golden axe of Frisian sources and the gold studs and silver-thatched roof of Icelandic sources, which may reflect the tradition of paying recompense as a punishment among the Germanic peoples.

Móði and Magni

Móði ("Bravery") and Magni ("Main-Strength") are the sons of Thonar and his etin-concubine Járnsaxa. Magni is the strongest of all the gods; when his father was trapped under the leg of the fallen giant Hrungrnir and none of the other deities could move the body, three-year-old Magni lifted it off and then said that if he had gotten there earlier, he would have struck the etin into Hel with his fist.

According to *Völuspá*, Magni and Móði will inherit Thonar's Hammer after Ragnarök.

Víðarr and Váli

Both of these sons of Wodan were fathered by him on etin-women (see "Skaði, Gerðr, and other Etin-Brides") for the purpose of the acts of revenge which will work towards bringing about the rebirth of Wodan and Balder after Ragnarök.

Víðarr, the son of Gríðr, is called "the silent god"; his name may mean "the wide-ruling one". According to *Grímnismál* 17, "Bushes grow, and high grass, in Víðarr's land, the Wide; yet there the kinsman shall leap from the steed's back, bold, to avenge his father". Two Norwegian place-names, "Virsu" (from "Víðarshof") and "Viskjøl" (from "Víðarskjálf" - Víðarr's Crag) may suggest that this god did have his own cult, but if so, it was not widely spread, and may not have been very old. Today, he is often seen as the silent warder of empty plains and uncut woods.

Váli is the son of Wodan and the etin-maid Rindr, who, when only one day old, avenges Balder. *Völuspá* says that he did not wash his hands nor comb his hair until Baldr's slayer was borne to the funeral pyre. This sort of oath was not uncommon for Northern heroes; it is similar to Haraldr inn hárfagri's vow that he would not cut nor comb his hair until he had brought all Norway under his rule, and also very like the oath of Tacitus' young Chatti warriors not to cut their hair until they had slain a foe. A place-name which may be derived from "Váli's Skjálf" also exists in Norway. "Váli" was also used as a man's name; a character in *Landnámabók* is called Váli hinn sterki (Váli the strong).

Vafþrúðnismál 51 tells us that "Víðarr and Váli shall dwell in the gods' wih-stead when Surtr's fire is slaked".

Contributors

- Eric Wodening, "Forseti" (previously unpublished).

Chapter XVI

Nerthus and Njörðr

Nerthus and Njörðr are, so far as we know, the first and eldest of the Wans. The meaning of their name is uncertain; de Vries suggests that it might be related to "strength", "the underworld/the North", or possibly a verb meaning "to dance", hinting at holy/ecstatic dancing as part of the Wanic cult (*Wörterbuch*, p. 411). They are the same deity; the difference in their names is only that of the linguistic shift from Proto-Germanic *Nerthuz to Old Norse Njörðr. However, when Tacitus wrote of Nerthus in 98 C.E., he called her "Mother Earth", while all our Old Norse sources tell us that Njörðr is a manly god. Their first being may well have been as an hermaphrodite, or else as a deity that could be either manly or womanly at will. However, it is likely that, if this were so, they soon became a male-female pair of twins. The wooden male and female gods of bridges and marshy places from the Celtic and Roman Iron Ages have already been spoken of in that historical chapter. Such pairs have often been likened to Fro Ing and the Frowe, but their watery and boggy steeds suggest, rather, that they may have been images of Njörðr and Nerthus.

This earthy/watery character is the very root of the Wanic might. As shall be spoken of, Fro Ing and the Frowe have, respectively, much of air and of fire in their beings as well; as we see in the tales left to us, they are more active than their parents. To Nerthus and Njörðr belong the hidden realms below the earth and the waves - the darkness from which seeds and fish spring up, and into which the dead sink. The Wans are very often called the "wise Wans" in Eddic poetry, and said to have fore-sight. One reason for this may be that their realm is that of the gravemound's earth - the silent hall in which the ur-old seeresses dwell, in which all that is and is becoming is kept and may be known. The same realm is also the waters deep in the Well of Wyrd: the Well and the howe, the water and the earth, are two forms of the same might which hides and feeds the roots of the World-Tree in darkness. That which sinks into this realm is, in the turning of time, brought forth ever stronger; gifts which sink into the waters of the lake or mud of the bog are known to have been taken by the god/esses, so that they will bless the giver. This is how it was done at the great hof of Old Uppsala: sacrifices were put into the well that stood before the hof's great evergreen, and those that sank were known to have been accepted and showed that the prayers given with them would be answered.

In the Viking Age, only Njörðr was known by name; but the ever-informative Loki tells us that he had gotten Freyr and Freyja on his own sister (*Lokasenna* 36). Snorri also mentions in *Ynglinga saga* that brother-sister marriages were common among the Wans, but not allowed among the Ases. Whether he knew more about this belief, or was simply extrapolating from the references in *Lokasenna* to the mating of not only Njörðr and his sister, but Freyr and Freyja, we cannot know. Njörðr's sister is never named in any of the sources, and there are no other references to her. The reason for that may be that only one name was known for the two of them, and the changes in speech which transformed *Nerthuz into Njörðr may also have rendered the name more distinctively manly, so that the goddess was forgotten and the god remembered.

About Nerthus, Tacitus tells us that she was worshipped by the tribes of Northern Germany and Southern Jutland, whom in an earlier chapter of *Germania* he identifies as the "Ingvaeones". His description of her cult is very close to that of the *Gunnars þáttur helmings* description of the cult of Freyr (written at least 1200 years later). "In an island of the ocean there is a sacred grove and in it a carriage dedicated (to the goddess), covered with a vestment; only one priest is allowed to touch it. He feels the goddess' presence in her shrine, and follows with great veneration as she rides forth drawn by cows. Then come festive times for those whom she dignifies with her hospitality. They do not make war, they do not take up arms; all iron is put away; then, and only then, peace and quiet are known and loved, until she is satiated with the company of humans and the same priest returns the goddess to her sacred precinct. After this, the carriage and the vestment and, if you wish to believe it, the goddess herself, are washed in a secret lake. Slaves do this ministry and are then swallowed by the same lake: hence a mysterious terror and an ignorance full of reverence as to what that may be which men see only to die" (*Germania*, ch. 40). The tall wooden goddess from Forlæv Nymølle (discussed in "Celtic and Roman Iron Ages"), laid in a cairn of stones with pots around her, may have been just such an image of Nerthus, resting in her hidden dwelling place as she waited for her next procession.

As well as the holy wain, the ship-procession may also have been part of the Wanic cult. Tacitus claims that the Suebi had somehow managed to adopt the foreign cult of Isis, of which the emblem was a ship; but it seems more likely that he was imposing what he knew from his own culture onto a native Germanic religious practise. Grimm cites a German account from the year 1133 of how "a ship was built, set upon wheels, and drawn about the country by men who were yoked to it, first to Aachen, then to Masetricht, where mast and sail were added, and up the river to Tongres, Looz, and so on, everywhere with crowds of people assembling and escorting it. Where-ever it halted, there were joyful shouts, songs of triumph and dancing round the ship kept up till far into the night. The approach of the ship was notified to the towns, which opened their gates and went out to meet it" (*Teutonic Mythology* I, pp. 258-59). The clerical author also comments on "malignant spirits" travelling within it and the generally heathen and sinful character of the event. Grimm connects this with the procession of Nerthus, adding that one of the most significant elements of the account is "that (the ship-procession) was

so utterly repugnant to the clergy, and that they tried in every way to suppress it...On the other hand, the secular power had authorized the procession, and was protecting it; it rested with the several townships, whether to grant admission to the approaching ship, and the popular feeling seems to have ruled that it would be shabby *not to forward it on its way*" (I, p. 262). The Oseberg ship, highly decorated as it was, and unsuitable by construction for any waters but the relatively shallow and calm bays and fjords, may also have been a ritual ship designed to make the procession by water, as the wain did on land. It is possible that memories of such a procession could also have been kept alive in Snorri's description of how Freyr's ship *Skíðblaðnir* could travel over both land and water; Simek comments that "The name *Skíðblaðnir*, which means 'assembled from pieces of thin wood', would fit well for a cult ship which was only built for the duration of festivities" (*Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, p. 289).

Tacitus also tells us that the amber-gathering Germans on the eastern coast of the Baltic worshipped "the mother of the gods", whose emblem was the figure of the wild boar, which was worn by her folk. This boar "takes the place of arms and of human protection, and secures the follower of the goddess a mind at rest even among enemies" (ch. 45). This same belief appears in *Beowulf*, where the boar-crest on the helm wards the warrior who wears it. The boar is holy to Fro Ing and the Frowe; this reference suggests that it is also holy to Nerthus.

As the early earth- and bog-goddess, Nerthus must, like her daughter, have owned a mighty necklace or girdle. The word *njarðgörð*, "girdle of strength", appears in Old Norse and may well be related to her name; though it is Þórr who is said to wear it in the skaldic poem "*Þórsdrapa*", it is likely that Nerthus has such a girdle of her own. It is pleasing to think of her necklace and girdle as being, like the Stone Age bog-gifts, great strands of raw amber.

While Nerthus is mostly a goddess of earth, Njörðr himself seems to be a god of water, particularly the ocean. He is the god of ships, seamen and fishers. His home is called *Nóatún* - "enclosure of ships", or "harbour". In the tale of his unsuccessful marriage to *Skaði* (see "*Skaði*"), his home is by the waves and loud with the sound of seagulls. This tale also tells us of how *Skaði* chose him by the beauty of his feet; interestingly, the bare footprint is one of the signs which often appears on the Bronze Age rock carvings, most of which were set up by the coast. It may well have been an emblem of the god from early times, perhaps as a sign of his fruitfulness, as the wedding-association suggests.

Today, Njörðr is also the god of water-sports. Frolicking at beaches, rivers, lakes, or swimming pools, going out on surfboards or water-skis, and so forth, are wholly fitting ways to celebrate this deity on holy days.

Like his son Freyr, and often together with him, Njörðr held a very high place as a god of ritual and holiness. In *Ynglinga saga*, Snorri says that the two of them were set as *blótgoðar* (blessing-godmen) among the gods, and that they were *díar* among the Ases. The exact meaning of *díar* is not sure, but Turville-Petre suggests that, as Snorri uses it, it "probably implies priests of a particularly exalted kind" (*Myth and Religion*, p. 163). The Icelandic oath-taking formula recorded in *Landnámabók* (*Hauksbók* ch. 270) was "so help me Freyr and Njörðr and the all-mighty Ase (probably either Óðinn or Þórr, though Ullr has also been suggested - KHG)"; at holy feasts, according to Snorri (*Hákons saga ins goða*, *Heimskringla*) a special toast was drunk to Freyr and Njörðr (see "*Symbel*"). Turville-Petre also cites Egill Skalla-Grímsson's curse against Eiríkr Blood-Axe, where the runester called on Freyr and Njörðr together, and Egill's later statement that Freyr and Njörðr had blessed Arinbjörn with riches (*Myth and Religion*, p. 162).

In *Vafþrúðnismál* 38, Óðinn mentions that Njörðr has countless hofs and harrows, though he was not born among the Ases; and in *Grímnismál* it is told that Njörðr rules a high-timbered harrow in *Nóatún*. Place-name evidence supports this as well; there are quite a few of the "Njörðr's vé" type; also "Njörðr's grove", "Njörðr's hof", "Njörðr's bay", and "Njörðr's island" (*Myth and Religion*, p. 163).

Unlike Freyr, Njörðr does not fight in the last battle; *Vafþrúðnismál* 39 tells us that at Ragnarök, Njörðr "shall come home among the wise Wans again".

Colours associated with Nerthus and Njörðr in modern times are brown (Nerthus), deep blue (Njörðr), black (both), and deep green (both).

Njörðr's holy bird, and perhaps Nerthus' as well, is likely to be the seagull. Nerthus' holy beasts are the boar (as mentioned above) and cattle; Tacitus mentions that her chariot is drawn by oxen. As the most nurturing of beasts, the cow is clearly fitting to her. It is also possible that there might be some tie between the Wanic god/desses and the ur-cow *Audhumbla*, whose doings after Ymir's death are never spoken of.

There are no animals associated with Njörðr in traditional sources. However, it may be thought that those mammals which can live both in sea and on land, such as seals and walruses, are the most fitting to him.

Jet is the stone which is thought of as Nerthus' gem, green malachite is Njörðr's. Amber, the gift of both sea and earth, goes well with both of them.

As spoken of above, the bare footprint is Njörðr's sign. There is no traditional sign of Nerthus, though the girdle or twisted circle of rope might be thought fitting to her.

Chapter XVII

Fro Ing (Freyr, Engus, *Fraujaz Ingwaz)

Freyr's competence (à la Nadel) was in the areas of fertility, peace, prosperity, sex, sacred kingship, battle and death. All of which areas are connected with the greater cycle of life: even prosperity, which is the result of a high fertility. The name Freyr (Anglo-Saxon Frea, Old High German Fro) is a title, meaning "lord" in the sense of the peacetime/judicial function of rulership: the Norse references to him as Yngvifreyr or Ingunar-Freyr have led to the conclusion that he is the same god as the Anglo-Saxon Ing/Gothic Engus, and thus many Troth folk who prefer to use Anglo-Saxon or general Germanic forms call him Ing.

Freyr was known throughout the Germanic world, but different areas tended to focus on different deities as paramount. The area in which Freyr was most important was Sweden, specifically the southeastern part.

The first evidence of worship of Freyr or a like deity comes from the Bronze Age: the rock-carvings from Östergötland, which show a phallic man with a sword and a boar. All the examples of this sort "are from Östergötland, and this restricted distribution corresponds in part to the distribution of place names containing the name Freyr. (de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, vol. ii, p. 201). They are commonest just to the north of Lake Mälaren, and consequently overlap with the Uppland group of engravings, among which the role and importance of the sword cannot yet be assessed; but they are fairly common as far south as Östergötland, after which they are distinctly rare in the south and west of Sweden" (Gelling and Ellis-Davidson, *The Chariot of the Sun and other Rites and Symbols of the Bronze Age*).

There are several finds of what may be images associated with Freyr. The best known of these is the small silver figurine from Södermanland (Viking Age), where the god sits with chin on hand and a substantial erection. This was probably carried in a belt-pouch, like the silver image of Freyr that Ingimundr the Old was said to carry with him in *Vatnsdæla saga*. From the Celtic and Roman Iron Ages, there are also the phallic wooden figures found in the bogs of Denmark, which, if they do not represent this god himself, showed a deity of very similar character.

The christian historian Adam of Bremen, writing just before A.D. 1200, describes the high temple at Uppsala thus:

"in this temple, richly ornamented with gold, the people worship the images of three gods. Thor, the mightiest of the three, stands in the centre of the church, with Wodan and Fricco on his right and left. Thor, they say, holds the dominion of the air. He rules over the thunder and lightning, winds and rain, clear weather and fertility. The second deity, Wodan, that is to say, 'Rage', wages war and gives man courage to meet his foe. The third is Fricco. He gives to mortals peace and enlightenment, his image having a much exaggerated penis. All their gods are provided with priests, who offer the sacrifices of the people. When plague or famine threatens, sacrifice is offered to Thor; when war is imminent, to Wodan; when a wedding is to be celebrated, to Fricco"

(*Lost Gods of England*, p. 114).

Branston then mentions that Fricco is the same as Frey(r), a generally accepted interpretation. The name, however, cannot be derived from "Freyr"; it is a common Old High German man's name, which may originally have been a manly derivation from the Proto-Germanic *Frijjo - Frija. Since Adam translated Óðinn by the German name Wodan, he may have substituted a more German-sounding name for Freyr as well.

Saxo Grammaticus, writing not long after Adam of Bremen, knew that Freyr was particularly associated with Sweden and with the kings of Sweden at Uppsala, as well as having a special religious role there. He describes Freyr as being the "satrap" of the gods, and introducing human sacrifice at Uppsala. Earlier, he mentions how the king Hadding had established the yearly feast which the Swedes called Freyr's-blót, when "swarthy" victims were given to the god. Freyr has the particular title "blótuð svía", "blessing-god of the Swedes", and *Gunnars þáttur helmings* shows the Swedish procession of Freyr's image in graphic detail; *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* also mentions that the Swedes called Freyr *veraldar guð*, "god of the world" (*Flateyjarbók* I, p. 402).

The following of Freyr also appeared often among the Icelanders. For example, *Gísla saga* tells how Þórgrímr is said still to be in the howe, and "he was so dear to Freyr on account of his sacrifices to Freyr that Freyr would have no frost between them" - that is, the barrow-mound stayed green even in the snow. *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða* recounts the story of a man who was specifically given to Freyr and shared all his best possessions with the god he loved, especially the horse Freyfaxi.

The most specific Freyr-beast is the boar, which is one of the fertile early farm animals. Here we see a clear tie between Freyr and fruitfulness, which is mirrored in Freyja's *heiti* Sýr, "sow". At the funeral of Baldr, it is told how, "Battle-

wise Freyr rides first on his gold-bristled boar to the hill (pyre) of Óðinn's son, and leads the hosts" (Úlfr Uggason, "Húsdrápa" 7). Snorri also tells us that one of the gifts forged by the dwarves at Loki's behest was Freyr's boar Gullinbursti (Gold-Bristled) or Slíðrugtanni (Cutting-Tusked), which could "run over air and water, night and day, better than any horse, and it would never be so dark at night or in mirk-worlds, that it would not be bright enough where he fared, his bristles gave off such light". *Vatnsdæla saga* gives us a tale of holy swine as showing the will of Freyr: Ingimundr the Old (who carried the Freyr-image with him), lost some of his swine and did not find them again until a boar named Beigath was with them. Ingimundr and his people drove the swine to the lake now called Swine Lake, where they meant to pen them, "but the boar jumped into the lake and swam across it, but became so tired that his cloven feet came off him. He got to the shore at Beigatharhívól and died there. Now Ingimundr felt happy in Vatnsdale." This was clearly a sign of the same sort as that given to Þórólfr Mosturskeggi in *Eyrbyggja saga* when he trusted the pillars carved with the image of Þórr to guide him to the place the god meant him to live: the finding of the swine and the boar's strength and endurance showed the blessing of Freyr and Freyja (*The Chariot of the Sun*, p. 54). Similar stories are told about the swine-herds of Steinólfr the Short and Helgi the Lean, who put a boar and a sow aboard at a certain cliff, and came back three years later to find that the herd had grown to seventy.

The boar was also a beast of battle, and it is probably as such that Freyr rides it as leader of the hosts: *Beowulf* speaks of the boar-crested helms of the warriors, and such helms were actually found in the Migration Age Anglo-Saxon burials of Sutton Hoo and Bentley Grange. "Hildisvín" (Battle-swine) and "Hildigöltr" (Battle-boar) were names for helmets; Freyja's boar was also called "Hildisvín". *Jöfurr*, "boar", was an Old Norse "glory-name" for warriors and princes; the boar was clearly one of the noblest of beasts as well as one of the most warlike.

Lastly, the boar was a holy animal. The Yule-oaths were sworn on the best boar of the herd, which was then given to Freyr and/or Freyja (according to *Heiðreks saga*) as the Midwinter sacrifice. Here we see Freyr (and Freyja as well, since the two cannot be parted) as the one whose might brings the world of humans together with the worlds of the god/esses and ghosts. Images of a man with a boar are found on some Migration Age bracteates, and these may be connected with the cult of Freyr.

Freyr also appears to have been connected with horses. He was the owner of a horse called "Blóðughófi", "Bloody-Hooved". Sometimes this has been read as suggesting an injury to the horse's leg, such as that which formed the model for the Zweite Merseburger Zauberspruch (see "Balder"); it is also possible that the name describes Freyr's riding forth in battle, as his own *heiti* Atriði suggests. The saga of Hrafnkell Freysgoði tells how Hrafnkell dedicated a horse (Freyfaxi) to Freyr, which only he and Freyr were allowed to ride. Such horses seem similar to the holy horses described by Tacitus in *Germania* ch. 10: the "white horses, never soiled by human use" who are "yoked to a sacred chariot and accompanied by priest or king or other head of state, who observe their neighing or snorting. No other divination has greater faith placed in it, not only by the ordinary people but by the kings and priests; they are the servants of the gods, but the horses their confidants". Another horse named Freyfaxi appears in the *Vatnsdæla saga*, where the sons of Ingimundr, worshippers of Freyr, attended a horse-fight. To EllisDavidson, it seems likely that horse-fights were associated with the cult of Freyr. (Ellis-Davidson, 1964:98). In *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar (Flateyjarbók)*, it is told how the christian king carried out his attack on a Trondheim hof by riding the stallion of a herd that was dedicated to Freyr.

The *Völsa þátr* of St. Óláfr's saga (*Flateyjarbók*) tells of a family which had a preserved horse-phallus as a holy item; this has also been associated with Freyr, for obvious reasons. The phallus, from a horse killed at the autumn slaughtering, was taken by the farm-wife, who preserved it with linen and leeks and enchanted it so that it grew great and stood by itself. It was given the name Völsi, and at the evening feasts, it was passed about from person to person with the repeated refrain, "May the Mörnir take this blessing!" "Mörnir" seems to mean "etin-women"; the singular is used twice for Njörör's wife Skaði in Þjóðólfr ór Hvíni's *Haustlög*, implying the sacrifice of manly fruitfulness to the darker womanly powers, as is in fact hinted at both in the wooing of Gerör and the account of Skaði's wedding (see "Skaði and Gerör"). Because of Freyr's own surrender of sword and horse to bring about his wedding, the rune Ingwaz has often been interpreted as the sacrifice of manhood, and its shape as showing the castrated male. However, no matter how often Freyr gives his might of fruitfulness to his bride, more power always springs forth from him; it is more likely that the shape of Ingwaz shows the manly seed-sack, often emptied and often refilled with the god's strength.

After Freyr gave away his sword for the sake of winning Gerör (see below), he had to fight with a stag's antler at Ragnarök. The stag is thus thought of as one of Freyr's beasts. Like the boar and the stallion, it is among the most male of animals. It also suggests a special closeness between Freyr and the powers of the wild, though usually when he is spoken of in Norse sources, it is because of his social and agricultural functions. However, in modern times, Freyr is often seen as being a god of the wood and its beasts. Freyr's use of the stag's antler has also been seen by some as suggesting that he may be something of a Norse equivalent of the Celtic Cernunnos (Horned One), whom the Anglo-Saxons knew as Herne the Hunter. Though all the Wans are particularly associated with ecology and the responsible relationship between humans and the natural world, as the warder of the woodland's frith and well-being, Freyr would most especially be a god of the ecology.

According to *Lokasenna*, Freyr has two servants, a married couple named Beyla (perhaps "bee" or "cow", "cow-keeper" - difficult etymology) and Byggvir ("barley"). The latter may perhaps bear some relationship to the British "John Barleycorn"; his connection with Freyr is clear. If Beyla does indeed mean "bee", the two of them could be read as the

givers of the basic materials for brewing - grain for ale, honey for mead.

In the natural world, Freyr is the giver of sunlight, fair winds and light rain and all that is needed for the crops to grow. His might is known in the bright and warm weather of a good harvest-time; as lord of the Light Elves, he is especially associated with the air as well as the earth.

Ships were also affiliated with Freyr. He had the magical ship *Skíðblaðnir* ("assembled from pieces of thin wood" - see "Njörðr/Nerthus"), made for him by the same dwarves who crafted Óðinn's spear and Sif's gold hair. This ship could be folded up and carried in his pocket, or be put down and grow to be large enough to hold all the gods and goddesses. It has a favorable breeze whenever it is used, and can sail over land as well as sea. As spoken of earlier ("The Bronze Age") the ship is the symbol of death and rebirth; both of which functions are clearly in Freyr's domain. Death and rebirth are often seen as a journey, into the unknown; and before modern charts and navigation, sea travel, or at least ocean travel, must have seemed that way at times. *Ynglinga saga*, however attributes the ship to Óðinn, which is interesting, considering that both the Prose Edda and *Ynglinga saga* were written by Snorri Sturluson. However, Snorri was not always consistent between these two works; it is possible that he knew two different traditions, one of Óðinn as the ferryman between the worlds (see "Wodan") and one of Freyr as ship-god and/or death-god. The ship is also a sign of fruitfulness, and the Wanic processions were carried out both in a ship and in a wain.

The so-called Peace of Fróði (mentioned in Saxo), a sort of Norse Golden Age when frith (fruitful peace) ruled throughout the Northlands, was attributed to Freyr by the Swedes. Both Turville-Petre (*Myth and Religion*, pp. 160-170) and de Vries (*Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* II 182-86) also identify this King Fróði with Freyr. Here we see Freyr as the frith-god, the keeper of the peace, and as the image of the best of all possible rulers. This frith was also a great part of his holy places, where weapons and outlaws could not be brought nor blood shed. *Víga-Glúms saga* shows Freyr as being particularly angered by the Óðinnic Glúmr, who did all these things in Freyr's holy places (Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion*, pp. 69-70). Freyr's might is, as seen with the oath-boar, that of bringing the worlds together in frith and making sure that all goes rightly: from this work of his stem holiness, wisdom, and earthly fruitfulness.

Freyr does not scorn fighting: he is called "leader of the host of the gods" (*Skirnismál* 3), and not only did he slay his brother-in-law, the etin Beli, but Snorri mentions that he could have killed the giant with a single blow of his fist (a reference which has led some modern Ásatrúar to think that Freyr might be called on as a particular patron of martial artists). However, his battles seem to be, like Þórr's, against the foes of the gods - most especially against Surtr, the greatest force of destruction at Ragnarök. To humans, Fro Ing is more often a giver of frith. Even in war, the use of the boar-helms can be contrasted with that of Wodan's spear: the spear-hallowing acts as a curse to slay the foe, the boar-image hallows and wards the one it crowns, so that he comes safe and whole from the battle. Eric Wodening adds that rather than being a god who loves peace so much he is unwilling to fight, Freya is a god who loves peace so much he is willing to fight to keep it; thus Freya is in many ways the divine equivalent of a policeman or "peace officer". Evidence of this function of Freya can be found in the fact that the Anglo-Saxons called the bands of men charged with enforcing the law in Dark Ages England "frithgilds". A policeman not only enforces the law, but protects his charges as well, and Freya does this too.

Bede tells us that the Anglo-Saxon high priest was not allowed to carry weapons, or ride any horse other than a mare; and when Coifi turned against the god/esses of his folk, he desecrated the hof by riding up to it on a stallion and casting a spear into it. Similarities have often been seen between these rules and Freyr's giving away his own horse and sword to win Gerðr; the frithgarth is also typical of the Wanic cult, so it may be that Coifi was first a priest of Ing.

Mention has already been made of one type of Fröblót, or sacrifice to Freyr, and that is of swine. Oxen were also sacrificed to Freyr, as in *Víga-Glúms saga* in which Þórkell brought an ox to Freyr's holy place with the request that Glúmr, who had driven him from his land, should in turn be driven out. The ox bellowed and dropped down dead, showing that Freyr had taken the gift and would fulfill Þórkell's request.

Sacrifices to Freyr took place at certain times more often than others. One time which they were done was on midsummer's night, when weddings were performed: "sacrifices to Frey among the Swedes took place at the same time as marriages. (Adam of Bremen, IV:27.) Doubtless on such occasions swine were sacrificed. They were the most prolific of domestic animals and therefore a most fitting sacrifice, on such occasions dedicated to Frey and Freyja. Again, we may satisfactorily explain why weddings were set on the "winter nights": That was the time to perform the sacrifice to Frey" (Barthi Guthmundsson, *Origins of the Icelanders*, p. 57).

Another practice associated with Freyr is the procession of his idol in a chariot through the fields. In the *Flateyjarbók*, part of the saga of King Olaf Tryggvason, is preserved the tale of Gunnarr helming. In the tale it is told that the statue of Freyr is taken around to bless the fields during autumn, accompanied by his "wife", a priestess. Gunnarr wrestles with the wooden image of Freyr, overcoming the god and taking his place. The Swedes were delighted at the god's lively eating and drinking, more delighted when the god's wife became pregnant, as that was the best of signs. This tale was clearly meant by the christian tellers to poke fun at the gullible Heathen Swedes, but it is just as clearly based on real memories of Freyr's procession - and perhaps also hints at the possibility that a human man could have housed the god's might for a little while in the holiest rituals. The Anglo-Saxon Rune Poem also tells us that "Ing was first seen by men among the East Danes, till he, after that, went over the sea again: his wain ran after him - thus the warriors named the hero." As spoken of further in "Njörðr/Nerthus", this procession may be the most typical characteristic of the Wanic cult.

Burial in a howe without burning is associated very strongly with Freyr. (Ellis, *Road to Hel*, p. 78). Euhemerizing Freyr to a mortal king in *Ynglinga saga*, Snorri tells us that when he was buried in that manner, others copied his example: "But after Freyr had been laid in a howe at Uppsala, many chiefs raised howes as often as memorial stones in memory of their kinsmen", and later mentions that "Freyr [was] buried secretly in a howe, and it was said to the Swedes that he lived", and the Swedes kept paying taxes to him, which they poured into holes in the mound.

The cult of the howe was deeply important to the Scandinavians, for it was from the burial mounds of his forefathers that a king got his authority. Together with Óðinn, Freyr was the great kingly deity of the North: he was both ancestor-god, fathering the Yngling royal line of Sweden, and mound-god. Together with Óðinn again (and in contrast to Þórr, who hardly ever received this backhanded distinction), Freyr was the god most often euhemerized as a king. One of the great royal treasures of the Swedes was an armring called *Sviagrís*, "Piglet of the Swedes", and this ring was probably the sign of Freyr's might passed down through the kingly line.

We know only one major myth of Freyr - that recounted in the Eddic poem *Skirnismál*. Freyr had seen the etin-maid Gerðr (Snorri adds that this happened when Freyr was sitting on Óðinn's seat Hliðskjálf) and fallen in love with her, retiring from the company of the other gods in his sorrows. Skaði sends Freyr's manservant Skírnir to find out what is wrong; Freyr then sends Skírnir to woo Gerðr, but must give the messenger his horse and his sword so that Skírnir will be able to get past the trolls on the way and ride through the ring of fire surrounding Gerðr. Gerðr is reluctant at first, but when threatened with enchantment, yields and says that she will be wedded to Freyr. It is likely of pre-Christian origin, as stated by Hollander. But as for whether or not Skírnir is an hypostasis of Freyr, as has been suggested many times, one can only guess. The name, Skírnir means "radiance," which is a title of Freyr; but nowhere else is it suggested that he and Freyr are the same. In fact, in *Lokasenna* 42, Loki tells how Freyr will be without his weapon at Ragnarök, because he gave it to Skírnir for his journey to seek out and obtain Gerðr in marriage for Freyr. Many have analyzed this story as an example of *Hieros Gamos*, of the marriage of heaven and earth for the fertility of the crops. Freyr, who is a solar deity, represents heaven; and Gerðr, who is a giantess, the earth. The shining hero's journey through a dark otherworld to win the maiden surrounded by flames appears elsewhere in the Eddas, notably in *Svipdagsmál* and *Sigrdrífumál* (where the maiden in question is an ex-valkyrie). This seems to be the typical model of the "Spring Drama": the woman may embody the powers of the sleeping earth, the man the sunlight that awakes and makes her fruitful. Although the Sun herself is a goddess, the might of her radiance is sometimes personified as a male, particularly with Freyr, who seems to be descended from the phallic sun-god of the Bronze Age rock carvings, if he was not actually that god.

Certain geographic features are associated with Freyr. That a hill formation would be so is not surprising, considering Freyr's association with hill burial: "For the Frey worshipper Ingimund the Old it was, to be sure, no new thing that hillock or an elevation overgrown with woods was to be his homestead. Such spots our heathen forbearers called a *holt* (stony hill.) Frey had decided that Ingimund was to live by a *holt*, and so he does. In fact, he twice chooses a place of residence by a *holt* before finding the image of Frey in the hill, as is indicated by the names Ingimundarholt and Þórdísarholt. Ingimund worships holy trees, as did the people by the Baltic, and like the skalds Þórir snepil and Helgi Ásbjarnarson" (Guthmondson and Hollander, 1969:79).

We know that Freyja is very much a goddess of magic, and it would be surprising if her brother, as well as being king, hallower, warrior, and bringer of fruitfulness, did not also have his own magical secrets. What has survived, however, is hints which, again, must be woven together, and there are true folk working to do this today. From his own understanding of Freyr, William Conrad Karpen writes of an aspect of the god that is less often considered: the possible shamanic practices of Freyr's priests in the old days.

If you have seen anything written about Freyr, he was probably described as a fertility god. Well, yes, he is responsible for good harvests. Yes, he is responsible for the well-being of the land. Yes, he is usually depicted as ithyphallic (ithy = bone, phallus = penis; you figure it out). Does this make him a fertility god? If you ask me, to describe Freyr as a fertility god misses the point. The mysteries of Freyr as I have experienced them have to do with the process which transforms Desire into Pleasure into Plenty into Desire. But Desire lives only in the moment, it does not care about the Consequences. Desire does not manifest in order to bring Plenty or to procreate the species or anything else. Desire manifests itself only for the Pleasure of the moment. Freyr is a God of Ecstasy.

Freyr is not the only god of ecstasy, of course. There are others like Dionysos, Shiva, Oberon, Herne, and Cernunnos, and it is perhaps more than coincidental that they are all associated with wild animals, especially horned ones, with death and the spirits of the dead, with sexual pleasure, and quite often with sexual ambiguity. Freyr is associated with the stag, the wild boar, and the horse. Freyr rules over Álfheim (Elf-Home), the realm of the mighty ancestors, and is associated with burial mounds (Davidson, *Gods and Myths*, p. 100). In fact, the Vanir...are often referred to as álfar (elves). He is usually depicted with a rather large, erect penis, and his priesthood at Uppsala, Sweden, appears to have cross-dressed.

In connection with these links between ecstatic gods, shamanism, and transvestite priesthoods, it is perhaps not going too far astray to mention Timothy Taylor's theory that the Gundestrup Cauldron was forged by a group of transvestite

silversmiths from Transylvania:

The beardless ("Cernunnos") figure may, for example, be a ritual specialist. Indeed, he may belong to the same group, guild, or caste as the five silversmiths (who made the Cauldron), for metalsmithing was an important ritual occupation...They might ...have resembled the Enarees of Scythia...Biologically male but dressed as women, the Enarees interpreted omens and settled disputes for the Scythian aristocracy. Such specialists are attested across Eurasia in the Iron Age, not just the shamans of Scythia and the yogis of India, but the seers of Thrace, the druids of Gaul, and a few centuries later, the bards of Ireland. In Ireland the biologically male bard who praised the king in song was described as female, in opposition to the ruler's maleness" (p.88).

Taylor goes on to suggest that the "Cernunnos" figure on the Cauldron is of ambiguous gender, having neither beard nor breasts. The figure does, however, wear a pair of antlers. Taylor, in the course of demonstrating a cultural continuity with certain Hindi traditions, also notes that the figure's position is similar "to one still practised in rural India by low-caste sorcerers...Moreover, the posture is intended to channel sexual energy" (p.89). He goes on to link the figure's attributes - ambiguous gender and connection to animals - to the shamanic rapport with the female, the male, and the animal realms.

Freyr was also associated with sexual ambiguity. Saxo Grammaticus' hero Starkaðr fled Freyr's temple at Uppsala because of the "effeminate gestures", the "unmanly clatter of bells", and the "clapping of mimes upon the stage" (Saxo, VI, 185, p. 228). Tacitus describes a similar phenomenon among the Naharvali, a Germanic tribe:

The Naharvali proudly point out a grove associated with an ancient worship. The presiding priest *dresses like a woman*; but the deities are said to be the counterpart of Castor and Pollux. This indicates their character, but their name is the Alci. There are no images, and nothing to suggest that the cult is of foreign origin; but they are certainly worshipped as young men and as brothers.
(Tacitus, p. 137; emphasis mine)

The phrase that Mattingly translates as "dresses like a woman" is *muliebris ornatus*, which Davidson translates as "decked out like women" (p. 169). In relation to these twin gods, Davidson mentions several pairs of brother kings, one of which is Alf ("elf" - Freyr is the ruler of Alfheim or Elf-home) and Ingvi (one of the names of Freyr). She goes on to say that the Alcis "have been sought among the Vanir, and it has been suggested that Njord and Freyr are their descendants, or Freyr and Ull" (p. 170). According to the "Lokasenna", Njörð is Freyr's father rather than brother, but it is also perhaps significant that Njörð and Freyr were almost always toasted together. While not much can be conclusively stated about these cults, cross-dressed priesthoods were in any case not unknown among the Germanic tribes, and it appears that at least one of them was devoted to Freyr (in *Anglo-Saxon Paganism*, pp. 96-97, David Wilson also cites Grave 9 from Portway, in which a distinctively male skeleton was found buried in women's clothing with female grave-goods, and suggests a relationship between this find and the priests of the Narhvali - KHG).

It should be noted that in Old Norse, the words *ergi*, *argr*, and *ragr* all referred both to receptive homosexual intercourse and to the practise of *seiðr*..Folke Ström points out:

Both the law texts and the instances in the sagas seem to show that the component in the *ergi* complex which can be considered sexually obscene has exclusively to do with the female role in a homosexual act. In *seiðr* - the element in the *ergi* complex related to sorcery and magic - we find an analogous connexion with the fulfillment of a role that was regarded as specifically female. Thus we may conclude that it is the performance by an individual man of a role normally belonging to the female sex which constitutes perversity in his action and causes it to be branded as *ergi*; and this applies whether we have to do with a sexual relationship or with the carrying out of a magical function.
(pp. 9-10)

Thomas K. Johnson has suggested that *argr* may be translated as 'eager for penetration', referring to sexual penetration in both women and men (when Loki calls Freyja a slut, he refers to her as *argr*) as well as to penetration by the gods, i.e., possession. This connection between passive homosexuality and certain spiritual practices is reminiscent of the berdache role in some American Indian tribes as well as the Siberian Shamans and the Scythian Enarees mentioned earlier in connection with the Gundestrup Cauldron.

Going back to Saxo's description of the priesthood of Freyr at Uppsala, there is an interesting parallel to the English folk-plays which have survived to the present. All of the characters, male and female, are played by men, and these plays, including the mummers' plays, the wooing ceremony, the sword plays, and the plough plays, have remained more staunchly all-male than other British folk traditions (Brody, p.21). Brody links this phenomenon to the response of an old English mummer when asked if women ever take part in the plays: "'No, sir,' he replied, mumming don't be for the likes of

them. There be plenty else for them that be flirty-like, but this here mumming be more like parson's work" (p. 21). In fact, he states that the original purpose of these folk-plays, not entirely lost on their twentieth-century performers, is essentially of a magical nature: "As we look at the separate elements one by one, we shall begin to see them informing each other until the concept of magic as an essential, underlying purpose becomes inescapable" (p. 20). It seems quite likely that these plays are survivals of ancient pagan rituals.

English folk-plays are most often performed between Christmas and New Year's, although sometimes at Easter or in the fall. Freyr's main sacrifice occurred at the winter solstice, and so this time of year would have been associated with his worship among the Scandinavians. Brody notes that the Wooing Ceremony, which is the most complete form, occurs only in four East-Midland counties - Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, and Rutland (p. 99). It seems more than coincidental that one of the strongest Scandinavian settlements in England was in the boroughs of Lincoln, Leicester, Nottingham, Derby, and Stamford (Jones, p. 421). Rutland, by the way, is quite tiny and is bordered on three sides by Lincolnshire and Leicestershire, and Derby and Stamford are inland and were more sparsely settled by the Scandinavians. The word "mummer" has been related to the Danish *momme*, or "mask", an etymology reinforced by the use of the term "guizer" in some parts of England to describe the mummers, which is derived from "disguiser" (Brody, p. 4; Chambers, p. 4). Further, the sword dance performed predominantly in the northeastern counties is thought to have originated in the folk-dances of the Danish settlers and resembles dances still performed in many parts of Germany (Spicer, p. 7). While the historical origins of these plays have been lost to us, it seems likely that they are related to certain Scandinavian traditions, including perhaps the cross-dressing priesthoods of Freyr and other gods.

In all of the English folk-plays, of which the mummers' plays are one type, there is one or more female character played by men. In some, this character is entirely peripheral to the action of the play, but as Brody concludes, "There is good reason to believe that these two figures, the clownish Beelzebub and the 'female', once did have a direct connection with the central action of the ceremony and lost their place in to Hero-Combat, as they did not in the Wooing Ceremony and some Sword Plays, when the combat began to take place over the direct fertility elements" (p. 61). Brody suggests that the Fool/Beelzebub is the remnant of a central fertility figure in the rituals of ancient times. This character, as a result of the wooing action, dies, is reborn, and weds the "female", providing the substance of the fertility ritual that Brody believes the Wooing ceremony to be (p. 106). In many of the Wooing Plays, there are two female characters: Dame Jane, who claims to carry the Fool's bastard child, and the Lady, who initially rejects the Fool's advances but later weds him. In some plays, there is a Fool's Wife or else a Mother Christmas. Often the old woman carries a broom and is called Besom Betty.

I cannot help but wonder, though, why the female characters of a "fertility" ritual must be played by men. It suggests to me that something other than purely imitative magic is going on and that "fertility" is more than simply the mechanics of physical reproduction or the "polarity" between "male" and "female". Rather than understanding this role simply as an imitation of a woman, I think it helps to see it as an example of a third distinct gender, which among the American Indians is referred to as the "berdache". It is not as if real women were in short supply among the British (or Scandinavians, for that matter). Even if women were scarce in some circumstances, one would expect to see women once again playing the roles if the roles were simply circumstantial imitations of women. It seems more likely that the interaction in the "fertility" ritual was intended to be, not between a man and a woman, but between a man and a berdache. Perhaps the means of securing the fertility of the land was an ecstatic one since the berdache role is associated in many cultures, including the Scandinavian, with shamanism and ecstatic ritual.

In most English folk-plays, there is some sort of combat in which one of the characters is killed. While most of the time, a doctor is called in to revive the slain character, in certain plays it is the man-woman: "At Haxby the Clown falls, Besom Betty runs into the ring, revives him, and leads him out. It appears to be a dumb show. At Askham Richard a Doctor is called to the Fool and fails. Besom Betty then says, 'A'll cure him', and does so by brushing his face with her broom" (Chambers, p. 131). One of the male characters, in some places the Fool, in other places Beelzebub, seems to be a fertility figure, with his phallic club, his death and revival, and his marriage to the Lady (Rudwin, p. 36; Brody, *passim*). The marriage of the Fool to the Lady suggests a possible interpretation of the relationship between Freyr and his cross-dressed priests. To my knowledge, Freyr himself is not portrayed or described as cross-dressing, but he is often described and portrayed as a fertility figure. Could it be that his cross-dressed priests were understood in some way to be his 'wives'? One does find stories in some tribes that the berdache were really married to their tutelary deities, and that any human husbands they may have are only secondary ones (Johansson, p. 1192), so this would fit in with other cross-dressing traditions.

So we have the connections with the male and the female, which are so common among shamanic/berdache traditions. In the folk-plays, we also see a character called the Hobby Horse, which brings in the link with animals that is found in shamanic traditions. "In the plays of Dorsetshire, the hobby-horse serves yet another purpose...that of divination and prophecy. The horse has a long history of associations with ecstatic divination, not only in England, but all over the primitive Western world" (Brody, p. 64). It is perhaps not entirely coincidental that Freyr was associated with the horse. We also find the man-woman character present at the Abbots-Bromley Horn Dance, in which dancers carry huge, centuries-old reindeer antlers. This man-woman is dressed in the Anglo-Saxon style, which is nearly identical to certain illustrations of the Bessie in chapbook mummers' plays printed in the 18th and 19th centuries. It may have been in part this type of symbolic connection between the male, the female, and the animal that made the Gundestrup Cauldron so desirable to some

ancient Dane.

Unfortunately, while there seems to be a good deal of information about Freyr, it is not enough in itself to build a living tradition. What we have done to effect that transformation, which continues to be an ongoing process, is to take all this book information and work with it in a magical context. We have used discussion, intuition, meditation, ritual, deity possession, and inspiration to help fill in the gaps and to manifest in a concrete form that which we understand about Freyr. Gradually it has come to life. Gradually it has integrated itself into the whole Scandinavian spirit world. Gradually it has become part of our lives.

Colours associated with Fro Ing today are gold, green, and brown. Because of the reference in Saxo, many Freyr-godmen wear bells on or as part of their ritual garb.

Fro Ing is particularly a god of joy and brightness, a god of enjoying being to its fullest. He is also a god of wholeness: he brings together body and soul, life and death, humans and god/esses, the earth and the worlds beyond, and sees to it that they work together rightly. As frith-god, he can also bring folk together for a single goal, and makes sure that they all get good from what they do beneath his sign.

No single symbol is known for Fro Ing from the old days, but the Sun-Wheel is often used for him more than for any of the other Vanir; and indeed, many of the Bronze Age rock carvings show a phallic man with a sun-wheel body, sometimes carrying out a ritual wedding with a female figure.

Contributors

- The bulk of the first part of this chapter was written by Helgi T. Dagsson ("Freyr: A God and Society").
- William Conrad Karpen's article "Freyr: An Ecstatic God from Scandinavia" was originally published in *Lavender Pagan Newsletter*, issue 5 (Beltaine 1992).
- Also contributing: Eric Wodening, Elder-in-Training, from "God of the World", *Idunna V*, i, 18 (Rhedmonth 1993), pp. 13-14.

Chapter XVIII

The Frowe (Freyja)

The Frowe is probably the best-known and most beloved of the goddesses today. As mistress of magic and goddess of sexual love, she kindles the imagination and sparks the heart. Whereas that other great goddess, Frija, is wholesome and safe, the Frowe is sweet, wild, and dangerous. Though Fro Ing is her twin brother and their might mirror each others', the two of them show that might forth in very different ways.

Her name, Freyja or the Frowe, is a title meaning "Lady". Though she has many other names in the Old Norse sources, it is not known which of them (if any) was her true name. In Scandinavia, the title was associated so strongly with the goddess that it, like her brother's title "Freyr", was dropped wholly from ordinary human use and preserved only as a name; but in Germany, where she either was not known or was known by a different name, the cognate word "Frau" has continued in human use to the modern day. To the Scandinavians, however, there was apparently one "Lady", and one "Lord", whose titles could be used by no one else (it was only towards the end of the Viking Age that the word "húsfreyja", "house-Freyja", came into use for the lady of the house; this may have stemmed from skaldic kennings, in which a woman might for instance be called "Freyja-of-necklaces", or, since the form *húsfri* also appears, have been borrowed from the corresponding German title). These titles clearly show the love and respect which our forebears felt towards the Frowe and her twin. In modern times, it has often been suggested that our "Lady" and "Lord" are the original pair whose memories survived in Northern European folklore to be called upon as the Wiccan Lady and Lord today. This fits well with much of what we know of the Frowe and Fro: as well as being sister and brother, they are also lovers, as is spoken of in *Lokasenna*. The possibility of a likeness between Freyr and the Horned One is also mentioned in the chapter on "Fro Ing".

The main difference between the Frowe and the Wiccan Lady is that the Frowe is not motherly in any way. Because she is the best-known Germanic goddess, folk have often thought of her as possibly being a Germanic reflection of the Mother-goddess archetype. Unlike Frija, however, we never see her giving fruitfulness to folk, nor does she appear in a motherly way to either deities or humans. Only once does she appear as a patron of childbirth: in *Oddrúnargratar*, the childbirth-blessing calls on "kind wights, Frigg and Freyja and many gods". However, this poem is generally thought to be among the youngest of Eddic lays; Hollander actually suggests that the invocation to "Frigg and Freyja" is a deliberate archaism put in to give the poem a heathen flavour (*The Poetic Edda*, p. 279). Although Snorri tells us that the Frowe has two daughters, both their names (Hnoss and Gersimi) are ordinary words for "treasure". In fact, they are mentioned only twice in skaldic poetry, where actual treasures are called "Freyja's daughter". If it is not the case (as it may well be), that these references simply speak of the belief that gold comes from the Frowe's weeping and treasure is therefore "her daughter", these maidens may be understood as embodiments of her might as a goddess of wealth; one might perhaps ask the Frowe for "the love of her daughters".

To the Norse, Freyja was a goddess of riches, whose tears fell to the earth as gold and whose most common appearance in skaldic poetry is in kennings for "gold". Although many of the god/esses are givers of wealth, she seems to be first among them. Here we see one of the ways in which the Frowe and Fro Ing work differently: the riches he gives are those of the fruitful fields and beasts, while those she gives are the worked gold - we might say now that Fro Ing is the god to call on to bring the harvest of long-term investments about well and to look after real estate deals, while the Frowe is the goddess to ask about cash-flow.

The Frowe is probably best-known, however, as a goddess of love and sexuality. The etin-maid Hyndla says to Freyja "(You) ran, ever-longing, after Óðr, you let many creep beneath your fore-skirt - atheling-friend, you leap about at night like Heiðrún among the goats" (*Hyndluljóð* 47). Loki says that she has slept with "all gods and alfs in the hall" (*Lokasenna* 30), which seems to be true. Unlike Frija and Wodan, to whom their chosen humans are children or foster-children, the Frowe's heroes are her lovers; the Eddic poem *Hyndluljóð* gives us a very clear description of her beloved Óttarr, whom she has changed into a boar which she rides to the rock-hall of the giantess Hyndla. This sort of "nightmare-riding" is typical for witches throughout the Germanic world. Unlike the men of later folk-tales, however, Óttarr is not only apparently willing to be ridden, but gets some good from the faring - the account of his lineage, which he must use to win his inheritance. Still, the Frowe's love is as dangerous as it is wildly exciting: Hyndla says that Freyja is riding Óttarr on his "slain-faring" (*i valsinni*), and since the etin-woman sees clearly otherwise, we may suspect that the goddess' lover was not long-lived.

The story of Óttarr, who built a harrow for Freyja and reddened it with blood until the holy fires (or the heat of Freyja's might) had turned the stones to glass, also suggests that the Frowe was not only worshipped by women, but had her own given godmen. Like the gyðja who was Freyr's wife in *Gunnars þátr helmings*, these men may well have been seen as the Frowe's husbands or lovers. Some of the mysterious deaths of Yngling kings, such as that of Agni, who was strangled with a necklace by his wife, or Aðils, who, touched by a witch's magic, fell off his horse at the *disablót* (goddesses' blessing - see "Idises"), also suggest the possibility that these Ing-descended kings died as holy gifts to Freyja.

Snorri tells us that Freyja is particularly fond of love songs (*mannsöngur*), of a type we know to have been outlawed

in Iceland even before the conversion; and the pages of heathen publications are often brightened by love-songs written for Freyja. Such a song of your own is a fitting gift for her: one copy might be written out in runes and burned for her while you read the other aloud to her.

It is strongly suspected that the Frowe's sexual character led to the suppression of much of her lore by christianity. however, some pieces did survive, though in a diluted and moralizing form. The best-known of these is the tale (from *Sörla þáttur* in *Flateyjarbók*) of how she saw four dwarves forging a necklace (the *Brisingamen*) and traded four nights of her love for it. Alice Karlsdóttir reads the tale thus:

The story is usually told to demonstrate Freyja's 'immorality' or bawdy humour. This always seemed rather unfair to me. After all, when writers discuss Odin and how he slept with Gunnlod on three nights in order to win the mead of poetry, they praise his efforts at winning wisdom, but when Freyja, a goddess, does pretty much the same thing, they say, "What a shameless hussy!"

Freyja's necklace is not, of course, just a pretty piece of vanity, but rather a powerful symbol of the goddess' powers of fertility and life. Giants are continually trying to win or steal Freyja for themselves, not just because she's a good lay, but because her powers contain the essence of the life force itself and sustain the well-being of Asgard and the rest of the worlds. the story of how Freyja got the *Brisingamen* is a story of her quest for wisdom and power, every bit as much as Odin's adventures are...

One of Freyja's powers seems to be a mastery of material manifestation, the infusing of the physical world with the spiritual. Freyja not only masters the senses, she revels in them and shows that physical existence itself is a wondrous thing. I always sort of imagined that the dwarves didn't create the necklace until *after* Freyja slept with them, that their intercourse was necessary to inspire the dwarves to be able to make the *Brisingamen* in the first place. Freyja, on the other hand, discovers the powers of the material world and how to control and shape them.

The goddess' necklace or girdle is an emblem that goes back to the Stone Age, when slender amulets of schist, given human form only by the careful carving of necklaces, were carried about (Gløb, *Bog People* p. 159). As mentioned in "The Stone Age", amber necklaces of a size only a goddess could have worn were being given to bogs at the same time. The Bronze Age kneeling goddess-figurine who drives a small ship with a snake leashed beside it wears only a necklace and a string-skirt; the same is true of the little female acrobat/dancer from the same period. The huge Swedish gold collars of the Migration Age (discussed in the historical chapter), were clearly also holy, and by this period it is quite possible that they could have been given specifically to the Frowe, although god-figures with collars carved on their necks have also been found. The necklace is the sign of the world's ring; Freyja's winning of the *Brisingamen* is one of the strongest reasons to think of her as an earth-goddess like her mother Nerthus, and therefore, though there is nothing in the Norse sources to suggest it, perhaps also being one of the goddesses who makes the world fruitful. It is certainly the sign of her power. We do not know what it actually looked like: the name "*Brisingamen*" can either be read as "the necklace (or girdle) made by the fiery ones (*Brisingas*, presumably the name of the dwarves)" or as "the fiery necklace (or girdle)". We know that gold is called fire in kennings, so that the *Brisingamen* is likeliest to have been made of gold, though it is often pictured in modern times as being amber or at least set with amber. In Úlfr Uggason's poem *Húsdrápa*, the *Brisingamen* is called *hafnýra*, "harbour-kidney", a kenning which may also hint that amber was a part of the necklace, since amber was normally gathered along the seashore. The workings of the four dwarves might hint at a four-ringed collar, or a four-stranded necklace - especially since, seen on a level plain, the cosmos also has four concentric rings (the Ases' Garth, the Middle-Garth, the sea around the Middle-Garth, and the Out-Garth - see "Worlds"). The Frowe's necklace would then be the embodiment of her might through all the realms. A small Swedish pendant from Östergötland (late Viking Age) is often thought to represent Freyja: it shows a remarkably large-breasted woman wearing a four-layered necklace and seated inside a ring.

As the bearer of fiery life-might, the Frowe is greatly needed by the other god/esses; etins often seek her in marriage, as was done by the builder of Ase-Garth's walls and the giant Þrymr, who stole Þórr's Hammer to use it as a bargaining point in getting her.

The Frowe is first thought to have come among the Ases as the witch Gullveigr ("Gold-Intoxication"), whose fate started the war between the Ases and the Wans: "when Gullveigr was studded with spears and burned in Hár's hall; thrice burned, thrice born, often, not seldom, but yet she lives" (*Völuspá* 21). Here we see what is clearly a Frowe-initiation similar to that of Wodan's hanging on the tree: while he is hanged and stabbed, she is stabbed and burnt, each of them slain by the means which is holiest. Just as Wodan won the runes, the Frowe came forth with the full lore of her own seiðr: "Heiðr hight she, when she came to houses, spæ-wise völva, she knew magic; she worked seiðr as she knew how to, worked seiðr, playing with soul - she was ever beloved to wicked women" (*Völuspá* 22). The name "Heiðr" means either "the Glorious/Bright One" or "the Heath-Dweller": we can see her wandering freely through heath and house, glowing with the seething fires of her threefold burning and rebirth. Heiðr is seen in modern times as the "older woman" aspect of Freyja, with the fiery might of her gold and sex sublimated into the wisdom and magical might of the witch. The stone we associate with her now is jet, and the colours are black and white interwoven so that they look gray from a little way off. *Eiríks saga ins rauða* mentions that the seeress was fed a meal of the hearts of several sorts of animals; as Heiðr is the great *völva* (even as Wodan is *Fimbulþulr*, the great thule), it is thought today that hearts are the meat which is holiest to Heiðr.

Snorri also tells us in *Ynglinga saga* that Freyja taught the art of seiðr to the Ases; Thorsson sees this as an

exchange whereby Freyja learned the runes from Óðinn and he learned seiðr from her. In any case, the situation is, again, comparable: as Wodan teaches the craft of the runes after his initiation, so Freyja teaches the skill of seiðr after hers - not only to the Ases, but, as *Völuspá* suggests, to humans as well.

The Frowe is married to a god called Óðr - the noun from which the adjectival "Óðinn" is derived. The folklore of the Wild Hunt suggests that "Wod" was an older form of the name *Woðanaz; de Vries also compares the Óðr-Óðinn to the other surviving pair of noun-adjective forms, Ullr-Ullinn ("Contributions to the Study of Othin"). There is little doubt that Óðr and Óðinn were the same god, although this identity seems to have been forgotten by the end of the Viking Age; it is probably very old. The wedding between Óðr and Freyja is, at the least, a very open one: the way in which the Frowe is sought as a bride by etins suggests that she is thought to be effectively single. *Sörla þáttur* describes her as Óðinn's mistress, rather than his wife. The two of them clearly work together - they mirror one another in many ways and share many of the same realms - and both being quite sexual deities, it would be surprising if their relationship was not shown forth as a sexual one. However, the Frowe seems to be too independent to tie herself to any single male for long; though she wandered weeping after Óðr when he left her, there is no doubt that sexual faithfulness was never part of the arrangement.

The Frowe is also a battle-goddess: one of the names of her hall is Folkvangr ("Army-Plain"), and there "Freyja rules the choices of seats in the hall: she chooses half the slain every day, and Óðinn has half". It is not sure whether by "choosing the slain", the *Grímnismál* speaker meant this in the usual sense (as when used for the walkurjas, Wodan, and Hella) of choosing who among the living warriors shall be slain in that battle, or whether it means that the Frowe gets her choice of those among the fallen who she wants for her hall. In either case, she is certainly a goddess of death and specifically the battle-dead: the men she wants are clearly the best of heroes. What she does with them is never told to us, whether they fight beside the *einherjar* at Ragnarök or stay with Freyja, who may survive the battle (in *Ynglinga s.* ch. 8, Snorri tells us that "Freyja then kept up the blessings, for she alone lived after the gods", though since he has euhemerized them all and given them very different deaths from those they meet at Ragnarök, this may not be a reliable indicator). As seen in the tale of Gullveigr, she is also a cause of strife as well: wealth and women were two of the most common causes for fighting among the Germanic folks. The two chief social roles of women in the Icelandic sagas were as frith-weaver and strife-stirrer: Frija embodies the first, the Frowe the second. Here, the Frowe and Fro Ing complement each other rather than working in the same way: the Eddic poem *Grottasöngur* shows how the two, strife and frith, need each other. When Fróði harnesses the etin-maids Fenja and Menja to turn a magical mill, they grind out gold and frith and happiness; but instead of letting them rest, he tries to keep them working without pausing longer than it takes to sing a lay. Then the scales tip too far: the women become angered and grind out battle and Fróði's death, and the balance is evened again. The Frowe stirs up Fro Ing's frith; Fro Ing stills her strife; thus challenge and rest are balanced out.

According to Snorri, the Frowe's hall is also called Sessrumnir, "Roomy-Seated" - which it would need to be as a hall of the dead. As is not hard to imagine, the sexes seem to mix freely in the Frowe's realm, warriors and young women alike: when Egill Skalla-Grímsson's daughter Þórgerðr tells of her intention to starve herself beside her grieving father, she says that she will take no food until she sups with Freyja.

Like her brother, the Frowe has the swine as a holy animal, and rides on a gold-bristled boar (hers is called Hildisvín, "Battle-Swine") which was made by dwarves. The Yule boar is holy to her, as to him. One of the Frowe's own by-names is Sýr, "Sow", which suggests not only her fruitfulness and sexuality, but her more frightening side: the swine is, after all, a carrion-eater, and sows are proverbially known for eating their own piglets at times.

Like Frija, the Frowe travels through the worlds by putting on a falcon-hide and faring forth in that shape. Though none of the myths show her actually using it - we only know of it because she lends it to Loki - the falcon seems to be the womanly match to the manly eagle (a shape taken by Wodan and, quite often, by etins). This shows her swift-faring through the worlds; the falcon is clearly a holy bird of hers, in her most active shape when she is not only fiery, but aerial. Some of the birds of prey which appear so often in Germanic art may be falcons rather than eagles, but our forebears' art was so stylized that there is no way to tell which is which; only the hooked beaks distinguish birds of prey in general.

The Frowe is also well-known to have a wain which is drawn by two cats. Every so often the question of what sort of cats these were, or whether they were actually felines and not some other creature, comes up. Grimm mentions that the Old Norse word *fres* "means both he-cat and bear, it has lately been contended, not without reason, that köttum may have been substituted for *fressum*, and a brace of bears have been really meant for the goddess" (*Teutonic Mythology*, II, p. 669). It has also been suggested several times that the image of Freyja in her cat-drawn wain was borrowed from the southern Cybele, whose chariot was drawn by lions. There is also a special connection between seiðr and cats: the seeress in *Eiríks saga ins rauða* is described as wearing catskin gloves, which has spurred many people to hope that the Old Norse word *köttr*, "cat", did not really mean *cat*. Alternate suggestions have included bears (gib-cats), hares, and various sorts of ermine- and weasel-type creatures. However, wild felines such as the lynx have been native to Scandinavia at least since the earliest human settlements, and the first skeletal evidence of house-cats dates from the earlier part of the Iron Age (*Scandinavian Saga*, 131). Further, the burial goods of "Queen Asa" (the Oseberg queen) include elaborately carved vehicles (generally thought to be for cultic processions) on which cat-images are carved. In one case, the sledge-posts are unquestionably cat-heads; the end panel of the wagon shows a repeated picture of a cat who is apparently fighting or dancing with a snake, while either shielding her eyes with one paw or just revealing them (perhaps to awe the snake by her gaze?). These cats are

probably house-cats or small European wildcats, as they do not have the tufted ears of the lynx. A little amber cat-figurine was also found lately in the archaeological excavations at the late Viking-Age site on Birka. All of this, particularly the cat-head posts from Oseberg, suggest very strongly that there is every reason to think that the belief is native rather than foreign, that Freyja's cats are indeed house-cats - and so were the seeress' gloves. No names for these cats have survived in any sources, but in her book *Brisingamen* (which is highly recommended to all Ásatrúar, especially those interested in Freyja), Diana Paxson suggests the names "Trégull" ("Tree-Gold", or amber) and "Býgull" ("Bee-Gold", or honey) for them. Some will be amused, and others appalled, to note that certain less-reliable books on Norse heathenism are already solemnly reporting these fictional names as part of authentic Teutonic tradition...

The Frowe herself was known by other names in Scandinavia: Snorri gives us the names Hörn (which is etymologically tied to "flax"), Sýr ("sow"), Gefn ("giver"), and Mardöll ("Sea-Brightness" - another name which may refer to amber, or else to gold, which is often called "fire of the sea"). These names are likeliest to have been local titles for either the Frowe or other goddesses who were so like her that it made no difference.

The Frowe's stone is amber, a connection which may go back to early days. Amber is especially beloved by Northern folk; it is "the gold of the North". In our forebears' time, necklaces of amber were probably a status symbol as much as anything; and even today at Teutonic rites, one can often see women (and occasionally men) hung with as many strands of amber as they are able to buy. Other stones which the name "Brisingamen" and the Frowe's flame-being suggest are fire agates and fire opals; gold is clearly her metal, if you can get it.

The elder-tree (whose very name means "fire") is especially close to her; yarrow and dill, as traditional "witches' herbs" also belong to her. Her flower is the rose, especially the Northern European wild rose or "dog-rose". One Northern German church is supposed to have been built at "Freyja's spring"; when the church was rebuilt after the last World War, the roots of the dog-rose which had grown beside it were shown to be over a thousand years old. The legend of "Freyja's spring" may have been a romantic product of the eighteenth or nineteenth century, but the flower itself surely shows her being, being both the sweetest and the thorniest of blooms.

The Frowe is especially a goddess of women who do as they will and love as they will without worrying about social constraints or anything else. More than any other goddess, she shows the right of women to rule over their own bodies, to love - or not love - as they choose. Indeed, according to *Þrymskviða*, it was easier for the Ases to get Þórr to put on women's clothing and go into Etin-Home as a bride than for them to make Freyja wed against her will!

The necklace is the sign which is traditionally that of the Frowe's might, though there is no one picture of it that stands as "her symbol". In *A Book of Troth*, Thorsson suggests that "Freya's Heart (the basic heart-shape) is the sign of the blessings of the goddess Freya, and is the symbol of those given to her mysteries" (p. 112). This is extrapolated from the reading of this symbol as showing the female genitals and/or buttocks: as the stylized picture of womanly sexuality, the heart (with or without the phallic arrow piercing it), is clearly fitting to the Frowe.

It is thought in modern times that the Frowe likes sweet drinks, especially berry liqueurs and German wines of the Auslese, Beerenauslese, and Trockenbeerenauslese class. One liqueur in particular, Danziger Goldwasser (which has actual flakes of high-karat gold foil in it), is felt to be especially fitting to her.

Contributors

- Stephan Grundy, "Frigg and Freyja"
- Alice Karlsdóttir, from "Freyja's Necklace", *Mountain Thunder* #10, pp. 21-22.
- Diana Paxson (esp. Heiðr and cat-names)

Chapter XIX

Skaði, Gerðr, Earth, and other Etin-Brides

Skaði

Skaði, whose name means either "shadow" or "scathe", is one of the darker goddesses of the North. She is not of godly kin, but the daughter of the etin Thjazi, who stole Iðunn and her apples and was slain in eagle-shape by the Ases while chasing Loki back. Still, not only is she counted among the god/esses, but her hall in the mountains of Etin-Home, Brymheimr (Din-World), which she inherited from her father, is numbered among the holy dwellings in *Grimnismál* 11. In the same verse, she is called the "shining bride of gods", and the skald Þórðr Sjáreksson calls her "the wise bride of gods". Although place-names show that she was widely worshipped in elder days (see below), she is not called on as often now - partially because there is little known about her, partially because her beauty is a harsh one, and many folk find her less easy to love than Frija or the Frowe. Those who do love her, however, see the starkest beauty of the Northlands in her high and rocky fells, her shining ice and dark crags; to some, the sound of her howling wolves and howling wind is the fairest of all songs, and her ski-tracks through the snow the brightest of all paths against the winter's long night.

There is a certain suggestion that Skaði's gender may have been ambiguous: the name "Skaði" is a straightforward weak masculine form, which could very easily and naturally have been changed to the weak feminine "Skaða", but never was. "Skaði" also appears as a man's personal name in the first chapter of *Völsunga saga*. It has been suggested that Skaði was first the husband of Nerthus, changing sex when "Nerthus" became "Njörðr", but this is by no means widely accepted. Turville-Petre comments that "Skaði, with her armour and snowshoes and bow, has some of the features of a male god", and compares her to Ullr, who shares her use of snowshoes and bow and is particularly a hunting god (*Myth and Religion*, pp. 164-65).

Skaði is most easily seen as a goddess of winter: not only does she come from the kin of the mountain- and rime-thurses, but our earliest skaldic poem, Bragi inn gamli's *Ragnarsdrápa*, also calls Skaði *öndurdís* ("snowshoe-goddess"); and she is spoken of as "öndurgoð" (snowshoe-deity) in *Haustlög* and *Háleygjatal*. Snorri tells us in his Edda how she "fares greatly on skies and with a bow, and shoots animals". The name of Brymheimr, which we know to be in the mountains, suggests the ceaseless screaming of wind over the rocks as well as the howling of wolves; and there are many mountains in Norway which are snow-capped all year, so that we may guess that Skaði ever dwells where it is icy, but fares among humans in wintertime.

The tale of Skaði and Njörðr has often been read as a nature-myth, in which she embodies the ice and snow of winter and the the free-flowing waters of summer; and their might can indeed be seen in these things. Here, however, we must remember that most of the god/esses are not personifications of the natural world, but rather, parts of the natural world are shaped by the being of the god/esses and reflect the shiftings of their might.

Skaði's first appearance among the god/esses is as the Maiden Warrior: she comes fully armed and armoured to avenge her father's death. Here she is seen as very grim and fierce: when the Ases offer her weregild, the impossible condition she asks is that they make her laugh. To achieve this, Loki ties one end of a rope to a goat's beard and the other to his bollocks, then starts a tug-o-war with the goat. Their antics and his near-castration finally get Skaði to laugh; the latter aspect may also hint that she was, indeed, specifically one of the "Mörnir" or etin-women to whom the horse-phallus of *Völsa þátr* (see "Fro Ing") was offered. Schröder suggests that her original unwillingness (or inability) to laugh relates to an aspect as death-goddess, for "according to Northern European tales, the dead are not able to laugh" (*Skadi und die Götter Skandinaviens*, p. 25). He also suggests that the goat may originally have been Skaði herself in animal-form, claiming the sacrifice which causes her aspect to shift from death-goddess to goddess of fruitfulness (pp. 25-28). As the goat is a mountain beast, an independent wanderer, and an animal which is also closely tied to traditional Yule rites in Scandinavia (see "Yule"), its connection with Skaði is not wholly unbelievable, though one may or may not choose to see the goddess in the goat itself. In *Lokasenna*, Loki claims to have slept with her, which she does not deny; this may also be related to the way in which he makes her laugh and thus brings her to be wedded.

Skaði's grimness is also seen in the prose tag to *Lokasenna*: when Loki has been bound, it is she who, as a final torture, ties the snake above him to drip bale onto his face. Her relationship with him is rather ambiguous: he has been largely responsible for her father's death, and yet it is he who makes her laugh so that she is willing to accept a wedding instead of the blood of the slain as Thjazi's weregild, and claims to have shared her bed. As her following torture of Loki suggests, her turning from death to fruitfulness is not a permanent alteration in her character: like all the god/esses, she can change her aspects at will and need.

Despite her seeming harshness and role as a goddess of winter, death, and revenge, as well as her first appearance as Maiden Warrior, Skaði also has a motherly side. Though no children were born of her wedding to Njörðr, we see Skaði acting in a motherly way to Freyr in *Skirnismál*, and he is called her son, though the term was probably used loosely to include "stepson", which is the actual relationship. In addition to this, she is the only goddess apart from Gerðr (see below)

who is known to have been the mother of a human dynasty. Snorri tells us in *Ynglinga saga* that after her separation from Njörðr, she bore many sons to Óðinn. One of these sons, according to the skaldic poem *Háleygjatal*, was Sæmingr, the father of the Jarls of Hlaðir - an heroic line which, for several generations, staunchly defended Norwegian Heathenism against all kingly efforts to convert the land. His name may mean "son of the seed god"; which would suggest that the bond between Skaði and Wodan has something to do with the working of the Wild Hunt to make the fields fruitful; or it may mean "the grey one", which would be a clear reference to the wolf - a beast holy to both of them. Skaði's strong bond to her father is also worth marking: in addition to her decision to avenge him, we see in *Lokasenna* that Loki's accusations against her chastity distressed her far less than his boast that he was first among the gods when they slew Thjazi. Skaði is clearly a goddess who cares greatly for bonds of blood and troth, a warder of the kin; and in this aspect, she should be called upon when the idises are hailed.

As far as we know, Skaði was not worshipped outside Scandinavia; it has even been suggested that perhaps she was a Finnish or Lappish goddess whose cult was taken over by the Norse. In fact, there is a Finnish goddess of the wood and hunting, Mielikki, the wife of the hunting-god Tapio, but whether she is the same being as Skaði is not known. It has also been seriously put forth that the very name "Scandinavia" is derived from her own, perhaps as "Island of Skaði"; this theory is not really accepted, but has not really been disproven either (de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, p. 338). She was quite often worshipped; there are a good many "Skaði" place-names, especially in mid- to eastern Sweden and southeastern Norway. Most of these are of the "Skaði's vé" type, though "Skaði's grove" is also seen a few times (de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, p. 339). In *Lokasenna* 51, the goddess speaks of her rede coming from her wih-steads and plains. The "plains" were probably holy fields, suggesting that she may also have had something to do with fruitfulness. In this aspect, it is possible that she may have been seen in the North as was Holda in Germany, as the one who covers the earth with a blanket of snow to protect all that sleeps in the ground through the winter; or it may, as with Gerðr, relate to her cyclical character as the etin-goddess who shifts from being frozen to being fruitful.

In the *Kantelar* (a collection of Finnish folk poetry made in the nineteenth century), one song calls on the goddess Mielikki to lend luck to the hunter and strew out her gifts for him, and another asks Tapio to guide the hunter's skis. Schröder compares this Finnish pair to Skaði and Ullr (Wuldor); he also suggests strongly that perhaps the two Norse deities were originally brother and sister, children of Thjazi (*Skaði*, pp. 115-16). In fact, we do not know who Wuldor's father is; only that his mother is Sif, but his father is not Thonar, so (although there is no direct evidence for it) this suggestion is as reasonable as any other, especially given the close likeness between Skaði and Wuldor. If Skaði's name is taken as "shadow", then the two of them also present a polar image of wintry darkness and light, since Wuldor's name, "glory", implies brightness and has sometimes been read as stemming from the glory of the Northern Lights.

Skaði is a goddess of hunters and hence of wild beasts as well. She is also the goddess of skiers, and of those who dwell in or fare through the mountains and wild places; she can be asked to help those who have to drive on snow or ice. As a field-goddess, her feast is particularly that of Disting/Charming of the Plough, when she accepts the gifts given to her and the earth begins to unfreeze. Alice Karlsdóttir also suggests calling on Skaði and Njörðr together at the spring or autumnal equinoxes, when "darkness and light are equal, and Njörðr and Skaði meet again at the turning of the year".

Like the Frowe, Skaði is a goddess of independent women; she may be seen as the especial patron of single mothers and of women who do things that are usually specified as male by society (the modern equivalent of the Norse Maiden Warrior).

She can also be called on as a goddess of justice. Though harsh, she is fair; as we see, she was willing to accept weregild and be integrated into godly society, rather than starting a blood-feud.

As the wild winter howler and hunter (as opposed to Wodan's battlefield-scavenger) the wolf is thought of as Skaði's beast because of Njörðr's complaints about the howling of the wolves in Þrymheimr. Her possible relationship with the goat has already been spoken of. There are no other animals given to her in traditional sources, but her father, like many etins, was able to take eagle-shape and to use the wind of his wings as a weapon in his flight; so there are some today who also see a dark eagle as an image of this goddess.

In modern times, the stone associated with Skaði is the natural (terminated) rock crystal, which is called "mountain crystal" in most of the Germanic languages, and was known as "ice-stone" in Old High German. Black serpentine, with its icy crystals against a dark matrix, is also fitting for her.

For calling on Skaði, crystal cups (the "rime-cup" of the Eddas) are most appropriate. It has been found that she is especially fond of iced vodka.

Colours associated with Skaði today are black and icy white.

Gerðr

Gerðr is Fro Ing's wife, an etin-maid won by the magical force of the god's servant Skírnir. *Skírnismál* tells us that she was not willing to marry Freyr: Skírnir tried to bribe her with golden apples and the ring Draupnir, and threatened her with Freyr's sword, but she did not yield until he brought a magical tine carved with three thurse-runes (thurisaz) against her, threatening that if she would not have Freyr, he would curse her with perversity and lust, and doom her to be the bride

of a three-headed troll. Then she welcomed Skírnir with a cup of mead, and said that she would be wedded to Freyr in nine nights at the grove Barri.

The most usual reading of this myth is as a nature-myth: Gerðr is the frozen winter earth, whose hard crust must be broken by the "shining" Skírnir so that she can be sown and made fruitful. The name Hrímgrerðr - "Ice-Gerðr" - appears for a troll-woman in "Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar", suggesting a contrast between the icy and the fruitful Gerðr. Her name is related to the word "garth", the fenced enclosure; from this, it has been taken that she has something to do with land which is settled and fenced in. The name of the grove where Freyr and Gerðr marry is Barri, which may either mean "barley-field" or "coniferous wood" (Simek, *Dictionary*, p. 32); the first reading matches better with the understanding of the tale as a fruitfulness-myth, the second with the poem's description of the place as a grove (*lundr*). In the latter case, the fruitfulness of Freyr and Gerðr would not only be that of the fields, but of the whole earth, both the wild and the tame lands. *Skírnismál* is one of the Eddic poems which is likeliest to have been the script for a ritual drama, as Bertha Philpotts suggests; it might have been done every year at ploughing time, mirroring the might of the goddess and god as the plough breaks the earth's soil.

Paul Bibire has read Skírnir's curse on Gerðr as being rooted in her own nature: all the things he threatens her with are characteristic for troll-women. As an embodiment of the might of the earth, she can choose to become fruitful as Freyr's wife, or she can choose to be barren, and therefore be a dwelling for trolls and the worst of wights.

The wooing of Gerðr can also be seen as an inversion of that of Skaði: Skaði is thawed by Loki's symbolic self-castration; Gerðr, by the symbolic rape of Skírnir's thurse-runes. The one etin-maid takes the gift of fruitfulness willingly; the other, because she must. If one were to read *Völsa þáttr* as a purely spiritual work, one might perhaps compare them to the two young women who pick up the völsi in turn: one is eager for it, the other takes it only out of need. Eventually, however, both "Mörnir" do receive the blessing, and the earth becomes fruitful.

In *Det hellige Bryllup og norrøn Kongeideologie*, Gro Steinsland reads the tale as also being closely tied to the ideology of Norse kingship. She sees the apples, ring, and magical stick as emblems of kingship; the threats Gerðr suffers as stemming from the belief that the king is the conqueror of his land as well as its warder and tender. Thus, *Skírnismál* shows not only the holy wedding of the god with the earth, but also of the king with his country (which is likewise needful to make it fruitful). She also points out that this mating, like that of Óðinn and Skaði, brings forth not a god, but the first man of an earthly dynasty - Fjölfnir, the first of the Ynglings, a line which was particularly thought of as being holy. From the blending of gods and etin-maids can come not only gods (such as Wodan, Thonar and his two sons by Járnaxa, and several others), but also the rulers who, as ritual leaders and sometimes sacrifices, bring the might of the god/esses forth in the Middle-Garth.

Gerðr is not seen in any other myths: even after her wedding she seems to have little to do with the other god/esses. No signs of a cult of hers have survived: as an embodiment of the earth, she is a goddess to be honoured, especially at Disting when the year begins to near the doors of summer again and the world recreates the myth of her wooing, but she is not otherwise called upon, except generally with the other goddesses of fruitfulness. It is, however, thought by some in modern times that one cause of natural disasters and bad harvests is Gerðr's anger at being forgotten.

The colours associated with Gerðr today are deep red and deep brown.

Earth (Jörð - ON, Erda - Wagner)

Earth is the mother of Thonar, the daughter of the goddess Night and her husband Annarr ("the Second"). She has several other names - Fjörgyn, Hlóðynn, Fold, and Grund. The latter three simply mean "earth"; the first may possibly be related to an early Germanic thunder-god (see discussion of the manly "Fjörgynn" in the chapter on Frija).

We know that she was first made out of the corpse of the hermaphroditic etin Ymir; from this, perhaps, it can be understood that Ymir's dismemberment was also a separation into manly and womanly elements. It might be possible to reach out from this to the reading that Earth's male counterpart could possibly be Ægir, the etin of the sea (which was Ymir's blood, as the Earth was his body), though this leans out into the realm of speculation.

There is not a great deal of evidence for the worship of the personified Earth, but some traces have lived on. In one of our few surviving Norse prayers, the "Hail to Day" from *Sigrdrífumál*, the awakened Sigrdrífa calls on Day and Day's sons, Night and her kinswoman, and "the greatly-helpful Earth". She names these wights together with, and apparently as equals to, the "Æsir and Ásynjur". The description *fjölhýta* is difficult to translate simply; the latter element means generally, "helpful, good-bringing, enjoyable", and appears in Saxon English as the verb *nytte*.

The Anglo-Saxon charm "Æcerbot" ("Field-Ceremonies", also called "Charming of the Plough"), a sketchily christianized fruitfulness-rite, includes the strange line, "Erce, Erce, Erce, eorþan modor". The phrase "Erce, mother of earth" is confusing, and the name itself resists philological analysis; but since the next lines are, "May the all-ruling, eternal drighthen grant you fields waxing and thriving, flourishing and bountiful, bright shafts of millet-crops, and of broad barley-crops, and of white wheat-crops, and of all the earth's crops," it seems the most reasonable guess that the first line was originally meant to be a call to Mother Earth, accidentally or deliberately garbled. Slightly later in the charm, a very clear

call to her is spoken: "Hail to thee, Folde ("earth"), mother of men! Be thou growing in god's embrace, filled with food for men to enjoy". The last verb, *nytte*, is cognate to the Old Norse *nýta* (see above); one can see the general idea as expressing the way our Germanic forebears saw the Earth. The whole charm is, in fact, a model for the Northern relationship to the Earth: humans are responsible for helping to bring the god/esses' blessings to her, for hailing her and making gifts to her in thanks, and for carefully tending her fields and lands.

The loop of turf which was cut whole with each end still attached to the earth and carefully raised for men to creep under as part of the blood-brotherhood oath was called "Earth's necklace". There are also several references in the Eddas to the "main of the Earth" as being one of the greatest of strengths; it is clear that Thonar gets a great deal of his might from his mother. Eysteinn Valdason (a skald writing ca. 1000) called the Middle-Garth's Wyrn "Earth's Girdle", and we will also remember the little goddess of the Bronze Age who rode in a ship with a leashed wyrm beside her.

Gríðr

This etin-frowe is the mother of the god Víðarr, whom Wodan begot to be his own avenger. Though never counted among the goddesses, she is especially friendly to the gods. When Loki had tricked Thonar into going to the Outgarth without his hammer, she gave the god lodgings, warned him about the giant Geirröðr, and also gave him a girdle of might, iron gauntlets, and the staff Gríðavölr (Gríðr's magical staff), with which he was able to ward himself against all the attacks of Geirröðr and his daughters. As discussed further under "Thonar", these items are typical for Icelandic witches, and indeed for certain shamanic practices. Gríðr can thus be seen as an initiator and helper for those who must deal with the might of the etins and the sundry wights of the Outgarth.

Járnsaxa

Járnsaxa, whose name means "Iron Knife", is an etin-woman and Thonar's concubine, the mother of his two sons Móði and Magni who shall inherit his Hammer after Ragnarök. It may seem more than a little strange that Thonar, of all gods, should be the lover of an etin-woman; but Járnsaxa is called "Sif's Rival", so she must be very fair indeed. She must also be very strong: at three years old, her son Magni could lift a weight that none of the other gods could manage.

Bestla

The etin-mother of Óðinn, Vili, and Vé (or Óðinn, Hoenir, and Lódur). Her father is Bölthorn (Bale-Thorn). She has a brother, who taught Wodan nine mighty songs; Hollander suggests that this brother may have been Mímir. This reading is supported by the fact that, according to *Ynglinga saga*, Óðinn sent Mímir together with his own brother as a hostage to the Vanir, implying at least the possibility of a blood relationship.

The etymology of her name is difficult: the likeliest reading connects it with "bark" (Simek, *Dictionary*, p. 36), and de Vries also suggests, among other things, the possibility that she may have been a yew-goddess (*Wörterbuch*, p. 34).

Angrboda

Loki's horrible wife (as opposed to his good wife Sigyn). Her name means "the one who brings grief"; the "Völuspá hin skamma" section of "Hyndluljóð" tells us that she and Loki got the Wolf Fenrir together, and Snorri also adds the Middle-Garth's Wyrn and Hel as their children. Possibly the best summary of her character is that given by Alice Karlsdóttir in one of her many verses for "That Old-Time Religion":

Angrboda is voracious,
And her children are hellacious,
I guess Loki's just salacious,
And that's good enough for me!

Needless to say, the only use for Angrboda in a religious or ritual context is the listing of her name among those of ill-willing wights whose might one wants to banish.

Contributors

- Alice Karlsdóttir, from "Njörðr and Skaði: the Marriage of Light and Darkness", *Mountain Thunder* 7, pp. 19-21.
- Diana Paxson
- Laurel Mendes and the other women of Hrafnar

Chapter XX

Idises (dísir)

"Idis" originally seems to have meant "atheling-woman". There is considerable doubt as to whether it is actually the same word as the Old Norse *dís*; the loss of the initial vowel is impossible to account for, but since the use is so similar, those who prefer English or general Germanic terms use "idis" instead of the Old Norse word.

In the singular, the word itself is very general in meaning. Both "idis" (or Anglo-Saxon "ides") and *dís* are applied to human women, womanly ghosts, goddesses, and figures such as Grendel's mother and Hel; in skaldic kennings, someone's *dís* is their kinswoman, whether living or dead. As a name-element, this word was very common, especially in Old Norse (Freydís, Ásdís, Þórdís, Hjördis, and the very rare Óðindís) but also on the Continent (Agedisus, Disibod, Tiso). The walkurjas are described as "Herjans dísir" (Óðinn's idises - *Guðrúnarkviða I*) as well as "Herjans nönur" (Óðinn's women - *Völuspá* 30).

Although the plural term is most often used specifically for the dead women of the clan who still guard their descendants and help them in various ways, it can also speak of living women; the two have basically the same might, though the dead ones, dwelling wholly in the hidden realms, are thought of as stronger in matters of magic. The Old High German "Erste Merseburger Zauberspruch" gives us a clear picture of one of the things they do:

"Once the idises sat, sat here and there.
Some fastened fetters, some loosened fetters,
some plucked at chains;
spring the chains free! the fighters come out."

In *Wealtheow and the Valkyrie Tradition*, Damico tried very hard to prove that this might of fettering and loosing characterized a number of Germanic women as valkyries, and ended up showing either that it was a typical power of Germanic women, or that all mighty Northern females, including christian heroines such as Juliana, had originally been valkyries.

The idises also take part in battle in other ways. The women of the Helgi lays, Sváva and Sigrún (who are probably of the special type called "spae-idis" - see "Soul, Death, and Rebirth"), ride over air and water to ward their beloved Helgis in war. In *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, Helgi sees Sigrún and her troop of "southern *dísir*" in bloody byrnies with flashing lances after his battle with Hunding's sons; she also wards his fleet through a storm so that they come safely into the harbour. *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar* tells how Sváva is Helgi's unseen protector when the troll-woman Hrimgerðr attacks his ship, and also shows the troop of idises as bringers of fruitfulness: "(Their) steeds whinnied; from their manes fell dew in deep dales, hail in high woods, and thence comes good harvest to men." The battle-aspects of these women have often been taken as support for the prose identification of them as walkurjas. However, Germanic women typically went to the battlelines to encourage their men, and it is very likely that those who were skilled in magic also helped their beloveds in that way, faring forth to do battle unseen above the heads of the warriors. This seems to be more a trait of Teutonic womanhood in general than something specifically associated with the cult of Wodan, as the walkurja certainly is. As seen below in the story of Þiðrandi, family idises also appear as mounted warriors, even being mighty enough to slay men in the Middle-Garth.

Two of the greatest clan-idises were Þórgerðr and Irpa, idises of the Jarls of Hlaðir, who had their own statues "as big as a man with gold ring on arm and head-dress on head" (*Njáls saga* ch. 88), the *fulltruar* (fully-trusted; that is, patron deities of) the Jarl Hákon. In his battle against the Jómsvíkings, Hákon made a sacrifice to these goddesses, whereupon a sudden storm came out of the north, in which Þórgerðr and Irpa appeared with arrows flying out of their fingertips; and this was the chief decisive factor in the battle. Þórgerðr's statue, together with that of Freyr's, was singled out for special abuse by Óláfr Tryggvason when he came to destroy the hof at Trondheim.

The idises help in birthing: Sigrdrifa counsels Sigurðr, as part of a midwife's skills, to "bid the idises aid". They are quite likely to be the wights that Snorri describes in his Edda as the norns who come to every child when it is born to speak its doom - "some of the ætt of Ases, some of the ætt of alfs, some are daughters of Dvalinn (dwarves)". He adds that "Good norns of fine kin shape good lives; but those folk who have ill-shaping, that is ruled by ill norns". This seems to be closely tied to the belief in the luck of the clan, which the idises may perhaps have been seen as passing to the child at birth (or name-giving):

Unlike walkurjas, idises were widely worshipped. It is likely that, as with the alfs, the belief in the clan-mothers goes back to the eldest times. However, the oldest surviving examples we have of a cult specifically dealing with the "Mothers" comes from the Roman occupation of the western banks of the Rhine. There are a number of little clay figures and stone votive sculptures showing three women with (usually) crescent head-dresses and baskets of fruit, cornucopiae, or

suckling children sitting in a row. All of these bear inscriptions identifying them as the "Matronen". Many of the "Matronen" inscriptions are identified by tribe: "Suebian Mothers", "Germanic Mothers", "paternal Frisian Mothers"; others' names show them to be warders or gift-givers (Simek, *Dictionary*, pp. 204-08).

In *Ynglinga saga* and *Heiðreks saga*, a *disarsalr* (idis' hall) is spoken of. It is a place for sacrifice of various sorts. The king Aðils falls off his horse and dies in the idis' hall, and one of Heiðrekr's wives hangs herself there. The death of Aðils is especially interesting, as it is attributed to a witch; it is possible that, as with the story of Þiðrandi (discussed below), the attendant idis chose her own sacrifice.

As well as being protectors, idises also come to claim their kin when it is time for the living to die. Before Gunnarr begins his ill-fated faring to the hall of the Huns, his wife dreams that "Dead women came hence in the night; they were mourning-clad, and wished to choose thee, bidding you swiftly to their benches...they were your *disir*" ("Atlamáll in groenlenzco" 28).

The best-known story of the idises is that from *Kristni þáttur in Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar (Flateyjarbók)*. At a certain Winternights feast, a man called Þórhallr had an ill boding that someone should die that night, and said that no one should go out. But when most folk were asleep there was a knock at the door. Þiðrandi "took sword in hand and went out. He saw no one...he went then under the woodpile and heard riders galloping from the north. He saw that there were nine women and they were all in black clothes and had drawn swords in their hands. He also heard riders galloping from the south; they were also nine women all in light clothes on white horses. Then Þiðrandi wanted to turn inside and tell folk of it. Then the black-clad women came forward and attacked him, but he warded himself well and manfully. Some time afterward Þórhallr woke up and asked if Þiðrandi was awake, and he was not answered. Þórhallr said, "Then you must have overslept." Then they went out. There was moonshine and frost-weather. They found Þiðrandi lying wounded and he was borne in. And when folk had words with him he said all that had happened. He died at dawn that same morning and was laid in a howe according to the old custom of Heathen folk". Þórhallr then interprets the events as meaning that a new custom should come to the land, and says, "I expect that your *disir* which have followed this old faith have now learned of this changing of customs and that they shall be forsaken by their kin. Now they must not want to have no share from you before they part from you and they must have (taken) this as their part. But the better *disir* must have wanted to help him and were not able to do so as things stood."

Like Þiðrandi, Gísli Súrsson (Gísli the Outlaw) had two *draumkonur* (dream-women) who came to him, the better one giving him advice and the other one threatening. Shortly before his death, he dreamed that the second one came and washed him in blood; and after that he had such a fear of the dark that he could not dare to be alone. Again, the author of the saga gave the tale a slightly christian slant, but the basic belief in a bright idis helping and guarding and a dark idis calling towards death is probably heathen in origin. Part of Óðinn's doom-speech, as he reveals himself to Geirroðr at the end of *Grímnismál*, is "(your) *disir* are foelike - now you shall see Óðinn!" (that is, die). In *Reginismál*, the god counsels his hero Sigurðr, "That is very dangerous if your foot drops (if you stumble) when you go to do battle. Betraying *disir* stand at your two sides and wish to see you wounded." In his extensive bracteate studies, Karl Hauck has interpreted some of the animal figures, especially the bird-headed snake-monsters that appear to be threatening a rider on Tulstrup-C and Dannau-C, as showing just such ill-willing idises ("Fünens besonderer Anteil", pp. 120-27), which he sees as causing Balder's horse to stumble and be wounded as may be described in the Second Merseburger Charm (see "Balder").

Chiefly, however, the idises are helpful to their kin. Little is shown of their actual workings, except for one saga in which the family idis afflicts a kinsman with various illnesses to keep him from walking into an ambush that would otherwise have been fatal. We thus know that they have foresight (the word *spádisir* is used in *Völsunga saga* to describe Sigmundr's battle-protectresses in his final fight); to those who can hear them, they give warnings or advice. The special association of their worship with Winternights (mentioned in *Víga-Glúms saga* and *Heiðreks saga*) suggests that they are also goddesses of fruitfulness, probably in regards both to humans and their lands and cattle.

As well as having their own halls or hofs, the idises also had holy stones in which they dwelt. The Norwegian *Disahrøys* (stone-pile of the *disir*) suggests that harrows of rocks were built to these wights. This is very like the "harrow...of heaped stones" (*Hyndluljóð* 10) which Óttarr, who "trusted ever...in the *ásynjur*" built for Freyja; though such harrows were probably not exclusive to womanly wights, they do seem to have been thought very fitting.

The Frowe is called "Vanadís", idis of the Wans. This has often been taken to show that she is the leader of the idises or the great idis, but given the general usage of the word to mean "kinswoman", this reading is probably excessive. However, as Fro Ing is the lord of Alf-Home, and it is likely that the idises and alfs are womanly and manly clan-ghosts of the same sort, it seems clear that his sister should have a similar tie with the idises, and be called on when they are called, as is the usual custom of the true today.

Together with the Frowe/Fro-idis/alf pairings, there is also reason to think of a Frija/Wodan-idis/alf connection. The reference to Óðinn as being the god who will be angered by a christian at the *álfablót* in Sigvatr's *Austrafaravísur*, as discussed under "Alfs", suggests strongly that he has a part in the cult of those wights as well. As the realm of the dead, especially the ancestors and the mound-dead, is the area in which Wodan and Fro Ing overlap most and work most closely together, this is hardly surprising. Frija and her goddesses could also be called "the idises"; the motherly character of the *disir*, especially when the cult of the Matronen is thought on, seems to bring them at least as much into Frija's realm as the

Frowe's.

In *A Book of Troth*, Thorsson offers a "Blessing of the Dises" in which several of the different women's personal names with the "dís" element are used in a call to the idises (p. 168). Here we offer a short list from which folk can put together such a call. Those slightly familiar with Old Norse can also easily generate their own idis-names/descriptions; such created forms have been marked with an * here.

*Árdís

harvest-idis

Ásdís

Ase-idis

*Barnadís

idis of children

*Eplidís

apple-idis

Freydís

Freyr's idis *or* Freyja's idis (forms would have been identical in ON)

Herdís

army-idis

Hjálmdís

helm-idis

Hjördís

sword-idis

Jódís

horse-idis (note: used for Hel)

*Móðirdís

mother-idis

Óðindís

Óðinn's idis (only found twice, on late Swedish runestones -- may have been a cultic title, but more likely formed after the other god-idis compounds)

*Sigrdís

victory-idis

Spádís

prophecy-idis (used as a descriptive rather than personal name)

Úlfdís

wolf-idis

Valdís

slain-idis

Vanadis

idis of the Wans (the Frowe)

Vigdís

battle-idis

Þórdís

Þórr's idis

*Ættardís

clan's idis

Chapter XXI

Walkurjas (Valkyrjur, walkyriges, valkyries)

In modern times, the Walkurja has become one of the best-known figures of Northern spirituality (with a little help from Richard Wagner). The roles of the walkurjas that we see in our forebears' literature are several. Firstly, they ride out to the battlefield as Wodan's representatives to choose who shall die; this is the meaning of the name "walkurja". Secondly, they bear drink to Wodan and the einherjar in Walhall; their images on the Gotlandic picture stones suggest that they are especially responsible for giving the horn of welcome to the newly slain. Thirdly, they may also be responsible for raising the dead on Walhall's plain and healing them so that they may slay each other again and again till Ragnarök.

The oldest recorded uses of the word are in Anglo-Saxon, where "wælcyrge" is often used to gloss various Classical terms such as the names of the Furies and Bellona: in *The Wonders of the East*, *gorgoneus* is translated as *wælcyrging*, and mention is made of beasts which "have eight feet, and walkyries' eyes, and two heads". These, particularly the former, might be taken as speaking of the walkurjas' magical power of paralyzation (battle-fetter); they certainly strengthen the image of the walkurja as a frightening figure.

In modern times, the term "valkyrja" has often been used for the Higher Self, the warder of the soul and the shining bride with whom the consciousness seeks to be wedded, especially by Edred Thorsson (*FUTHARK*), and, following him, Kveldulf Gundarsson (*Teutonic Magic; Teutonic Religion*). This has caused much difficulty: since the walkurja is so closely associated with the cult of Óðinn, it seems difficult, if not impossible, for followers of other god/esses to call their own Higher Selves "valkyrjur". Gundarsson has suggested (*Teutonic Religion*) that perhaps the followers of other deities could assume manifestations of their own god/ess along the model of the valkyrja, but known by more fitting names (for instance, "Þrúðmaiden" for worshippers of Thonar). Likewise, those who interpret the walkurja/Higher Self as incorporating some of Jung's concept of the anima are baffled by the problem of women's relationship to this figure.

The concept of the walkurja as Shining Bride and Higher Self is based wholly on *Sigrdrífumál* and the Helgi poems. In the former, however, the walkurja is specifically sentenced to be married to Sigurðr as part of her disgrace. She has disobeyed Óðinn by choosing the wrong man to die, and so she is no longer a walkurja: she must enter the ordinary realm of women as a wife. Even in *Völsunga saga*, Brynhildr is not called *valkyrja*, only *skjaldmær*, "shield-maiden. In the Helgi-poems, the woman is only called a valkyrja in the prose (which was probably added by the scribe, long after the conversion of Iceland and the composition of the poems); in the poetry itself, she is only ever referred to as a *dís*. It can also be mentioned that, although Sigrún is able to ride over air and water to ward the living Helgi, while she lives herself, she is not able to follow the dead Helgi to Valhöll - hardly consistent with those women who are actually called *valkyrjur*, who fare to and from that hall in the course of doing Wodan's will (*Hákonarmál*) and bear drink to the heroes inside. In the actual poetry, the word "valkyrja" is used only in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, and there it is an insult: Sinfjötli accuses Guðmundr of having been a harmful walkurja "with All-Father", awefull and ill-willing, who set all the *einherjar* to fighting her battles. Likewise, Sigrún is not called "valkyrja" in *Völsunga saga*, although the compiler knew the Helgi lays. Neckel suggests that this omission is due to an earlier perception of the valkyrja as a frightful being, which made the term inappropriate for application, so that Sigrún and Sváva were not originally conceived of as valkyries. The same holds true for the swan-maidens of *Völundarkviða*: both the term "valkyrjur" and the association of the swan-women with battle appear only in the prose, not the poetry, while the theme of the animal-bride who is happily married to a human man for several years, but then reclaims her beast-hide and leaves him, is very widespread and has nothing to do with walkurjas. In one of our oldest skaldic poems, Þórbjörn hornklofi's *Hrafnsmál* (ca. 900), which is also the first recorded ON usage of the word "valkyrja", it is specifically stated that the woman speaking to the raven is a wise valkyrja who understands bird-speech, to whom no man is dear. The belief in a womanly soul-warder, bride, and "Higher Self" should not be forgotten - it will be spoken of further under "Idises" and "Soul, Death, and Rebirth" - but it is probably incorrect to give that being the name "walkurja".

The arguments against seeing the walkurja as being essentially the hero's higher self and bride also stand against the idea of seeing human women as walkurjas. Today, it is quite common either to describe any strong woman (especially warrior-women) as a "valkyrie", or to use the word for the woman who bears the horn about at holy rites. The shield-maiden or Maiden Warrior is, indeed, a mighty figure of Germanic literature (and probably life in the old days, and certainly life now!), but there is no justification for identifying her with the wild wights who ride above the battlefield to choose men's death and doom the battle's outcome. There were probably human women who practiced magical arts to take part in battle in this manner, as is discussed under "Idises", but they are unlikely to have been universally followers of Wodan. Whereas the few surviving instances of "valkyrja" in Old Norse poetry, with the exception of *Hrafnsmál* where the walkurja is actually interrogating a raven (a bird defined in skaldic kennings almost exclusively, and interchangeably, by the names of Óðinn and the valkyrjur) about a man who is probably an Óðinn-hero (Haraldr inn hárfagri), not only explicitly connect these women with Óðinn, but show them as being wholly spiritual beings. Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* (C.E. 1014), which

puts "wiccan ond wælcyrrian" together with murderers, kinslayers, and fornicators as destructive influences upon the nation, does hint at a belief in human walkurjas; however, Wulfstan also emphasizes a euhemeristic interpretation of the Heathen gods in *De Falsis Deis*. This, applied to walkurjas, could reasonably turn the battle-spirits into human sorceresses. If the supernatural walkurjas were generally seen as partaking in Wodan's magical practises, as the name-pair Göndul/Göndlir suggests, this could also have blurred the distinction between spirit and sorceress in the christian cleric's eyes.

As bearers of the horn in Walhall, the walkurjas are the Wodanic mirroring of the normal womanly role: as a drighthen's hall must have the atheling-frowes, his wife and daughters, bearing drink to the ruler and his thanes, so Walhall must have fitting women doing this honour to the god and his einherjar, as in *Eiríksmál*, when he bids "walkurjas bear drink, as if a prince came". Despite the reading usually given to the little Viking Age pendants of horn-bearing women from Sweden, however, this does not mean that all women bearing drink are walkurjas - though those who appear on the Gotlandic picture stones as holding the horn up to a rider on an eight-legged horse, with a great hall behind them in front of which a fight is going on, almost certainly are. However, carrying the horn about at a holy feast or offering a greeting-drink to a guest was one of the most usual activities of the Germanic woman, from the free farmer's hut to the halls of the god/esses. At a blessing made to Wodan alone, the horn-bearing woman might be thought to play the part of the walkurja in his hall; but at other rites, this would hardly seem fitting.

As the Norse and English sources show them to us, the walkurjas are figures of awe and even terror, who delight in the deaths of men. As battlefield scavengers, they are very close to the ravens, who are described as *walceasega*, "picking over the dead", in the Old English interpretive translation of *Exodus*, and the good Prof. Tolkien suggests that the valkyrie-word "derived partly from the actual carrion-birds of battle, transformed in mythological imagination" (*Exodus*, p. 50). The steed of the walkurja, like that of the frightful troll-woman of *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar* (*Heimskringla*) who gloats over the dead and feeds corpses to her mounts while claiming the blood for herself, is the wolf; the Rök Stone speaks of "where Gunnr's horse sees food on the battlefield, twenty kings who lie there". Gunnr ("Battle") is one of the most typical walkurja-names; others include Skögul (either "Forward-Striker" or "The Raging"), Hlökk ("Shrieker"), Göll ("Loud" - cf. Óðinn names Göllnir, Göllorr, Göllungr), and Herfjötur ("Battle-Fetter"). In *Darraðarljóð*, a man sees these women weaving in a womanly way - but they are weaving human guts, with human heads as the weights, a sword for the beater and an arrow for the shuttle. This poem is associated with the Battle of Clontarf (1016), so it is likely to be Heathen in conception.

As spoken of under "Wodan", the walkurjas can best be seen as the womanly reflections of Wodan: they do his work and share in all his crafts and being. This is a narrower role than the word "valkyrie" has held in *Ásatrú* until now, but one better-founded. It also deals with the vexing question of why a part of the soul which all human beings share - the "Higher Self" - should have been thought to be so strongly associated with one god, and not the most widely beloved god at that: the answer is that after the Heathen period, the term was applied widely and romantically by the antiquarian scribes writing down the Eddic poems.

Contributors

- KveldúlfR Gundarsson, "The Valkyrie in the Cult of Óðinn", *Idunna*.

Chapter XXII

Alfs, Dwarves, Land-Wights, and Huldfolk

The word alf (álfr, elf) is used for many sorts of wight: not only the Light Alfs, Dark Alfs (mound-elves), and Swart Alfs that Grimm separates out of German folklore and the Norse sources, but also different sorts of land-wights (wood-elves, mountain-elves, field elves, water-elves, and sea-elves). In the Troth, we usually speak of the Light Alfs and Dark Alfs as alfs, the Swart Alfs as dwarves, and the rest of them as land-wights.

The alfs are clearly a holy folk; the alliterative phrase "Ases and alfs" is often used in the Poetic Edda. The question, "What is (the trouble?) among Ases? what is among alfs?" is also asked in *Drymskviða* 7, hinting that the happenings of the two are closely bound. The phrase "at ganga álfrek" (*Eyrbyggja saga* ch. 4), literally "to go drive out the elves", meant to relieve oneself, which fits in with the general belief, also described in *Eyrbyggja saga*, that excreting on holy ground defiled it - this, again, hints that the alfs and the god/esses go closely together. This likening also, as Turville-Petre points out, appears in the Anglo-Saxon charm "Against a Sudden Pain" in which the phrases "shot of Ases...shot of alfs...shot of hags" appear together (*Myth and Religion*, p. 230) - though the context of the charm suggests rather that the Ases had sunk to a level where they could be counted together with witches and lesser spiritual wights than that the alfs were seen as godly beings at the time the charm was composed. Of the Light and Dark Alfs themselves we see nothing in the Eddas; it is only the dwarves who seem to take part in myth.

The word "alf" is likeliest to stem from a root meaning "white", with the various suggestions of "gleaming" (as in the Anglo-Saxon man's name *Ælfbeorht* - "alf-bright" and adjective *ælfsciene* - "beautiful as an alf"), and "white mist-form" (de Vries, *Wörterbuch* p. 5). The latter reading may be tied to the mysterious Nibelungen ("mist-folk" - ON *Níflungar*), who are a supernatural tribe in the first part of *Nibelungenlied* but whose name is also attached to the Burgundian royal house in the later half of the poem and in the Norse materials, perhaps through the character of Hagen/Högni, whom *Þiðreks saga* tells us was the son of an alf.

The alfs had a very strong cult in the Viking Age; the Winternights feast was sometimes called *álfablót* (as well as *dísablót* and *Freysblót*). When the skald Sigvatr, a christian converted by Óláfr inn digri, came to a farmhouse in late autumn, he was told that he could not enter because the Alf-Blessing was being celebrated - as a christian, he was presumably unwelcome at the family's holy feast. We do not know what sort of alfs were being hailed at this blessing, though, as spoken of later, it is likeliest to have been the mound-alfs. Interestingly, although the alfs are usually thought of as being tied to the Wanic cult, Sigvatr tells us that the housewife told him "I am afraid of Óðinn's wrath" (*Austrfararvisur*, ca. 1019 C.E.), suggesting that Wodan, also, had a special relationship with them. Since Sigvatr was a first-generation convert, he is not likely to have confused Wodan with another god, or used the name without reason.

In his Edda Snorri tells us that the Light Alfs are bright and shining, very fair to look upon, which fits well with the first reading of the word's etymology. The Sun is also called "álfróðull" (Glory of the Alfs), which seems to fit largely with the Light Alfs, as neither the Dark Alfs nor dwarves care for her light; according to *Alvíssmál*, the alfs also name the Sun "Fair Wheel". These alfs are closely tied to Fro Ing, the lord of Álfheimr; as airy and bright wights, they may help in the bringing of fair weather. Grimm comments that, "Of the dwellings of light elves in heaven the folk-tales have no longer anything to tell" (*Teutonic Mythology*, II, p. 454). It is also possible that the term "Light Alf" may have been a synonym for "god/ess", with "alf" being used poetically as a broad term for "spiritual being". In modern times, the Light Alfs are sometimes seen as messengers for the god/esses, bringing might down from the Ases' Garth to the Middle Garth.

We know far more about the Dark Alfs, or mound-alfs, than about the other two sorts. It is clear from both Norse sources and Scandinavian folklore that the Dark Alfs are dead folk, especially those ghosts dwelling in the howe. One of the many Norwegian kings named Óláfr, after his burial, was thought to bring fruitfulness and good to his kingdom even from the howe, and therefore was called "Geirstaðaálfr", the Elf of Geirstaðr. Indeed, the Old Norse word *álfkarl* (male elf) was taken over in Irish as *alcaille*, "ghost of the dead" (de Vries, *Wörterbuch*, p. 6). In *Hávamál*, when Óðinn is speaking of those who teach runes to the various folks, he says, "Óðinn among the Æsir, but Dáinn for the alfs, Dvalinn for the dwarves..." The name "Dáinn", also a dwarf-name, simply means "Dead One".

Since the worship of the mound-dead has been carried out from the Stone Age onward, the cult of the alfs is one of the oldest strands in the weave of the elder Troth. From the oldest times, that worship has been characterized by the offering of food and drink to the howe-dwellers. In *Kormáks saga*, it is told how a badly wounded man was instructed to put the blood and flesh of a steer on a hill in which the alfs dwelt. Gifts of food and drink put on the howe nearest the house at holy times, especially Yule, were known up through modern times (Feilberg, *Jul*, II, p. 20); it is quite likely that in older days this was done whenever there was need. In the Bronze Age, many holy stones were marked with small round depressions, now called alf-cups; till modern times, again, offerings were poured or set into these little holes in the rock. Those true folk of today who do not live near Germanic Heathen howes can chip or grind small cup-shaped depressions into whatever rocks are near their homes so as to make offerings of a like sort to the alfs.

Turville-Petre suggests that the álfar may have been manly counterparts to the womanly dísir - the dead men of the clan, as the dísir were the dead women - and this has often been taken up by true folk today, Fro Ing and the alfs being called on together with the Frowe and the idises. Aside from Óláfr, there is no reason to think of the mound-alfs as being necessarily manly: women were buried in howes as often as men, and individual alfs are not seen often enough in Norse sources for us to know whether they are likely to have been of one sex or not. However, it may be that the words, while referring to the same wights, were distinguished by gender in the Viking Age. Certainly *álfr* is a masculine word and *dís* is feminine, so, at least regarding their use in the cult of the dead, the two could quite easily have been polarized. Turville-Petre supports this theory by mentioning that, according to *Heiðreks saga*, "the woman who reddened the altar during the *disablót* was called *Álfhildr*; she was daughter of *Álfr*; king of *Álfheimar*" (*Myth and Religion*, p. 231). Since the source is relatively late, antiquarian consistency might have changed *disablót* to *álfablót*, or *Álfhildr*'s name to one of the many names with "dís" as an element, but this did not take place, suggesting that a tradition may have been reported accurately.

If such a distinction did indeed exist during Heathen times, it was lost later, and all the mound-folk called alfs; but Scandinavian folk ballads offer tales which suggest that these alf-women still acted as the idises (in their darker shape) could. The Danish "Herr Oluf Han Rider" tells of a man who rides through a grove where elf-folk were dancing on his wedding-eve. One of the women asks him to dance with her, but he refuses. She strikes him over the heart; he rides home to his betrothed, and the two of them are dead by the next morning. In the Icelandic "Ólafur liljurós", the alf-woman asks the man to dwell in the hill with them; he refuses on the grounds that he is a christian. She then asks him for a kiss, which he gives "half-heartedly" (with half-hugr); she stabs him with her knife, mortally wounding him. As spoken of under "Idises", such bidding and its consequences are typical: one way or another, the chosen man will join the woman in death.

The mound-folk are especially interested in human babies, whom they will steal if they can, leaving changelings in their place. According to folk belief, they can breed, but this is rare and difficult, and there are several tales of human women called to midwife alf births.

Alfs, like trolls, etins, and god/esses, can mate with humans. This happens often in Scandinavian folklore. From the late heathen/early mediæval period, perhaps the most notable example is Högni (Hagen) of *Piðreks saga*. According to the saga, he was "gray as ash, and sallow as bast, and pale as a dead man", easily mistaken for a troll in a dim light. The belief that Hagen was the son of an alf may have come to Scandinavia through the original German source for both *Piðreks saga* and *Nibelungenlied* (though, as mentioned above, the Niflungar/Burgundian association suggest the possibility of an older connection which, like Siegfried's spear-death, was lost in the Norse but retained in the German materials); but the description is typically Norse. There are a number of later folk stories of men who are seduced by alf women (and father children on them), and of brides who are stolen by the alfs on their wedding day. There are also stories of men who cast steel over their elvish lovers to bind them to the Middle-Garth so that they can marry them.

Folk who spend time with the alfs often come back mad, or at the very least sorrowful and wandering in their wits. The expression "taken into the mountain" was used whenever someone underwent a sudden psychological change, which was often associated with getting lost in the mountains or woods. The ringing of church bells was thought to force the alfs to let their captives go (Kvideland & Sehmsdorf, *Scandinavian Folk Belief and Legend*, p. 212). Simek tells us that the German "Erlkönig", on whom Goethe's ballad (set as a song by Schubert) is based, "originates from an incorrect translation of Herder's who misunderstood the Danish *elverkonge* ('elf-king') to be Erlenkönig ('alder-king'), but attributed to it some of the darker attributes of elves (*Dictionary*, p. 74); that is, trying to lure a child away, and when that fails, taking it by force, leaving a corpse behind.

Alfs are also well-known for "alf-shot" - little invisible arrows which cause effects in humans and cattle ranging from sudden sharp pains, local swellings, and inexplicable wasting sicknesses to bone cancer and even death. Lumbago and arthritis are especially thought of as the result of alf-shot. This belief is common throughout the Northern world, with forms of the word appearing in all Germanic dialects (together with the similar "troll-shot", "witch-shot", and "dwarf-shot"); it probably stems from the eldest times. Those who suspect they or their animals may be suffering from alf-shot should work the charm "Wiþ Færstice" (Against a Sudden Pain), the text and translation of which can be found in G. Storms' *Anglo-Saxon Magic*.

Alfs dislike it greatly when stables are built or people relieve themselves on their mounds. There are also several stories of mounds with trees growing on them from which it was forbidden to break branches; when this bidding was broken, great ill-luck overcame the one who had done it.

However, the alfs can also get along well with humans. Tales abound of folk who have done favours for them and are well-rewarded for it. If offered a gift by them, especially in payment for services done, it is far safer to take it than to refuse it. Food and drink are quite common (though there is a counter-belief that to eat alfish food within their hall will trap one there forever). There is also a recurring theme of an alf-gift which seems worthless (dead leaves, wood-shavings, and such) turning into gold - quite the opposite of the Celtic belief in "fairy gold" which looks valuable, but is actually something worthless with a glamour laid on it. The Anglo-Saxon names such as *Ælfgiftu* (Alf-Gift), *Ælfred* (Alf-Rede - mod. Alfred), and *Ælfwin* (Alf-Friend - mod. Alvin) also speak of a close and good relationship between alfs and humans in the English tradition.

Alfs can be seen through knot-holes (elf-bore), holes made by an alf-shot in an animal's hide (Grimm, *Teutonic*

Mythology, II, p. 461), and probably natural holes in stones, which were thought to be especially magical.

Swart Alfs (Dwarves)

Norse literature tells us more about the Swart Alfs, or dwarves, than about the other sorts of alf. According to Snorri, the dwarves were made from the maggots crawling in Ymir's corpse when the Middle-Garth was shaped. He also mentions that the Swart Alfs are black as pitch, but this may well be his own understanding drawn from the name; in *Alvíssmál* 2, Þórr comments on how pale the dwarf Alvíss is, and asks if he has been with a corpse in the night.

Like the Dark Alfs, the Swart Alfs are closely associated with death, and may in fact often be dead folk themselves, as the names "Dáinn" (a dwarf-name as well as the alfs' ruler), Nár (Corpse), and Bláinn (blue/black - cf. "Hel-Blue", a common description of corpses, especially undead ones) suggest. Other dwarf names relate to their crafts: Næfr (the Capable One). They have magical skills, as shown by the names Gandálfr (Wand-Alf or Magical Alf), and are wise, as seen by the names Fjölsviðr (Very Wise - a name shared with Óðinn), Alvíss (All-Wise), and Ráðviðr (Rede-Wise). They can be deceitful: their ruler is called Dvalinn (Deluder). The word "dwarf" itself has been variously etymologized as stemming from Indo-European **dhuer-* (damage), Old Indian *dhvaras* (demonic being), and Indo-European **dreugh* (the root of "dream", but also of the German *Trug*, "deception"). The last reading fits best with the meaning of "Dvalinn". Simek mentions that "the origin of the concept of dwarves is either to be found in nature spirits or else in demons of death...(but) Nature spirits are probably more likely to be elves. However, it is possible that there was a mixture of concepts" (*Dictionary*, pp. 68-69).

The relationship of dwarves with dreams and delusion has led today to the understanding that their land, Swart-Alf Home, is mirrored in the human soul by the subconscious, the realm of shadows where thoughts are forged into being.

Four dwarves, Austri (East), Norðri (North), Vestri (West), and Suðri (South), hold up the sky - the dome of Ymir's skull. These dwarves are sometimes called on today in warding the quarters of the holy ring. Alice Karlsdóttir's reading of the tale of the Brisingamen also has them as the four forgers of the Frowe's necklace (who are not named in *Sörla þáttur*).

The Swart Alfs are, so far as we can tell, always male - though modern fantasy writers have come up with the ingenious explanation that dwarf-women exist, but are also bearded, making it difficult for humans to tell the sexes apart. However, male dwarves are known for stealing human women away (Grimm, II, pp. 466-67), while human men do not marry dwarf-women; the one reference Grimm quotes to this happening speaks of a mound-alf's daughter, not a dwarf. The dwarves usually appear to be old, with long gray beards; they are short and gnarled, but powerful. Often they wear red caps, which make them invisible to human folk; the Tarnkappe of *Nibelungenlied*, which had the same power, was also a dwarfish product, and part of the Nibelungen-hoard guarded by the dwarf Alberich (Alf-Ruler). In the Norse version of the story, the magical cap from the dwarf's hoard was the *ægishjálmar* (Helm of Awe), which made shape-changing possible and terrified the foes of the one who wore it.

Like trolls, dwarves dwell in mountains and stones, which are often the doorways to the Otherworld. *Ynglinga saga* tells how the Yngling king Sveigðir sought for Óðinn's dwelling a long time, and one evening after sunset, when he went from the mead-hall to his sleeping place, he saw a dwarf under a great stone. The dwarf stood in the stone's door and called Sveigðir, bidding him come in if he wanted to meet Óðinn. Sveigðir leapt into the stone, and it closed behind him, and he never came out. In *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, the king Svafrlami (or Sigrlami in an alternate version) saw two dwarves, Dvalinn and Dulinn, by a stone at sunset and barred them from the stone with his sword until they had promised to make him the best weapon possible. That was the sword Tyrfingr: but when they had given it to him, Dvalinn told him that it would be a man's bane whenever it was drawn, and would do three niðing-works, and that it would be Svafrlami's own bane. Then Svafrlami struck at him, but the dwarf had already gone into the stone. Dwarves are not warrior-like, and can be forced to work by threats - but they hold grudges very well, and always get their revenge.

Again like trolls, dwarves are turned to rock by the light of the sun; Thonar gets rid of his daughter's dwarfish suitor Alvíss by distracting him with questions until daylight strikes him, a theme otherwise typical of troll-tales both in Norse poetry (cf. *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*) and Icelandic folk-tales. They can, however, fare above ground by daylight in the form of stags; the four stags that chew at the World-Tree's bark all have dwarf-names, and may indeed be North, East, South, and West in their daylight shapes. The dwarf Andvari, keeper of the Rhine's hoard, took the shape of a great pike, and the Old English charm against dwarves also describes them in the form of spiders.

Above all, however, dwarves are the greatest of smiths (with the exception of Weyland, spoken of later in this chapter). They made all the great treasures of the god/esses, and many things for human folk. Although there are no traces of a common cult of the dwarves, as there was for the alfs, it is not unlikely that smiths might have given these wights special worship and called on them for craft. Certainly our legends sometimes have heroes being apprenticed or fostered by dwarves. The German Siegfried is sent to the dwarf Mime as his apprentice; in the Norse version, Sigurðr is the foster-son of the smith Reginn. According to the German tradition preserved in *Þiðreks saga*, Weyland was also apprenticed to dwarves.

The dwarves are also the keepers of all the wealth within the earth, and do not necessarily appreciate humans taking that wealth out: most mining communities have legends of ill-willing wights who cut ropes and weaken shorings. Those who work with metals and stones, as well as hailing the dwarves for crafts, would do well to give them gifts for this

sake.

Human beings can become dwarves or alfs. Such a transformation appears in the Norse Völsung/Nibelung legend, where Reginn - originally a human, the brother of Fáfnir and the skin-changer Óttarr - turns into a dwarf, even as Fáfnir becomes a dragon. Since the Germanic dragon, as Professor Tolkien pointed out in "The Monsters and the Critics", is never a natural animal, but rather the ghost of a dead man guarding his hoard, and some dwarves also seem to be dead people, it is possible that the transformations of Fáfnir and Reginn were brought about posthumously by their obsessions with the hoard of the Rhine (originally belonging to the dwarf Andvari). As a smith, Reginn was naturally closest to the dwarf-kind.

Another such change seems to take place in Weyland, as spoken of in *Völundarkviða*. Although the legendary smith is called "prince of alfs" early in the poem, he seems wholly human: he eats, hunts, and is overcome by sleep, making it easy for his foes to capture him. However, during the long trial in which he is imprisoned, hamstrung, and made to forge for Niðuðr, the might of need and his craft begin to change him. He does not need sleep any more, but smiths continuously, becoming as tireless and mighty a smith as any of the Swart Alfs. By the time he has wrought his full revenge, he has passed wholly outside of the human world and become an alf in truth. When he says "Well I... would be on my feet, those which Niðuðr's warriors took from me", he is acknowledging the destruction of Weyland the man; when he takes to the air on the wings he has forged for himself, he becomes wholly Weyland the Smith of our folk-legends, the "wise alf" who lives yet and was given gifts and worship throughout the Teutonic world.

Land-Wights

The land-wights are beings who dwell in natural features such as streams, stones, and waterfalls. They take many shapes, often humanlike, often not. The land-wights can be roused to defend their land against magical attacks, as in the story from *Heimskringla* (*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*) in which a wizard goes to Iceland in whale-shape to see if it can be invaded. He sees it crawling with land-wights everywhere. When he tries to go ashore, the four guardians of the land - dragon in the east-northeast, bird in the north, bull in the west, and mountain giant in the south-southwest - each with a host of smaller beings in the same shape following them, attack him. He returns to report to King Haraldr Gormsson that Iceland is too strongly warded for an invasion to be successful. These four warders still appear on the back of Icelandic kronur.

Unlike some alfs and dwarves, the land-wights seem never to have been human; Iceland, which had been uninhabited except for the odd Irish monk (and some of them were very odd indeed), was already virtually seething with them when the Norse landed. They are the wights which can most easily be reached by those who dwell in the New World; while those land-wights have long been used to Amerindian ways, it has been found that they respond well to whoever comes to them with courtesy and respect. Some true folk in America add tobacco to the land wights' offerings of bread and drink to honour the local customs and see that the wights get what they are used to.

Throughout the Germanic world, the cult of the land-wights lasted far longer than the cult of the Ases and Wans; in fact, it is still a living belief in Iceland today, where many farmhouses have boulders that they will not mow too closely around nor let their children play on. From the period of christianization onward, there were stringent laws against giving any sort of worship to rocks, trees, or springs, such as the General Admonition of Charlemagne, ca. 787, and his Special Capitulary for the Missi, ca. 802, and the Sermon VI of the False Boniface, ca. 800 (Chisholm, *Grove and Gallows*). This worship was usually characterized by bringing food and drink to the place, then eating it in the name of the dweller there and/or leaving a share of it at the holy stead.

According to the Heathen law of Iceland, as recorded in *Landnámabók* (*Hauksbók* ch. 268), the dragon-prows of ships had to be taken off before coming within sight of land to keep from frightening the land-wights away. They were probably raised for the same reason during attacks and raids: they terrified the wights who dwelt in the defenders' lands and kept them from lending their aid in the battle. When Egill Skalla-Grimsson set his horse-head niðstöng (nithing pole) against King Eiríkr Blood-Axe and his queen Gunnhildr, he first stated that he turned it against the royal couple, then faced the horse-head towards in to land and said, "I turn this nith against the land-wights who dwell in the land, so that all of them fare wild ways, nor find nor meet their homes, before they drive King Eiríkr and Gunnhildr out of the land" (*Egils saga*, ch. 57). The horse-head pole probably worked in much the same way as the "dragon-prow"; in fact, remnants of a Danish ship-prow show that it was a beast with a horselike head and mane of iron curls.

If the land-wights are frightened or angered, all things in the land will go badly until they are at rest again. It is needful to get their permission before doing any major landscaping, especially if it involves moving trees or boulders, in which they often dwell. The landwights tend to dislike loud noises and are affrighted by the violent shedding of blood. It can be guessed that they also dislike pollution, large quantities of motor traffic, and littering. They can speak directly to those who are sensitive enough to hear them; to others, they may appear in dreams.

Worship of the land-wights was probably not carried out as a large-scale religious activity, though it is good to save food and drink from the holy feasts to put by whatever creek, stone, or tree houses the ones nearest to you. From the Icelandic sagas, we have two examples of individuals with close personal relationships with land-wights. *Kristni saga* and *Þorvalds þáttr víðförla* speak of how a chieftain brought sacrifice to a rock-dweller called his *ármaðr* (harvest-man) or *spámaðr* (spae-man) until the wight was driven out by holy water splashed on the stone. The names given to the rock-dweller suggest that not only do land-wights bring fruitfulness to their friends, but they can also give wise rede. In

Landnámabók, a man by the name of Goat-Björn had trouble with his goats. He dreamed that a rock-dweller came to him, offering to become his partner. After that a new billy-goat appeared among Björn's herd and they began to breed. When Björn went to the Þing, or his brothers went fishing, folk with the Sight could see all the land-wights with him. Making friends with the land-wights is clearly a personal thing, calling for a certain degree of quiet and privacy so that you and they can hear each other.

Although the land-wights were not subjects of myth, they seem to have been very much a part of the daily lives of all our Germanic forebears - wights to be loved and dealt with often. As Óðinn suggests in "Hávamál" 44: "If you have a friend whom you trust in well, and wish to have good of him, open your mind to him and share gifts, fare often to find him". In the old days, as we see from the wide spread of the cult of the land-wights and the law of the Icelanders, caring for these beings was very much in the minds of all. That is even more needful in these times, when a great many human activities seem as though planned to offend them. It is up to the true to make friends with the land-wights again so that both we and they can flourish.

Huldfolk

The Huldfolk (hidden folk) are figures of continental Scandinavian folklore. They often overlap with both the Dark Alfs and the land-wights, and in the later folklore the term is applied generally to every sort of being which cannot usually be seen by human beings, particularly the mound-dwellers.

One of the most typical characteristics of huldfolk is that they appear as beautiful human beings, but have animal features such as cow-tails or hooves; or else their backs are hollow or overgrown with bark. They try to keep these things hidden, as they take particular delight in seducing and even sometimes marrying human beings.

The Swedes believed in a woman called the *skogsrå* (Forest Ruler), who lives in the wood and seduces hunters and charcoal-burners. In return for their sexual favours, she helps their work by charming their rifles so that they will never miss, or keeping their fires burning while they sleep. Any good done for the *skogsrå* is likely to be returned with good. In one folktale, a pair of hunters run across two forest women, one of whom is about to give birth. They give her pieces of their clothes to wrap the baby in, and she tells them that the next day, one will shoot her dog and the other her cat. The next day, one shoots a wolf and the other a lynx (*Scandinavian Folktales*, p. 89). Such wood-wives are also found in German folklore, where they teach humans herb-craft and help with milling and other such tasks; it was customary to bake a little loaf for them with each lot of bread, and to leave it out in the wood, and they would answer by leaving cakes of their own on the plough or in the furrow. They highly dislike bread flavoured with caraway seeds, as do several other sorts of huldfolk. There are also male wood-wights, but they are more retiring and less good-natured (Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, II, pp. 483-85).

Another sort of water-wight is the *nöck* or *näck* who dwells in streams, pools, and rivers. The word is the same as our English "nicor" or the much diminished form, "nixie". In the Anglo-Saxon sources, they are fearsome etin-kin, worthy foes for Beowulf to use his sword on; however, in the Scandinavian folklore, they can be helpful. The *Näck* will tune fiddles and teach folk to play the fiddle if he is offered a black lamb; if a fiddler lets this wight suck blood from his finger, the *Näck* will teach him a certain tune that everyone who hears must dance to. He is still a fearsome wight: it is said in Norway that he claims a life every year. Although German and English folklore remember less of the wights themselves, there are many rivers of which the same is said, including the small and sluggish English Cam (the Warder of the Lore can verify the truth of this legend) and the German Saale, who claims her victims on Walpurgisnacht or Midsummer's (Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, II, p. 494). When going out on a river, it is recommended to make a small gift of food and drink so that the wight does not get the idea of choosing its own sacrifice. In Iceland, such water-wights are said to disguise themselves as horses, which are perfectly safe to ride so long as they do not get near open water; if they do, they sink down and drown the rider. *Landnámabók* (*Hauksbók* 71) describes what was probably such a creature. Auðun stoti sees an apple-gray horse running over from the lake Hjarðarvatn; he sets the horse to work, and it works so hard that its hooves are sunken to the fetlocks in the field, but after sundown it breaks all its harness and runs back to the lake.

The Scandinavian *näck* is always male, but *havfruen* (harbour-maids, mermaids) are known as well. The most famous female water-wight is probably *die Lorelei* of the Rhine. These women have spae-sight, and can be made to answer questions; in *Nibelungenlied*, Hagen sees three water-maids bathing in the Danube, and they prophesy to him that all who cross the river must die.

Contributors

The folk of [Hrafnar](#)

Kveldulfr Hagan Gundarsson, from "Wayland the Smith", in *Mountain Thunder* 2, 3-5.

Alice Karlsdóttir, from "Freyja's Necklace", in *Mountain Thunder* 10, pp. 21-22.

Chapter XXIII

House-Ghosts

All through the Germanic world, we have the belief in house-ghosts. These wights are called by different names - nissen in Denmark, tomten in Sweden, tussen in Norway, kobolds in Germany, among others - but they seem to be all of the same sort. In Scandinavia, the house-ghosts are usually seen as little men, often wearing gray clothes and pointed red caps; the Danish nisse is also said to be thumbless. As with the beliefs in alfs and land-wights, the belief in house-ghosts long outlived the worship of the Ases and Wans; the custom of putting porridge out for the tomten or nisse has lasted to the present day in Scandinavia, although non-Heathen households take it no more seriously than they do putting out cookies and milk for Santa Claus.

One of the Norwegian names for the house-ghost is *haugbo* (also appearing in Orkney dialect as *hogboy*) - "howe-dweller" or *haugbonde*, "howe-farmer". Sometimes nissen or tomten are also said to live in mounds on the land. In "Gardvoren og senga hans", Solheim suggests that the house-ghost was the first owner of the farm, who dwells there as the embodiment of its prosperity - and perhaps to make sure that things are done rightly by those who come after him. This suggests that the house-ghosts of modern Scandinavian folklore may be much the same as the wights the Old Norse sources knew as alfs - the ancestral mound-dwellers who look after their kin. This idea may also be strengthened by the fact that the house-ghosts are always, with no recorded exceptions, male.

The house-ghosts are not always tied down to their mounds, however. While some are strongly associated with places (particularly communal places, even making their home in churches), many others will cheerfully pick up and follow a family where-ever it goes, whether they are asked to go or not. The theme of a family that tries to change houses to get away from a troublesome house-ghost, only to see him sitting on top of the wagon and chuckling about what a fine day it is to move is widespread through both Scandinavia and Great Britain (where it is attributed to the Gaelic brownie as well). Such wights also guard ships, mills, and other places where folk work - your office may have its very own house-ghost.

The chief role of these wights is to take care of the house and its surrounding lands. In rural households, they make sure that the bread rises, the cream turns to butter in the churn, the cows are fed well, and the field-work is successful. Today, most of them have different ways of looking after the families they follow. House-ghosts make sure that your keys and glasses are where you can find them, that the house's wiring is safe, and generally that things go as they ought. They help with cleaning and garden-work; they are annoyed by lazy people, but make things easier for the hard worker.

The house-ghost is also particularly responsible for bringing luck to the household, sometimes by stealing it from other households. One story from Denmark describes how a farmer had no fodder for his cattle, but his nisse went out at night with a cow and brought her home loaded with hay (Kvidelund & Sehmsdorf, *Scandinavian Folk Belief and Legends*, pp. 239-40). Another tale from Norway, variants of which appear all over Scandinavia has a man seeing his tusse struggling with a blade of grain and laughing at how light the load is. The tusse replies that he will see soon enough how heavy the burden was, and turns around to carry it the other way. After that there was nothing but poverty, illness, and bad luck on the farm, because the tusse was carrying all the good from it.

These wights work tremendously hard as long as they are appreciated, and ask little in return - a plate of porridge and a glass of beer every Thursday, with a share of feast-food on holy days, will usually keep them very happy indeed. In the last couple of hundred years, it has been found that they like tobacco as well. They are also fond of whole milk (though not skimmed, which will make them unhappy because they think you are being stingy with them - house-ghosts do not understand about cholesterol), and Kveldúlfur Gundarsson has found that his house-ghosts like vodka and other sorts of schnapps as well. If you think of your house-ghosts as old folk from rural Scandinavia or Germany and ask yourself what they would have wanted to eat or drink at home, you probably can't go too wrong. This food is either put in the barn or stable, where the house-ghost usually lives in rural households or beside the hearth (Diana Paxson suggests having a stone there to serve as his dwelling, on which the plate of food can be placed). If you have no hearth, the stone should go in whatever place you have chosen as the heart of the house. Grimm tells us that the house-ghost's yearly wage, given to him on Yule morning, was "grey cloth, tobacco, and a *shovelful of earth*" (II, p. 512).

One must take leaving the food out for the house-ghost very seriously. There are a number of tales of folk who ate the house-ghost's porridge themselves and/or defiled his plate, with consequences ranging from his aggravated departure to the culprit being beaten to death. It is especially important to give the house-ghost his food at Yule (and probably Winternights as well, since he will just have finished a long and hard stint of work). House-ghosts often revenge slights violently, and since they are supposed to be very strong in spite of their size, this is something to be wary of.

House-ghosts also dislike noisy evenings, although the nisse is fond of music. If you are planning a raucous party, you should probably warn your house-ghost beforehand, and give him fitting food and drink before and after as a reward for his tolerance. According to Swedish superstition, the tomten particularly hates chopping in the yard on a Thursday evening (Grimm, II, p. 509), and probably dislikes any sort of disturbance on this evening, as it is the night on which he gets his porridge and beer, and presumably his night off.

One of the most common stories about house-ghosts is also told of brownies in Scotland: the folk of the farm see their house-ghost dressed in tatters, and either feel sorry for him or want to reward him for all the hard work he has done for them. They make a little set of clothes, which he puts on with delight, declaring that now he is too fine to do farm-work, and they never see him again. However, other sorts of gift were apparently customary in Germany: clause 103 of the Penitential of the German Church (ca. 900 C.E.) asks, "Did you make bows and shoes of a size that small boys would use; and, then put them in your cellar or barn for satyrs and goblins to play with so that they will bring good things and you will be made richer?" (Chisholm, James, tr., *Grove and Gallows*, p. 54)

House-ghosts can often be mischievous, and like to play tricks. If they become obnoxious, an extra gift of food or drink put down with the firmly placed request that they kindly stop doing whatever has been annoying you is the best way to get them to stop. Actively banishing them is the very last resort, as a well-meaning house-ghost is the best and truest friend you can have. Most of those that become obnoxious simply do not realize that they are upsetting their people, and once told, become contrite and more helpful than before.

Other sorts of requests can also be made to the house-ghosts together with gifts of food and drink - the most common being, "Would you kindly find this/that/the other for me?"

Some house-ghosts, however, are basically unpleasant. There are Icelandic families even today which suffer from horrid wights called *fylgdraugar* (following-undead). These wights are a type of Sending made out of babies abandoned to die, which stay through the generations to torment a family. The best that can be hoped from these is that, if they are given food, they will be less obnoxious than if they exert their whole strength to make trouble.

There is an Old High German charm to banish ill-willing house-ghosts:

"Wola, wiht, taz tu weist, taz tu wiht heizist,
Taz tu neweist noch nechanst cheden 'chnospinci'."

(Well, wight, do you know that you hight 'wight',
that you do not know and cannot say 'chnospinci'.")

The wight, rather like Rumpelstiltskin, becomes so furious at not being able to pronounce the nonsense-word "chnospinci" (chno-speen-kee - the chn is a sneezing sort of sound), that it departs at once in a huff. This charm is only to be used when all else has failed.

In rural households, the house-ghost often chose a favourite horse or cow to give extra care and fodder to - the fodder being stolen from the other beasts. If one of your pets is always fat and sleek while others seem thin and unhappy, and (the most important step in diagnosing the problem) a vet can find nothing wrong with the ones that are not faring as well, it is possible that the house-ghost is interfering with them. In that case, his unfortunate victims should be fed by themselves and given extra care by the owner. In one Swedish tale, a farmer sold the tomte's favourite horse and brought another one, which became thinner and more sickly every day. One night the farmer hid in the stables, and saw the tomte come in and flog the new horse with a big whip. He then bought the old one back again, and had no more trouble (Simpson, *Scandinavian Folktales*, p. 174).

The house-ghost is especially associated with cats: Grimm mentions the names *polterkater* (noisy tomcat) and *katermann* (tomcat man) for him (II, p. 509), and says that the cat shares the name Heinz and Heinzl with the kobold, as well as being a *stiefel-knecht* (boot-servant), "coming very near the resourceful Puss-in-Boots. The *tabby-cat* brings you mice, corn, and money overnight; after the third service you can't get rid of her...A serviceable *tom-cat* is not to be shaken off" (IV, p. 1432). Treating house-cats well is clearly very important for the prosperity of the home.

Grimm also mentions the custom of having carved kobold-figures in one's home or painted on the wall (II, 501-02). Such a figure might well serve as a dwelling for the house-ghost, before which his food and drink could well be placed. If you seem to have no house-ghost, such a figure could well be used as the focus for a rite to call one to you, as suggested in Gundarsson's *Teutonic Religion*. If you look closely, you may even find that you have a statue somewhere in your house which has attracted such a wight on its own.

Finally, it must be mentioned that in her humorous fiction, the writer Esther Friesner has advised against letting tomten see Ingmar Bergmann films, which throws them into deep Scandinavian depressions. There is probably no real basis for this...but just in case...

Chapter XXIV

Etins, Rises, Thurses, Trolls, and Muspilli

Anyone who has ever picked up a book on Norse mythology knows about the conflict between the gods and the giants. It is often pictured as an endless dualistic struggle between the forces of good and evil, order and chaos, creation and destruction. As always with the ways of our forebears, however, matters are far more complex than the usual view would have them...

Our forebears had several terms for the race of giantish wights. It is hard to distinguish one from another by use, as the words were used fairly interchangeably. For the sake of clarity in the modern age, Edred Thorsson has divided them thus: the very wise, powerful, magical ones are called etins (jöttnar, single jötunn - "the Eaters"?), the huge mountain-dwellers are giants or rises (rísar - "giants"), the uncontrollable, hardly conscious natural forces are Thurses, and "troll" is (as it was in the old days) used as a catch-all phrase for obnoxious supernatural wights. The whole lot of them are referred to collectively as "etin-kind" or "Ymir's children", as they were all born from the body of the hermaphroditic ur-etin Ymir before Wodan and his brothers slew him and made the world from his corpse.

All seem agreed that the etin-kind are basically wights of untamed nature, and can be extremely dangerous and/or destructive. As the *Raven Kindred Ritual Book* puts it, "the Jötunn are the Gods of all those things which man has no control over. The Vanir are the gods of the growing crops, the Jötunn are the Gods of the river which floods and washes away those crops or the tornado which destroys your entire farm. This is why they are frightening and this is why we hold them to be evil.

The Jötunn are not worshipped in modern Asatru, but there is some evidence that sacrifices were made to them in olden times. In this case, sacrifices were probably made "to them" rather than shared "with them", as was the case with the Vanir and Æsir. It would be inappropriate to embrace them as friends and brothers in the way we embrace our Gods. One doesn't embrace the hurricane or the wildfire; it is insanity to do so. However, we must also remember that fact that (although) we see their actions as bad, they are not inherently evil. The storm destroys the crops, but it also brings cleansing and renewal. We humans are only one species on this planet and in the end we are both expendable and irrelevant to nature. This is the manner in which the Jötunn act, and it is not surprising that we see this as evil (p.17).

The etin-kind dwell in mountains, glaciers, volcanos, and all steads that are too wild and dangerous for humans to settle in; those who wish to see Etin-Home made real within the Middle-Garth need only look at the interior of Iceland, which Ymir's children still hold. Where they live, we cannot, and vice versa. In banishing rites, various sorts of etin-kin are also singled out as the specific wights of ill being banished.

Many embodiments of cosmic destructiveness are attributed to Ymir's children: the wolves Sköll and Hati (or Managarmr), who chase the Sun and Moon and will eat them at Ragnarök, are the sons of the Hag of Iron-Wood, who seems to be a great mother of etin-kind. The Wolf Fenrir, son of Loki and Angrboda, has already been spoken of. At the end of the age, some of the etin-kin, most particularly Loki's children and a giant named Hrymr, will fight against the god/esses: Snorri tells us that all the rime-Thurses will come with Hrymr, but this is not mentioned in the poetic sources. Both in *Völuspá* and *Vafþrúðnismál*, the etin-tribe as a whole seems to play little part. We know only that Etin-Home is as disturbed as the realms of the Ases and the dwarves (*Völuspá* 48), and troll women wander wildly when Surtr comes and the mountains (their homes) collapse (52). The chief source of destruction at Ragnarök, and the only host of foes described in *Völuspá*, will be Surtr and his Muspilli, spoken of at the end of this chapter.

Although the etin-kind are dangerous to humans and often work against the god/esses, they cannot be dismissed as wholly ill. The many etin-brides of the gods have already been spoken of; we will remember that Skaði's father Þjazi represented all that is most threatening about the etins, and yet she herself is, and was, worshipped as a goddess. Thonar is the great foe of etins, but has one as a concubine, and has gotten help from others (see "Skaði, Gerðr, and other Etin-Brides"). Mímir, Óðinn's rede-giver and teacher, was likewise an etin, and there is not one of the Æsir of known parentage who cannot claim kin among these folk.

The relationship between god/esses and etin-kind is often rather ambiguous: often the gods come as guests into etin-halls, sometimes even with apparently friendly intentions - although such visits usually end up with the giants dead, as at the end of *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Hymiskviða*. Although Thonar is sometimes seen as not too swift on the uptake, the great etin-slayer would undoubtedly have seen something very fishy in Loki's presentation of the "friendly invitation" to come unarmed to Geirröðr's hall if it were truly unknown for gods and giants to guest together. In fact, unless he is directly

challenged, Thonar's main fault as a guest in etin-halls is his efforts to eat the giants out of house and home (*Hymiskviða*, *Þrymskviða*). However, while the god/esses and Ymir's children do not seem to be universally sworn foes, and sometimes work well together, there is always a great tension between them - and between the etin-kind and humans as well: as Þórr's explanation for why he slays female, as well as male, etins (discussed by Paxson below) points out, most of Ymir's children cannot dwell safely by human beings.

For these reasons, very few true folk have even considered working with the etin-kind, except for the odd magician who seeks them out for lore or the wilderness wanderer who seeks to bribe the dangerous powers around her/him. However, a new, or perhaps *very* old, glance over the etins is offered by Diana Paxson:

...Despite the gusto with which Thor bashes etins, the old literature leaves one with a curiously ambiguous perspective. Ancient and terrible the Jötnar may be, but are they simply destructive, or does the conflict between them and the lords of Asgard have a deeper significance?

As I explore the spiritual ecology of the North I have come to believe that far from being the eternal enemy, the Jötnar may have a crucial role to play in the survival of the world and its inhabitants, including human beings. An analysis of their origins and functions not only illuminates their relationship to the gods (and therefore the meaning of the Æsir as well), but suggests a new way to interpret some of the ambiguities encountered in Norse attitudes towards the feminine and the natural world.

The mythologies of other early cultures reveal a pattern which may be paralleled in that of the North. Bearing in mind that traditional cultures do not have a single, canonical, "creation myth", still, almost everywhere we find a first generation of deities who are responsible for the creation of the world, and who are later supplanted by their children, the pantheon whose worship becomes the religion of the land.

The Graeco-Roman creation myth tells how *Gaia*, Mother Earth, arose from the empty "yawning" of Chaos and conceived the Titanic powers by Ouranos, who suppressed them before they could be born into the world. The last of them, Kronos, attacked and emasculated his father, separating him from the earth. The Titans who were then released were powers of the sun and moon, darkness and the dawn. Monsters of various kinds were also created. Kronos (Time) married his sister Rhea (Space) and they became the parents of the Olympian gods. Eventually the gods, aided by monstrous allies and the counsel of Mother Earth, defeated and imprisoned the Titans in Tartaros. Nonetheless, the time when Kronos and the Titans ruled was considered by the Greeks to have been a golden age.

Despite the theological sophistication of Hinduism, traces remain of a pre-Vedic system in which "The gods and the antigods are the twofold offspring of the lord-of-progeny (*Prajapati*). Of these the gods are the younger, the antigods the older. They have been struggling with each other for the dominion of the worlds" (*Bṛhad-aranyaka Upanishad* 1.3.1. [205]). These antigods are sometimes called *asuras* (later construed as *a-suras*, or "not-gods"), although this term, derived from the root "to be" or *Asu*, "breath", was originally used to identify the most important gods. Although the *asuras* are seen as opponents, many among them are described as wise and beneficent and aid the gods. Among the *asuras* the *Mahabharata* includes *daityas* (genii), *danavas* (giants), *kalakanjas* (stellar spirits), *kalejas* (demons of time), *nagas* (serpents), and *raksasas* (night wanderers, or demons). They live in palaces in mountain caves, the bowels of the earth, the sea, and the sky. They are said to be powerful in battle and magic.

In Egyptian religion, the oldest company of gods seems to have represented properties of primeval matter. According to E.A. Wallace Budge, "...in primeval times at least the Egyptians believed in the existence of a deep and boundless watery mass out of which had come into being the heavens, and the earth, and everything that is in them" (*The Gods of the Egyptians*, I: 283). These powers were represented by four pairs of gods and goddesses. The world as we know it was created by the action of the Khepera aspect of the sun-god, who says in the Book of the Overthrowing of Apepi, "Heaven did not exist, and earth had not come into being, and the things of the earth and creeping things had not come into existence in that place, and I raised them from out of Nu from a state of inactivity" (295). This bears a remarkable resemblance to the opening of *Völuspá*:

Old was the age when Ymir dwelt,
was not sand nor sea nor spray-cold waves;
there was no earth nor up-heaven,
the gap was ginn- (potential power) full
and grass nowhere.

Then Burr's sons rased up the land,
they who the well-known Miðgarðr shaped..."

Unless one is prepared to believe that the author of the Edda read hieroglyphics, one must accept this idea as a way of conceptualizing creation common to many peoples. The "inactivity" of Nu is a reasonable southern parallel to the eternal ice that encased Ymir. In both cases, the earth that we know is "lifted" into a state of manifestation by the action of a more clearly personified power. In the Younger Edda, we learn that the world was fashioned from Ymir's skull and bones, (shaped by the gods descended from the being Burr, who was) freed from the ice by the tongue of Audhumla, the primal female principle in the form of a cow.

In all of these mythologies, the elder gods are the...elemental powers. Myths about them have to do with their origins and their battles against the race of gods who supplanted them. They may be portrayed as monstrous or fair, but always they dwell in wild places - *Utgard* - or in the element to which they belong. Although they are the opponents of the gods, they do not appear to be hostile to men. In fact, they have very little to do with human concerns.

A number of theories have been offered to account for this cosmic struggle. A hypothesis adopted by many scholars has been that the elder deities, such as the *asuras*, were the gods of races conquered by the people who worship the gods. The asuras were the gods of pre-Vedic India, and presumably the Jötnar and Titans would be the deities of the pre-Indo-European peoples of their lands. However, this theory does not explain why gods and giants should differ in function.

Although some of the Jötnar are allies of the Æsir - Ægir, for instance, who brews ale in his cauldron so that the gods can feast in his undersea hall, or Vafthruthnir, who teaches Oðin wisdom - their functions clearly have to do with natural forces. Ægir is a god of the ocean; his wife Ran rules the depths beneath the waves, who are their daughters. However, it is the Van, Njorð, who watches over those who make their living on sea. Fjorgyn is Earth, but Freyr and Freyja, the alfar and *ármaðr*, "harvest-man", are involved to aid in farming. It is not the gods who are the personified natural forces beloved of 19th century folklorists, but the Jötnar.

The gods, be they Æsir or Olympians, can be seen as the product of evolving human consciousness. Oðin, first of the Æsir to arise, gives us the runes, the symbols and words of power by which the human intellect is enabled to comprehend the world. The Jötun expresses the natural power, while the god embodies the qualities needed for humans to deal with it. In the myths, the Æsir are able to interbreed with Jötnar or humankind. The stories of interaction between the gods and the giants can almost serve as a chronicle of the changing relationship between evolving human consciousness and the natural world.

Of all the Æsir, Thor, the thunderer and the great slayer of giants, is the most elemental. He is the Son of Earth, and his rune is that of the thurse (thurisaz). He joys in the chaos of the storm, but he can use its energy to protect humankind. But his is not a war of extermination. In *Hárbarðsljóð*, Thor tells us, "Great would be the clan of etins if all (the etin-women he had slain) lived; there would be no humans in Miðgarðr". As Gro Steinsland points out ("Giants as Recipients of Cult in the Viking Age?", in *Words and Objects*), this is not a war of extermination, but of balance.

For a long time, it was assumed that one distinction between Jötnar and Æsir was that the giants were never worshipped. However, Steinsland has demonstrated that the giants... did indeed receive cult worship in the Viking Age. She proposes that Snorri's account of how the gods gave part of the roasted ox to Thiazi while traveling to visit Utgard-Loki reflects an ancient ritual in which offerings were made to the wilderness powers... Skaði is not only the daughter of a giant, but the home she inherited from him is listed among the holy halls of Asgard (see discussion under "Skaði"). However, for the most part, the hallowed halls of the Jötnar are to be found in Utgard - "outside the garth" - in the wilderness beyond the fields we know.

The Jötnar are elemental in character and force, associated with the regions or environments in which they live (cliff-thurses, berg-rísi, or mountain giants or trolls, rime-thurses, sons of Surtr, Aegir, Ran and the waves, etc.). They rule the realm of Nature and can thus be viewed as chieftains of the order of nature spirits appropriate to various environments: the *skogsrán* or "wood-rulers" of the forest, who can bestow blessings in exchange for offerings; the *näckar* or "nixies", *sjoera*, lake-spirits, and *forskarlar*, waterfall-men, in the water; the *duergar* (dwarves), who live under the earth, and the *landvættir*, or land-wights, for a region in general. These are what the people at Findhorn in Scotland call the *devas*, the spirits which inhabit and give health to the environment, ranging from entities that express the spirit of a place or a group or species of living things (such as a forest), to the spirits of individual flowers or trees. Even during the Christian period they survived in Faerie, in which noble races of elves are accompanied by all kinds of sprites and goblins. In mediæval folklore, the Jötnar devolved into hags, giants, and trolls, and their attendant nature spirits into dwarves, dryads, and the like, but they continue to dwell outside the boundaries of the human world.

But not all of the Jötnar live in the wilderness. Giantesses are co-opted into the world of the gods as mothers and mates. In fact, a majority of the Æsir are the children of Jötnar on one or both sides. Indeed, when an As or Van seeks a bride outside Asgard, his only source of mates is in Jötunheim. Scratch a goddess, and you are likely to uncover an etin-bride. The courtships of Skaði and Gerð (see "Skaði, Gerð, and other

Etin-Brides" - KHG) are particularly noteworthy, and it is significant that they are married to Vanir, the gods most closely connected with the natural world. Oðin himself sires children by a number of giantesses, most notably Jorð, or Earth, the mother of Thor, and Rind, who bears him Vali. On the other hand, those female Jötun who are not co-opted by marriage appear to be more feared by the Æsir than are the males.

The male Jötnar slain by Thor are viewed as worthy antagonists who can sometimes be tricked into sharing their wisdom or powers. But the females, even Hyrokkin, whose strength is required to push Baldr's funeral ship out to sea, evoke a primal terror. They are not only wild, but female, with all of the suppressed power of both the feminine and the wilderness. In his analysis of prayers to Thor, John Lindow identifies eight killings of female Jötnar and four of male. "Thor was the defender of Asgard, as Thorbjorn himself put it, against the forces of evil and chaos. These forces seem, in the reality of peoples' lives...to have had a very strong female component...If those who fight for order are male, then it is appropriate that those who fight for disorder should be female" ("Addressing Thor", p. 127).

At this point a good feminist should say, "how like a man", but I think that the causes of this hostility lie deeper than simple misogyny. Norse culture in general approaches the feminine with a mixture of emotions, seeing it as irrational and equating loss of (masculine) status with loss of control, while at the same time retaining the memory of a long tradition of reverence for women and belief in their superior spiritual powers. This attitude is paralleled by equally ambivalent feelings about the world of nature. Is it therefore surprising that the Jötnar - the primal powers of nature - who are most feared should be personified as female?

Female biology makes it harder for women to suppress awareness of their physical nature in the way that men often do, and though women are less likely to seek battle, a woman once enraged may fight with a fury that ignores the rules by which men like to conduct their wars (certainly some of the women in the sagas are first-class bitches, and the men might have been better off if their wives had been allowed to fight the bloodfeuds). These generalizations reflect the social stereotypes of our culture; in reality there is a considerable overlap between the genders in this regard, and intellect, intuition, and the like are uniquely mixed in each individual. Given this caveat, such social and biological factors may explain why men have tended to link the feminine with Nature, which can be both terrible and nurturing, as well as with the irrational, the unconscious, and spiritual power.

Steinsland makes a good case for the survival of rituals addressed to the Jötnar into the Viking Age. Rather than identifying this as a lingering superstition, let us consider what function retaining a reverence for powers first conceptualized at the birth of human culture might serve in a supposedly more "civilized" age. The scholars who look upon myths of the passage of power from Jötnar or Titans to the shining gods as a reflection of an historical process may be seeing only part of the picture. A more accurate way to describe the change might be as evolutionary. Evolution does imply change over time, but this change can consist of alteration within a continuing group as well as the replacement of one culture or species by another.

The human brain is an excellent example of an organism which has developed by adding new structures and functions to older ones. Most people today have access only to the newer levels of consciousness, and are disturbed by the "irrational" emotions that shake them when the older parts of the brain are aroused. In the same way, our civilization thinks of itself as "modern", and has trouble understanding the social movements that arise when deeper needs revive older ways.

A major paradigm shift in our relationship to Nature is taking place this century - a change that must occur if humanity is to survive. Ours is the first generation to be aware of the fragility of the environment. "Primitive" people retain an instinctive awareness that the only way to survive in an environment that is more powerful than they are is by learning how to live in harmony with its forces. But as civilization and the development of technology have given humans more control over their surroundings, Nature has become an adversary. In the natural world, birth and death, creation and destruction, are parts of a continuing cycle in which both are equally crucial to long-term survival. Modern man can accept this theory so long as he remains insulated from realities by his technology. But, especially in the ancient North, where the climate is unforgiving, it is understandable that in the Viking Age the world outside the walls of the garth should have been something to fear.

And yet, as Kirsten Hastrup shows in *Culture and History in Medieval Iceland*, access to the actual or psychic wilderness was necessary for magic. The outlaw, or "out-lier", is banished outside the boundaries of the community, and yet that position may enable him to serve it in ways impossible for those who stay safe within walls. "In the cases of both hamrammr and berserkr there is a movement, in body on the one hand, in personality on the other. Such movement seems to have been easily imagined, in a world where every man had his fylgja, his double in wild space" (p. 153).

The tension is not only between order and chaos, but between control and power. This is why Thor never kills all of the giants, why the Æsir seek Jötun-brides, why Oðin goes to Vafþrúðnir to seek wisdom - and why worship at the shrines of Skaði and other Jötnar continued into the Viking Age. From wilderness

comes the energy that humans, like other species, need to survive.

What will happen if humans forget how to balance this energy? Ragnarök acquires a different meaning in each age. The *Völuspá* foretells a simultaneous breakdown in the natural balance and the social order. Óðin marshals the Einherjar and the gods march out for the last time to meet their foes. When all is destroyed, "the Sun is blackened, earth sinks into sea, the glorious stars are cast from heaven, steam and life-nourisher (fire) gush forth, tall flames play up to heaven itself" (57). The order of creation described in the early myths is being reversed. The world will return to its primal elements once more.

For the ancient Norse, the fear was that natural forces would grow too powerful. But science shows us that it is equally dangerous to suppress a powerful force too far or too long. The film *Koyaanisqatsi* (Philip Glass) presented a frightening picture of a world out of balance. Whether the Jötnar are allowed to rage unchecked or suppressed too completely, disaster will follow. Today's vision of Ragnarök is of an age when natural cycles have been pushed so far out of balance that only the most chaotic and destructive of the forces of nature will remain.

Can this disaster be avoided? Early cultures, living in a world in which the seasonal alternation of birth and death was more accepted than it is today, tend to think in terms of cycles rather than of linear progression. But though the Völva foresees destruction for the gods, the victory of chaos is not final...

"She sees the earth coming up a second time from the sea, renewed-green...the Ases find each other again on Iða-Plain...and they remember the mighty doom for themselves there, and Fimbultýr's ancient runes"
(59).

The process of creation is repeated, and once more Óðin's runes give meaning to the world.

In a world of vanishing rainforests and global warming, it may seem that the Time of Earth Changes foretold by more recent prophets such as Sun Bear is unavoidable. In the long run this is probably true, for why should either a physical body or the world be expected to last forever? For the world, as for us, death should be viewed not as an extinction but as a transformation so that the cycle can begin anew. Still, just as abuse of one's body can shorten, or healthy living extend, a human lifespan, humans have the power to hasten Ragnarök or to lengthen this age of the world. With that power comes responsibility.

Environmentalists have provided us with more than enough information to start work on the physical plane, and there should be no need to repeat their instructions here. But those of us who follow the Way of the North have an additional opportunity. We are already vowed to stand with the gods - what we must do now is to understand their relationship to the Jötnar so that we do not end up sabotaging our own side.

We need the giants as we need the wilderness, as a source of the nourishment required for our physical and spiritual survival. They provide psychological stability by aligning the powers of nature and protections at the species level, for they are the spiritual ancestors of all living things. Even abandoning intellect and technology and returning to the primitive, but as we use the gifts of the gods, we should remember that even Thor does not attempt to completely exterminate his enemies. These days perhaps we ought to be supporting the Jötnar rather than fighting them.

Jötun myths have to do with creation and cosmic patterning. In recreating the myths we re-create the world. Along with the land-spirits, they should therefore receive offerings and honour. When we seek to work in trance, to draw on the deepest powers that lie hid in our own inner Utgards, the Jötnar may even be invoked first in the ritual.

Like other forms of Paganism, the Northern branch of the Old Religion is an Earth-religion. As Steinsland put it,

"After all, it would be more remarkable if Norse tradition should miss any ritual dealing with powers on whom the whole of existence finally depended. The giants are as necessary to the world as the gods are"
(p. 221).

In recreating the practice of Norse religion, we should not forget to honour those powers.

Trolls

As spoken of above, "troll" is a wide term. The span of beings it has been used for takes in land-wights, etin-kin, house-ghosts, unfriendly idises or an enemy's patron (Þórgerðr is called *flagd*, "troll-wife", by Hákon's foes in *Jómsvíkinga*

þátr), magicians, unclean ghosts, big ugly people, and possibly walkurjas in their most unpleasant forms. Magic is still called *trolldom* in modern Scandinavian dialects, and there is an Old Norse verb *trylla*, "to enchant", so that it is possible that the noun could have first meant only "magical being" and later been specialized into the "troll" of folklore. The matter is made still more complicated for English-speakers by the existence of a number of different non-specific terms for nasty wights, all of which are translated as "troll" or "troll-wife" in English.

The kind of wight most true folk use the term "troll" for now is an outdweller who is smaller than a mountain-giant (folkloric descriptions of trolls have them ranging from human norm to perhaps ten or twelve feet) and usually lives in cliffs or mountain crags. There is little doubt that they are of Ymir's kin; Scandinavian folk-tales collected in the nineteenth century still kept the memory of the thunderbolt as the weapon of a troll-fighting deity. The trolls can easily be seen as the land-wights of wild and rocky areas, and as such can be dangerous to the humans who come into their realm: for instance, the Icelanders who went gathering birds'-eggs on the cliffs had to be careful lest the trolls should cut their ropes. However, trolls can also be befriended; there are quite a few examples of them going out of their way to be helpful to human beings. Folkloric descriptions of trolls and their actions also have much in common with Old Norse beliefs about the draugar (walking dead), so that the troll of folktales may encompass both "jötunn" and "draugr".

The etymology of "troll" is not certain; the word is probably quite old, going back to Common Germanic. It may come from a root meaning "to roll", and it has been suggested several times that the original "trolls" were possibly first seen in ball lightning; in folk-tales, trolls often roll or whirl around to travel at inhuman speed, some by means of special "Rolling Breeches". The use of the general verb for magic may also suggest that this "rolling" or "whirling" was seen as a magical activity, which in turn hints at interesting possibilities for magical experimentation in the modern age.

Usually trolls are thought to be ugly, hugely strong, and not very bright, in spite of which they manage to breed with humans once in a while. There are several characters in the sagas who bear the name "Half-Troll", and quite a few saga-heroes, such as Grettir inn sterki, Egill Skalla-Grimsson, and Skarp-Heðinn Njálsson, who could easily be mistaken for trolls in a dim light. Troll-women are especially desirous of human men: Hrimgerðr expresses jealousy of Helgi's beloved Sváva, and there is an Icelandic folktale about two troll-women who capture a man named Jón and try to feed him up and stretch him to troll-size so that he will be of more use to them. Another Icelandic folktale has a troll-woman calling a human man to her with magic and keeping him until, over the course of three years, he has turned completely into a troll himself. Oddly, there are fewer tales of human women desired by troll-men; but one of the most dangerous insults one Norseman could offer another was to say that he turned into a woman and had sex with a troll every ninth night, as Skarp-Heðinn says to Flosi in *Brennu-Njáls saga*. Unbelievable as the whole idea of periodical transsexuality may seem, it was clearly considered serious in some light or other, symbolically if not literally, as there were actually legal proscriptions (in the Norwegian Gulaping law) against the statement that a man became a woman every ninth night (Ström, Folke. *Níð, Ergi, and Old Norse Moral Attitudes*, p. 7).

"Trolls take you!" is a very common curse in Old Norse. This could, apparently, mean both dragging away and actual spirit possession (or at least the word "troll" could be used for a possessory spirit); in *Landnámabók* (*Hauksbók* 15) Þórleifr Þjóstólfsson was said to be "trollaukinn", which is normally translated as "possessed by a troll" (literally, "made greater by a troll", though there is also the possibility that this could be referring generally to a magical frenzy), and so was Loðmundr hinn gamli (*Hauksbók* 250). Whether there was ever meant to be any relationship between "trolls take you!" and the major insult mentioned above is not known, but the possibility certainly exists.

Trolls are turned to stone by sunlight, and there are a number of folk-tales about people who, chased by trolls, were only saved by the first rays of the Sun. The same happens in *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*, in which the troll-woman Hrimgerðr is drawn into talking with Helgi and his man Atli, and becomes a rock when the Sun rises upon her.

There are water-trolls as well as rock-trolls: Grettir does battle with wights of this sort, and Hrimgerðr and her family specifically attacked ships in their firth. Grendel, although he is called "þyrs" (thurse) and his mother also seem to be more like water-trolls than anything else.

Occasionally trolls are also eaters of human beings, though this trait only seems to show up in folklore.

Trolls particularly dislike Christian church-bells, a trait they share with etins, alfs, dwarves, witches, and Heathens who have been up late feasting on Saturday night.

Trolls are known for stealing beer out of the brewing-house. When they offer drink to humans, it is better not to drink it; there are a number of Scandinavian stories in which a fleeing rider tosses such a draft away, but a few drops touch the horse's hide and singe the hair off it.

Quite often, trolls seem to be walking embodiments of change and disorder. Sometimes they are helpful, more often troublesome, but whatever interacts with them is never quite the same afterwards - they can be seen as smallish zones of "wild magic".

Trolls are sometimes thought to take the form of house-cats, especially while waiting for a rival to die. There are several variants on the story in which a man is coming home and hears a voice telling him to tell his cat that So-and-So is dead - and when he does, the cat exclaims in delight and flies up the chimney or out the window.

There is no evidence for worship of the trolls, but there are stories which show individuals befriending trolls, giving them gifts, or doing favours for them. If you can find a troll that means well towards you, you are lucky: an Icelandic

proverb says, "trusty as a troll". When traveling in the wilds, especially when rock-climbing, it does not hurt to make an offering of food and drink to the trolls. According to Swedish folklore, a troll which takes a gift from a human is bound to help that human ever afterwards.

Muspilli

The Muspilli are the dwellers in Muspell-Home, the fiery southern realm. They play no part in the myths; their name is difficult to etymologize, but most suggestions have been forms of "destroyers of the world", and this seems to be their sole function. *Völuspá* tells us that, "A ship fares from eastward, the Muspilli shall come travelling over the water, and Loki steers: the monsters' sons fare with all greedy ones, and Byleist's brother (Loki?) fares with them" (p. 51). Snorri tells us in his Edda that Loki shall have the hosts of Hel with him, but this is not supported by his sources, as Snorri then separates Loki and his hosts from the Muspilli. In the light of Snorri's chief known material, that of *Völuspá*, the collective battle-array he presents - Hrymr and the rime-thurses, Loki and the hosts of Hel, and Muspell's sons with their own formation - looks suspiciously like a literary attempt to clarify and systematize the situation, especially in regards to his strong presentation of the giants as foes of the gods. Though we cannot ignore the possibility that Snorri might have had some sources unknown to us, in this case he is directly contradicted by the older material, which he actually quotes verbatim.

According to both *Völuspá* and *Vafþrúðnismál*, the chief figure of destruction at Ragnarök is Surtr, the leader of the Muspilli and slayer of Fro Ing, whose fires burn until there is nothing left to burn. Those children of Ymir who do battle with the gods - Loki and his sons - exhaust themselves in single combat: it is the flames of Surtr's sword which actually end the age.

The belief in the Muspilli as the agents of the fiery death of the cosmos may well be Common Germanic. This is suggested by the Old High German poem *Muspilli*: otherwise an entirely Christian poem about Armageddon, its title and the description of the destruction of the world by fire, as well as the internal use of the native word "muspilli" for the end of the world, have no parallels in Christian eschatological mythology, and very probably reflect the survival of German beliefs. In the Old Saxon *Heiland*, "mutspilli" appears as the personified end of the world, but in an even more Christianized context, in which the theme of fiery annihilation has been lost.

The Muspilli themselves - and not the etins, rises, thurses, or trolls - seem to be the closest thing to unequivocally destructive forces which the Germanic folk knew, the only absolute foes of all that lives and is. It is little surprise that they appear only at the end of the world, and that there is not the slightest hint that they ever interacted with the god/esses in any way, or that they were ever given any worship by humans.

Contributors

- Diana Paxson, "Utgard: The Role of the Jötnar in the Religion of the North", from *Mountain Thunder* 5, pp. 11-15.
- Lewis Stead and the Raven Kindred, from *The Raven Kindred Ritual Book*.

Section 3

True Beings: Thought, Life, Soul and Afterlife

Chapter XXV

The Nine Worlds: Their Shaping and End

We know of the making and ending of the worlds from three sources: *Völuspá*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, and Snorri's retelling in his *Edda*. As usual, the latter is the most complete and neatest, adding many details that the others leave out (for instance, the fires of Muspell-Home are not spoken of as part of the first world-shaping in either of the poetic sources).

In the eldest times, there was nothing except the ice of Nibel-Home (Níflheimr - world of misty darkness) in the North and Muspell-Home in the South. Between them stretched Ginnungagap ("gap charged with magical potential"). A number of rivers collectively called "Élivágar" ("Stormy Sea") flowed from the well Hvergelmir ("Bubbling Cauldron") in Nibel-Home, dripping down from its glacial edge. At the same time, sparks flew from Muspell-Home. When the two of them met in the middle, they whirled together and from them were born the hermaphroditic ur-etin Ymir ("Twin") or Aurgelmir ("the Roarer born from Sand") and the ur-cow Auðumla, "hornless cow with lots (of milk)" (Simek, Dictionary, pp. 22, 24). Auðumla licked the glacier's salty rim and gave forth milk which fed Ymir; he slept, and the effluvia of his body brought forth a male and a female beneath his armpit, while one leg got a son on the other leg. Meanwhile, Auðumla's licking also brought a bright being forth from the ice - the ur-god Búri ("producer"), who then brought forth a son, Burr. Burr wedded with Bestla, the daughter of the etin Bölþorn (Bale-Thorn), and their sons were Wodan (Óðinn), Will (Vili), and Wih (Vé - "Holiness") - or, according to *Völuspá*, Óðinn, Hoenir, and Lóðurr.

Wodan and his brothers slew Ymir; the icy rime that flowed from his corpse became the sea, drowning all the etins except two, Bergelmir and his wife, who got away on a raft. All etin-kin today are descended from them. This story of the drowning of the etins also appears in Beowulf, being told in runes on the hilt of the sword which Beowulf brings up from the underwater hall of Grendel's mother. But Wodan and his brothers dismembered Ymir's corpse: from his body they made the earth, his hairs became the trees, his bones the rocks, his skull the dome of the sky (held up by the four dwarves North, South, East, and West), and his brains the clouds; but with his eyebrows they fenced the inner world from the outer realm where Bergelmir and his kin dwell, and that inner world is the Middle-Garth where we live. They took sparks from Muspell-Home and fixed them in the sky as stars; two other wights, a woman named Sun and a man named Moon, they set to drive a course across the sky. The Sun's horses are called Alsviðr (Very Fast) and Árvakr (Early-Awake), or Skinfaxi (Shining-Mane), and her shield and a bellows must protect them from her heat; the Moon's horse is called Hrímfaxi (Rime-Mane), for he is cold. But one of Bergelmir's kin, the Hag of Iron-Wood (perhaps the same person as Loki's wife Angrboda?), bore two troll-sons, Skoll and Hati, who run after these drivers in the shape of wolves and will eat both Sun and Moon at Ragnarök.

As we see the worlds now, they are arranged both on a level plane and as a tree - the great World-Tree Yggdrasil (Ygg-Steed - a name speaking of Wodan's nine nights' hanging, as the gallows is often called the steed of the hanged). There are nine worlds: the Ases' Garth (or God-Home), Light Alf-Home (or Elfhome), the Middle-Garth (Middenerd, Middle-Earth, or Man-Home), Nibel-Home, Etin-Home, Muspell-Home, Wan-Home, Swart Alf-Home, and Hel-Home (which also includes Níflhel, "Misty-Dark Hel", a lower realm into which, according to *Vafþrúðnismál*, "men die out of Hel").

On a level plain, there are four rings (see discussion of the Frowe's necklace); and the terms Middle-Garth and Ases' Garth probably derive from this plain-view, whereas Man-Home and God-Home are more general terms. The outer one is the Outgarth (Útgarðr), where all etins, trolls, and outlaws dwell: it is the realm of untamed might and wild magic. Between the Outgarth and the Middle-Garth lies the stormy sea under which the Middle-Garth's Wyrms twines in a ring. Simek suggests that this sea stems from the river Élivágar, which, in the "Skáldskaparmál" part of his *Edda*, Snorri identifies as the border of Etin-Home (Dictionary, p. 73). The passage between the worlds inside the great Garth and the Outgarth is often seen as a river, as in *Hárbarzljóð*, where Óðinn appears in the shape of a ferryman who might (but doesn't) take Þórr back across to Ásgarðr. The ring of the Middle-Garth is within that sea; and within it is a yet holier garth - the Garth of the Ases. The outer ring is split into four parts: Nibel-Home in the North, Etin-Home in the East, Muspell-Home in the South,

and Wan-Home in the West (note: in Old Norse, heimr actually means "world", but it is the same word as our "Home"). Some like to call on the Nine Worlds as the eight winds around the Middle-Garth, in which case they are: Nibel-Home = North, Swart Alf-Home = Northeast, Etin-Home = East, God-Home = Southeast, Muspell-Home = South, Light Alf-Home = Southwest, Wan-Home = West, Hel-Home = Northwest. The winds of woe are those which blow from the East and the three Northern directions; the winds of weal blow from the West and the Southerly angles. However, the North is also the greatest source of might, and the East is also the direction of new birth. True folk today usually carry out their rites facing North for most things, East especially for Ostara's feast. Some also choose to face West for rites that deal especially with the Wans.

Seen as a tree, the worlds are arranged with God-Home at the crown, with Light Alf-Home between it and Man-Home. Around Man-Home, beyond the stormy waters, are the four elemental worlds: Nibel-Home (ice), Etin-Home (sometimes seen as air; in Thorsson's cosmology, venom), Muspell-Home (fire), and Wan-Home (water, or yeast). Nibel-Home is tilted downwards (often seeming to be actually set below Hel-Home), Muspell-Home upwards. Below Man-Home is Swart Alf-Home, and below that, Hel-Home. The World-Tree itself is usually understood as an ash, though many folk today think that it is actually a yew. The reasons for the latter are that it is called "needle-ash"; in *Völuspá* 20, it is said to be ever green (and an evergreen stood by the well at the Old Uppsala hof); and the *Abececlarium Nordmannicum* includes the verse "yew holds all". In *Svipdagsmál*, the World-Tree is also said to bring forth fruit, which sounds more like a yew than an ash. However, ideas differ: many true folk in Northern California, for instance, have found that their own vision of the World-Tree is as a redwood. In a larger view, the tree-shape is made of three realms pierced by the single axis: the Overworld (God-Home and Light Alf-Home, perhaps with the upper/southerly realm of Muspell-Home as well), the Middle World (Man-Home, Wan-Home, and Etin-Home), and the Underworld (Swart Alf-Home, Nibel-Home, and Hel-Home). Great rivers roar between the Middle-Garth and the Ases' Garth, and between the Middle-Garth and Hel-Home, as well as between the Middle-Garth and the worlds of the Outgarth. A like picture is described by shamans the world over; this universe-shape, and the waters which separate each realm from the other, are the most "objective" and least culture-specific elements of the realities beyond this world.

It may well be asked how, if the worlds are arranged so, the etin-kind (for instance) can also be seen as kin to the land-wights and dwelling in certain places that can be reached by travellers on this earth. The answer is that the sundry ways in which we can see the shaping of the worlds are not physical, but spiritual boundaries. The Nine Worlds are separate, but they also overlap and sometimes blend with each other. For instance, Skaði's home, Þrymheimr, was first owned by her father, who surely dwelt in the reaches of Etin-Home; yet in *Grimnismál*, it is counted among the holy dwellings within the garth of the gods. When Skaði married Njörðr, she and her realm became no longer spiritually part of the Outgarth, but of the holy lands within, although Þrymheimr still stands in the howling wilds. The parts of this earth that are the "Middle-Garth" are only those parts which are fenced and settled - the lands of humans. One may find the Ases' Garth on mountaintops or in holy groves; one may wander into the Outgarth, or walk into a cave and enter Swart Alf-Home. The holiest steads on this earth are those which have been marked off as the garth of the gods - the wih-steads - and to come into such a hallowed place is to step into God-Home. Such overlap can also be temporary, and happen even in an ordinary living room or cluttered bedroom. It is the aim and function of those rituals which are done at the beginning of all rites for the purpose of marking a place off as holy to bring the realms together in a single stead of might, in which the elder kin, the living kin, and the god/esses can meet for a time. Here, we see the special meaning of the Middle-Garth: we stand between all the worlds, and all of their mights are blended about us. The Middle-Garth is the realm of becoming, the heart of the Tree which both mirrors and shapes all that comes to pass in the other homes. When this world is whole and fares well, so it is with the worlds around us; but when things fare ill in the Middle-Garth, then we know that the whole of the World-Tree is ill at ease - and our works, our holy blessings and our most ordinary deeds, can help to shift the Tree's balance.

Another Norse view of the arrangement of the worlds, as described by Snorri, shows them as beneath the roots of the World-Tree. There are three great roots, one over the Ases' Garth, one over Etin-Home, and one over Nibel-Home. As soul-lore, we understand that these three "roots" are the three stems of might - the white brightness of the Overworld (God-Home), the rawest red strength of the Middle World (Etin-Home), and the blackness of the Underworld (Nibel-Home), from which the strands of being are braided and the Tree and the worlds find their shape.

Beneath each root is a well - the Ases' well is the well of Wyrð, the etins' is the well of Mímir, and Hvergelmir stands in Nibel-Home. In *The Well and the Tree* (the work which laid the foundation for the whole following discussion of Wyrð) Paul Bauschatz showed that this triplicity was probably an over-systemization of three different levels, or aspects, of the Well. According to his model, which is accepted by many among both mundane academics and true folk, Hvergelmir, the bubbling cauldron of venom, yeast, and icy water, is the lowest level and the source of raw might. Mímir's Well is the next level, that where all that is is kept and shapes the waters rising up from Hvergelmir. The highest level is Wyrð's Well, where the Norns lay ørlög and the Ases come to deem at their Þing. The roots of the Tree are sunken into the Well; the waters of Wyrð flow up again and again through its branches (the embodiments of time/space), shaping a new layer of events each time and dripping back. Those drops that fall into Hvergelmir - happenings of little worth - are simply recycled as part of the general might of the Well. Those that fall into Mímir's Well are the happenings that build on what is already set and help to bring it to being, without making any change. But those drops that fall into Wyrð's Well are the drops of might: these are the magical, ritual, or heroic actions that work the willed turnings of Wyrð.

According to *Völuspá*, the three Norns Urðr (Wyrd), Verðandi (Werðende - Becoming), and Skuld (Should [Become]) "lay laws and choose lives" at the Well of Wyrd. These Norns, the embodiments of causality, are probably the three maids spoken of in stanza 8, "maids of the thurses, awful and mighty, (come) out of Etin-Home)". They are the great ones who shape the wyrd of the worlds; but the greatest of them is Wyrd, for it is by her might that the other two work. Superficial texts often explain the Norns as "Past, Present, and Future", but this is not correct: the Germanic time-sense is not triple, like that of the Greeks and Romans (from whom contemporary Western culture inherited it) but dual. For our forebears, there was only the great structure of "that-which-is", in which the eldest and the youngest layers were at the same time and the one was just as close and real as the other, and the current moment, "that-which-is-becoming". There was no sense of future as such: spae-sayings, that told of what "should" happen, were literally statements of Wyrd - that-which-is, seen with the wisdom that knows what must then arise as the effect of an existing cause. This is one of the reasons why the religion of the North has always placed so much trust in forebears and tales of old, why the Germanic peoples have often been accused of living in the past and dreams of the past - we, like Wodan, ever have one eye in the Well of Memory and one eye on the moment of becoming. To us, that-which-is, "the past", is not gone or lost: it is forever living and green, and more, it is the source from which all springs, even as the roots are the source of the tree. New branches can spring forth if the crown is chopped off; but the destruction of the roots is the end: and thus it is with our folk. To lose the ways of our forebears - to lose our foothold in that-which-is, or get too far from their thoughts and beliefs - is to be rootless trees and to die. Yet the roots need the strength and growth they get from the branches and leaves as well; so it is likewise part of our troth to feed the old lore with what we learn, to give our worship to our forebears and the hero/ines of elder days, and to make the whole Tree greater by so doing.

The image of the World-Tree growing from the Well of Wyrd, with the Nine Worlds in its branches and roots, is the centrepoint of the Troth - the axis of the worlds. Our forebears often carried out their worship around holy trees; the Continental Saxons had the Irminsul ("Great Pillar" - destroyed by Charlemagne in 772), which was probably their earthly embodiment of the World-Tree. In our hofs and homes, it is represented by the high-seat pillars or the Bairnstock: it is the heart of every holy stead. Grønbech mentions that "At first sight (the description of the three worlds/wells under the three roots) impresses the reader as lacking inner coherence...but it is by no means improbable that the altar contained several representations of the water...The sacred tree and the well belonged to the holy place outside, but the principle of the blot rendered it indispensable that they should be represented on the altar. When it is said that the rivers take their rise in the centre of the world, it is identical to saying that they flow from the feast and spring from the ideal - i.e. the real - world situated on the altar in the sacrificial place" (II, p. 195).

The Tree itself is home to many wights. On the top sits an eagle, with a falcon perched between his eyes; the dragon Nith-Hewer (Níðhöggr) coils about its roots, with a nest of lesser wyrms who gnaw at it. The squirrel Ratatosk runs up and down to carry malicious messages between dragon and eagle. There are four stags - Dáinn, Dvalinn, Duneyr, and Duraprör - who gnaw at the bark; as spoken of in "Alfs, Dwarves, Land-Wights, and Huldfolk", these are probably dwarves in their daylight shape, since Dáinn and Dvalinn are two of the greatest among the dwarves.

In his Edda, Snorri also tells us that the Norns take water and mud from the well every day and pour it over the Tree to heal its hurts and keep it from rotting, and that the water is so holy that whatever is put into the well turns white as an egg's membrane. He adds that the drops falling onto the earth are called honeydew, and bees feed on it; also that there are two swans that feed in the Well.

Saying that the Norns cast water upon the Tree is another way of saying that they cut runes, lay laws, and shape *ørlög*. This is the same rite that is carried out when a child is given its name (see 'Birth'): the moment when the bright water of life strikes the newborn and the words are spoken is the moment when its wyrd is shaped. This rite in the Middle-Garth shows forth the greatest working of the worlds all around us: the water of wyrd-speaking is the might that rises from what is, gives life to what is becoming, and shapes that which shall be.

The Norns are also compared to spinners and weavers (as in the beginning of *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*), and this image offers another way at looking at being and causality, as told by Eric Wodening:

...the process of wyrd can be seen as the process of spinning thread and weaving cloth. To understand this comparison, one must know a little bit about spinning and weaving.

Thread is spun by using a spindle and a distaff to twist animal (wool) or vegetable (flax, nettle, or cotton) fibres. A bundle of the fibre is wound loosely around the distaff, which is held in one hand or tucked in one's belt. The spindle is a smaller, tapered rod, the turning of which gives the twist, and around which the thread is wound as it is twisted.

Weaving itself is a process whereby a set of crosswise threads, the woof, are interlaced with a set of lengthwise threads, the warp. Each warp thread is stretched out parallel to the others upon the loom. The woof thread is then passed back and forth between the warp threads by way of the shuttle. A comb is afterwards used to force each individual woof thread against the one before it, thus forming the woven cloth or web. The web is then taken up on a roll, or cloth beam, at the front of the loom. As weaving continues more warp is provided by way of a roll at the back of the loom, the warp beam.

Viewing the process of *wyrd* as one of spinning and weaving, then, the various actions occurring throughout the Worlds would be the fibres used in the spinning. Some of those fibres, those with no real impact on the worlds, would be useless for spinning and would be thrown out. Other fibres, those with some impact on the worlds, would be spun into thread. These threads would consist of fibres related to each other in some way. Each person's life would make up a thread, and the significant actions in his life would make up the fibres.

Within the process of weaving itself, series of interrelated actions taking place in the present would make up the woof threads. The influence of the past upon the present would be the warp, through which the present passes back and forth according to the *ørlög* spoken by the *Wyrðæ*, which acts as the shuttle. The past - the great realm of "that-which-is" - is represented by the web itself, ever growing as more and more woof is woven in with the warp.

Seeing the process of *wyrd* as one of spinning and weaving emphasises the interconnectivity of all things. Consider, each thread represents a number of interrelated actions. These threads are further interlaced with, and structured by, influences from the past ("warp threads") to form one great web.

Of course, some "threads" would be more closely related to each other than they would to yet other threads. A husband's life (his "thread") would be more related to his wife's than that of a total stranger. In such cases where threads are interrelated through kinship, alliance, and so on, it may be safe to say that such interrelationships are manifested as "patterns" upon the web of *Wyrð*, not unlike the patterns found in a tapestry or carpet. The web of *Wyrð*, then, is a colourful cloth indeed.

Within this web, or the branches and roots of the Tree, we find the Nine Worlds, each with a shape and might of its own. Some of these are well-known; some have yet to be sought further into.

Hel-Home is divided into Hel's realm - which, despite Snorri (see "Soul, Death, and Rebirth") seems not to be a bad place - and "Niflhel", that worst of realms where those go whose deeds have made them outcast from all the halls of god/esses. That is the hall the seeress of *Völuspá* sees standing "far from the Sun on Corpse-Strand, with doors turned towards the north - drops of venom fall in around the smoke-hole; the hall is all wound with the spines of wyrms...There she saw main-sworn men and murder-wargs wading the swift-flowing stream...There *Niðhögggr* sucks dead corpses, and the warg slits men" (38-9). The river that runs between Hel-Home and the other worlds is crossed by a broad bridge, the *Gjallarbrú* (Resounding Bridge), warded by the etin-maid *Móðguðr* (Brave Battle) who, as described in Snorri and *Helreið Brynhildar*, challenges those who would pass. In the soul, Hel-Home is also the realm of the deep subconscious. It is to Hel-Home that spae-seers fare to bring forth their wisdom, as Óðinn called forth the *völva* of *Baldur's draumar*, and it was in Hel-Home, at the roots of the worlds, that the runes shone forth to Wodan as he gazed down from where he hung on the World-Tree.

Of the geography of Swart Alf-Home, Light Alf-Home, and the four "elemental worlds" we know little or nothing. However, we know much about God-Home. It is seen as being either on top of a mountain or at the World-Tree's crown, and is reached by crossing the rainbow bridge called *Bifröst*, "the shaking road to heaven" or *Bilröst*, "the fleetingly glimpsed rainbow" (Simek, Dictionary, pp. 36-7). In *Grímnismál*, Óðinn tells us a great deal of lore about the god/esses and their dwellings. There are twelve great halls counted as part of God-Home: Þórr's *Þrúðheimr* (Trud-Home - Home of Strength), Ullr's *Ydalir* (Yew-Dales), Valaskjálf (Crag of the Slain) or *Válaskjálf* (Váli's Crag) - either ruled by Óðinn or Váli; alas, the manuscript has no acute-marks, so there is no way to tell which was the original meaning - *Sökkvabekkr* (Sunken-Benches), where Óðinn and Sága drink together, *Glaðsheimr* where *Valhöll* stands, *Skápi's Þrymheimr*, *Baldur's Breiðablik* (Wide-Gleaming), *Heimdallr's Himinbjörg* (Heaven-Mountain, which is also the name of Denmark's highest, or rather least low, hill), *Freyja's Fólkvangr* (Army-Plain), *Forseti's Glitnir* (Glistening), *Njörðr's Nóatún* (Ship-Garth), and *Víðarr's land, Víði* (The Wide). *Freyr's Álfheimr* is also named, but not numbered, perhaps because it is a whole different world (though, as the Ases and alfs are so close together, it may still be thought of as within the holy garth). As well as these, *Frija* has her own hall, *Fensalir*, and we may guess that many of the other less well-known god/esses have theirs as well; it is unlikely that *Tiw*, for instance, does not possess his own dwelling and judgement-seat. Whether a full tally would agree or not, however, twelve is one of the great numbers by which our forebears counted holy things (along with nine, three, and their various multiples); and the gods and goddesses are also tallied respectively as twelve and twenty-four. It has been suggested that the twelve halls of *Grímnismál* correspond to the signs of the Zodiac, beginning with *Þrúðheimr* in Capricorn and ending with *Víði* in Sagittarius, and certainly similarities can be seen by those who want to see them; this is not necessarily a reflection of our forebears' star-lore, but has found a place in the practices of some today.

For human folk, the span of life-age (*aldr*) is given at birth; and so it is with the worlds: they shall not last forever, and the manner of their ending is well-known - the final battle which is called *Ragnarök*, "The Doom of the Gods". A corrupt form, *ragna rökr* ("Twilight of the Gods") appears in "Lokasenna" 39 and Snorri's Edda. This has led to the German translation "Götterdämmerung", best known as the title of the last opera in Wagner's Ring Cycle (the one in which it is proven that a good Heldentenor can sing on for half an hour with a spear through his lungs).

One of the oldest descriptions of *Ragnarök*, and certainly the clearest, is found in the poem *Völuspá* (the Spae of

the Völva"), in which an ancient etin-seeress tells ðinn of the beginning of the worlds and their end. This poem was probably composed around 1000 C.E., when the end of the world was much on the minds of christian Europe and the fate of the gods a matter of some concern to the Heathens of Scandinavia. The author's own spiritual orientation is unknown: some elements suggest a degree of christian contamination (for instance, the stanza that begins with the Sun turning black is from the book of Revelation, and contradicts the poem's earlier reference to the troll-wolf swallowing her), but the general attitude is one of love and respect towards the Heathen god/esses, so that *Völuspá* is often thought to have been produced by a person of mixed troth. Still, whoever the composer was, s/he was clearly rich in old lore.

Certain signs will lead up to the last battle. According to *Vafþrúðnismál*, there will come a time called "Fimbulwinter" (the Great Winter), which Snorri describes as three very hard winters with no summer between them. Brothers will battle and slay one another, and sister-sons will destroy their sibs. It will go hard with the world; there will be an axe-age, a sword-age, a wind-age, a warg-age before the world ends, and no human shall spare another. Then Eggþér, the troll-woman's herdsman who watches from the mound where he sits, shall gladly strike his harp. The fair-red cockerel Fjalarr shall answer him from the gallows-tree (or the "great tree" - text uncertain, but Yggdrasill is probably meant here); then Gullinkambi, the gold-crowned cockerel of the Ases who keeps watch for Óðinn, shall crow, and he shall be answered by the soot-red cockerel from Hel's hall beneath the earth. The hound Garmr will bay mightily before Gniphellir (perhaps the cave at the entrance to Hel?), and fetters shall be broken; Yggdrasill shall tremble, and the etin (probably Loki) shall be loosed. All shall be fearful on the Hel-ways. Hrymr comes from the East, lifting his shield before himself, and Jörmungandr (the Middle-Garth's Wyrms) turns in etin-mood; the wyrm thrashes the waves, but the eagle screams, slitting corpses with his beak, and Naglfar (the ship made of dead men's nails) is loosed. A ship fares from the East: the Muspilli shall come travelling over the water, and Loki steers; the monsters' sons fare with all greedy ones, and Byleist's brother (Loki?) fares with them...How fare the Ases? How fare the alfs? All Etin-Home resounds, the Ases are at Þing; the dwarves groan before stone-doors, rock-wall's princes...Surtr fares from the South with the harmer-of-twigs (fire), the slain gods' sun (fire) shines from sword. The cliffs collapse, and troll-women wander, heroes tread the Hel-way, and the heaven is cloven. Then Hlín (Frigg) has a second sorrow, when Óðinn fares to battle the wolf, and Beli's-Bane (Freyr), bright, against Surtr; then shall Frigg's sorrows fall upon her. Then the mighty son of Sigfather, Víðarr, comes against the Beast of the Slain; with his hand he lets the blade stand in the heart of Hveðrung's son; thus is his father revenged. The girdle-of-Earth (Middle-Garth's Wyrms) yawns aloft, the terrible jaws of the Wyrms gape on high. Óðinn's son shall meet the Wyrms...then comes the mighty son of Hlóðyn (Earth)...he slays in fury, Middle-Garth's Warder; all heroes must ride from home-steads; Fjörgyn's bairn steps back nine feet from the Adder, fearing no shame. The Sun is blackened, earth sinks into sea, the glorious stars fall from heaven; steam gushes forth with life-nourisher (fire), tall flames play up to heaven itself.

She (the Völva) sees the earth coming up a second time from the sea, renewed-green; waterfalls stream down, an eagle flies above, hunting fish from the fell. The Ases find each other on Iða-Fields, and deem concerning the mighty earth-robe (the Middle-Garth's Wyrms - likely speaking with honour of Þórr's battle against it), and remember the mighty doom for themselves there, and Fimbultýr's ancient runes. And afterwards they must find the wondrous golden tafl-pieces in the grass there, which they had in earliest days. Unsown acres shall wax, and all bale be made better. Baldr shall come; Höðr and Baldr shall dwell there, the Slain-Gods well in Hroþr's sig-steads (Valhöll?)...Then Hoenir shall be able to choose the lot-woods, and the two brothers shall dwell in wide Wind-Home...She sees a hall stand, fairer than the Sun, thatched with gold, in Gimlé. There shall the doughty troops dwell, and enjoy the pleasures of ancient days. Then the mighty one shall come to the gods' deeming, powerful, from above, who rules all. Then the dark dragon shall come flying, the Adder forth from below, from Niða-Fells; Niðhögg bears corpses in his feathers, flies over the field - now she shall sink (speaking of the seeress who has finished her prophecy; an alternate manuscript has "now he shall sink", speaking of the dragon)".

Vafþrúðnismál adds to this that two humans, Líf (Life) and Lífþrasir (Stubborn Will to Live, or Striver After Life), will survive by hiding themselves in "Hoddmímir's (Treasure-Mímir's) Wood", and nourish themselves on morning dew. "Hoddmímir's Wood" is often taken to be the World-Tree, or its young shoots. The etin Vafþrúðnir also says that the Sun shall bear a daughter before the wolf (here, Fenrir) swallows her; that Víðarr and Váli shall dwell in the wih-steads of the gods when Surtr's flames are slaked, and Móði and Magni shall have Mjöllnir. Likewise, he mentions that Njörðr shall return to Wan-Home. Interestingly, Wan-Home is the only worlds which is not specifically mentioned as being disturbed by Ragnarök: the alfs are coupled with the Ases, Etin-Home resounds and the mountains fall, the dwarves groan, the Muspilli are on the move, Nith-Hewer is stirred from his stead in Nibel-Home, and even Hel is not untouched by the world-shaking last battle. Only Wan-Home and the Wans (apart from Fro Ing, the world's last warder) take no known part in it - though some may perhaps see their might in the rising of the new earth from the sea.

Snorri's version of Ragnarök differs from the poems in only a couple of particulars: he adds the hosts of the frost-giants and Hel (problematical, giving Baldr and Höðr's later return from her realm) to those fighting against the gods; he informs us of a few more single combats (Heimdallr and Loki, Týr and Hel's hound Garmr, shall slay each other; and Freyr fights against Surtr with a stag's antler); and, according to him, Víðarr does not stab Fenrir, but rips his jaws apart with a great leather boot made from the cast-off scraps of all human leatherworkers. The last element is thought to preserve an older tradition; the motif of the beast who swallows someone whole, only to be ripped apart so that the swallowed one may spring alive from its belly, appears frequently in Germanic folk-tales ("Little Red Riding Hood" probably being the best-

known example), and many true folk think that this shows that Wodan shall come forth again in some form - perhaps embodied in one of his kinsmen. In *Runelore*, Edred Thorsson suggests Hoenir, who now handles the lot-woods (runes); Óðinn's sons Balder and/or Höðr and/or his avenger Víðarr are all also possibilities. Þórr's might is reborn in Móði and Magni (and, we may expect, Þrúðr as well): his Hammer, like the sword of the Völsungs and Týrfingr, is the embodiment of the Thonarings' clan-soul, passed on and brought forth in generation after generation.

As for the "mighty one" of Völuspá, there are different readings. Some see this stanza as a christian interpolation giving the southerners' god a place among ours; others compare it to the section of "Hyndluljóð" which is called "Völuspá hin skamma" (the Short Spae of the Völva), in which a "mighty one" who, because of his birth from nine mothers, is generally thought to be Heimdallr, is spoken of in similar terms (see "Heimdallr"). As Járnsaxa (Thonar's concubine) is one of the nine women named in "Hyndluljóð", the possibility that these references could perhaps speak of Magni - physically the mightiest of the Ases, even at three years old - has been suggested as well in Freya Aswynn's runic correspondence course.

To true folk, Ragnarök is not something to be feared, no more than death is; the two are essentially the same on different levels. The great beasts of death for our forebears were the wolf and the wyrm (in its various shapes from maggot to dragon); Surtr's fires might well be seen as the flames of the funeral pyre leaping up to eat the whole of the world - as they do for the individual at cremation. However, as spoken of in "Soul, Death, and Rebirth", death takes many shapes, and many things may lie beyond it, according to how life is lived and how death itself is met. Thus, our need is to strengthen ourselves and the god/esses so that it will be possible for them to fulfill their parts in the battle and for the new world to be born again. It could happen at any time - "the gray wolf gapes ever at the gods' dwelling" - and we must be ready for it. This is not a call to stockpile guns, as some christians do in the expectation that their myth of Armageddon will soon play itself out in physical form; rather, our readiness lies in warding and healing the Earth, in strengthening our own selves so that we will be able to fight alongside the holy ones when the time comes, and - most of all - in seeking to know the god/esses, to work with them, and to give them might and bring them through more strongly into this world by holding the blessings of the seasons and living as true folk who call on them every day.

Contributors:

- Freya Aswynn, Elder (Runic Correspondence Course, Lesson 8)
- Sunwynn Ravenwood, in "Letters from Midgard", Idunna V, ii, 19 (For-Litha 1993 C.E.)
- Eric Wodening, Elder-in-Training, from "Heathen Cosmography", Idunna V, i, 18 (Rhedmonth 1993 C.E.)

Chapter XXVI

Soul, Death, and Rebirth

The "soul" of our forebears was made up of many different elements, woven together to become a whole being. As Thorsson points out, "the strong body-soul split so heavily emphasized in christianity is missing in true soul-lore. We would rather talk of a body-soul-mind complex for a more complete understanding not only of what the parts are, but also how they relate to one another" (*A Book of Troth*, p. 90). As usual, accounts of these elements vary from place to place and time to time. In modern times, several folk have written clear and organized descriptions of the various parts of the soul and the ways in which they work together, though whether our forebears were so systematic is open to question. Some folk find these models extremely useful; some do not. Probably the most precise version of such a model is that drawn out by Edred Thorsson in *A Book of Troth*, which shows the different elements of the whole-self as overlapping, interwoven rings (p. 91).

Swain Wodening has thoroughly analyzed the soul-lore of the Anglo-Saxons, coming up with a system that is similar, though not identical, to Thorsson's. He uses the Saxon English term *ferth to describe all of the non-physical parts of the body-soul complex except for the fetch (see below). This part survives death, and is capable of seeing or traveling into the other worlds even when still in the living body. The ferth was to the forebears what "the self" is to modern psychologists. Contained within the soul are the memory, intellect, and emotions. The Old English knew these as the mind (OE *mynd*), high (OE *hyge*, ON *hugr*), and mood (OE *mód*). The mind can be broken down further into the *gemynd* (OE) or *min* (OE *myne*), and the *orþanc* (ur-thought). The min is the personal memories of deeds done in one's lifetime as well as knowledge and wisdom learned. The *orþanc*, on the other hand, is inborn thought, ancestral memory, and/or instinct. Some might call it the collective unconscious. It is tied to the *fetch* and one's *ørlæg*, personal and clanic. It contains all the deeds, lessons, and errors of forebears and adopted forebears formerly linked to the soul's *fetch* for use by the individual. While the *ørlæg* is the *shilds* (debts) and *meeds* (rewards) of past deeds waiting to be dispensed, the *orþanc* is the memory of the deeds themselves.

The *high*, like the *mind*, can also be broken down. The *high* is made of the *angit* (OE *andget*), *sefa* (OE), and *wit*. The *angit* is the five senses, that which collects information from the world around us. The *angit* is the "intelligence agency" of the ferth. While the *angit* collects knowledge, it is the *sefa* that uses this information. The *sefa* is the seat of reasoning and thought. However, the *angit's* and the *sefa's* reasoning are worthless without the *wit*. One could think of the *angit* as a computer keyboard, the *sefa* as a data processing program, and the *wit* as memory retrieval (with the mind being ROM).

While the *mind* and *high* are easy to explain, the *mód* and wode (OE *wod* - also modernized to wood or simply wode) are not. The *mod* is the seat of emotions, and alongside the wode and the *will* (OE *willa*), it is one of the most runic or *dern* (secret) parts of the soul. The *mod* governs all emotions from the simplest to the most complex. The *mod* is also linked to such qualities as boldness and *are* (honour). In Old English, it was combined with many words to express states of mind (i.e. *deormodig* - bold of mind), much as the word "heart" is used today (i.e. bold-hearted). Often *mod* was used in place of *ferth* or *high*, but one must realize it was used as we use the word "heart".

If the *mod* isn't complex enough, its brother aspect, the wode, is even more so. While the *mod* governs emotions such as bravery, the wode reigns over everything from ecstasy and madness to inspiration. Wode is the actor's adlib, the athlete's drive, the fury of the berserker, and the inspiration of the *shope* and *gleeman*. Its common thread is its unrelenting drive akin to obsession, and its ability to well up out of nowhere. Some compare it to psychologist Rollo May's *daimonic* which uncontrolled leads to madness, but used with wisdom can accomplish great deeds (note: even the Gothic christian Ulfila translated *daimonizomenos* and *daimonistheis*, "possessed by a daimon", as *wods* - KHG). The wode is Woden's domain, and to understand wode is to better understand the god. Strangely enough, wode was the gift of Willa, the god of the will, in the Prose Edda (and of Óðinn's brother Hoenir in *Völuspá* - KHG). Whereas the wode seems to well up inspiration within us seemingly from without, it is the will that brings self-determination from within. It is the will controlling the wode that allows us to fight negative *ørlæg* or to flow with it. The will is the part of the ferth that allows us to bring thoughts from the *high* or inspiration from the wode into physical reality on *Middenerd*. Using the will one can call forth *main* from unseen places. And by using the will to harness the *wode* one may do most anything, for the will can call forth the wode instead of waiting for the wode to well up on its own.

Where the will fails, luck may prevail. Tied to the ghost is one's luck which in Old English was called *speed* (OE *spæd*), craft (OE *cræft*), main (OE *mægen*), *thracu* (OE), and might (OE *miht*). Strength and *threw* were sometimes used occasionally. *Speed* or *main* is the luck or power of the individual which determines the chances of success in any undertaking. It is the same as the Old Norse concept *hamingja*, as far as *hamingja* meaning luck and not the fetch *faring hame*. *Speed* is tied to *eldorlog* or *ørlæg*, and as such is passed down family lines. Good deeds add to main while evil deeds take away main. The dispenser of *main* as regulated by one's *ørlæg* is the *fetch* (ON *fylgja*, or "follower").

The Anglo-Saxons had no recorded word for *fetch*, although *fæcce-mare* (fetch-demon) appears in a 9th century document (it is possible that the scribe meant mere, a female horse). The first appearance of *fetch* as a written word outside of a compound was in the Scottish dialect, where the word *wraith* (ON *vörðr* - warder or guardian) also arose with a similar meaning. The *fetch* is an independent being attached to one's soul for life, so long as one does not grow too wicked. The

fetch records all one's deeds in one's *ørlög*. The *ørlög*, also called *elderlog* and *orlaw* (or ur-law), is the record of all the deeds committed by all who have belonged to the fetch, and determines how much *speed* or *main* a person will receive. The fetch, *ørlög*, and speed are passed down family lines, even to adopted family members. The fetch may serve as a warder or guardian, though this aspect is usually left to *ides* and *wælcyrge* (see chapters on "Idises" and "Walkurja"). The fetch usually appears as an animal compatible to the personality of the individual it serves, or a member of the opposite sex. One usually will not see one's fetch outside of dreams until just before death, when it will lead the soul to its abode in the hereafter. One may send one's fetch forth to get knowledge from the other worlds...

The high, mind, mod, and speed are contained in the *hame* (OE *hame*, ON *hamr*), *hide* (OE *hid*), or *shinehue* (OE *scínnhiw*). The *hame* is the energy/matter form underlying the body, and contains the ferth after death or when faring forth. It is the *hame* that allows us to see ghosts. You might wish to think of it as the astral image or ectoplasm. It looks like the body its ferth belongs to, though powerful runesters, witches, wights, and gods can shape-shift theirs. It is sent with the ferth when faring forth from the body, leaving the *athem* behind to keep the body alive. The Old English knew this as shinelock (OE *scínlác*) or shinecraft (OE *scincraeft*), the ability to send one's hame from the body to appear somewhere else. The *hame* is the skin of the soul; without it the ferth's energies would be lost among all else.

The link between body and soul is the *athem* (OE *æþem*), also called the *blead* (OE *blæd*), *edwist* (OE), and *eldor* (OE). The *athem* is the breath of life; a related term, *ande* (OE *anda*) is cognate to ON *önd*, one of the three gifts of the gods to humankind. The *athem* is the animating principle of the body, or in Latin the *animus*. It holds the ghost to the body, and this bond is needed to maintain normal life in Middenerd. In other philosophies and *sedes* (religions, customs), this could be seen as "the silver cord". Without it the soul would leave the body and move on to the abodes of Hell, Folkwang, or Walehall. In order for this bond to stay, the *athem* is fed with energies from the food we eat, the water we drink, and the air we breathe. *Main* is sent across the *athem* to the *lich*. This can be shown in the Old English manuscripts by the uses of *athem* and *blead* for breath, and *edwist* and *eldor* for physical nourishment. Upon death the *athem* dissolves, setting the ferth free to leave the lich forever. Should the *athem* fail to dissolve, the result could be the *draugr* (ON - OE *gidrog*) or walking dead of the sagas.

Native English words for the body are *raw* or *lich* (OE *lic*). During life the soul is contained in the lich which allows us to live in Middenerd. As such, one should see the lich and ferth as one great whole. Without the ferth the lich would be a vegetable, without the raw the soul would find it hard being in Middenerd. It is the lich that allows the ferth time to obtain wisdom in a friendly abode (Middenerd) before faring on to another.

Interestingly, the parts of the ferth-lich complex (minus the warders) number nine, mirroring in a way the nine worlds of Yggdrasil. However, such a comparison truly isn't feasible, but it leaves us something to ponder on (perhaps while browsing through Bosworth-Toller's *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* or the *Oxford English Dictionary*).

In his *Culture of the Teutons* (vol. I, pp. 248-270), Vilhelm Grønbech undertakes, among other things, an analysis of the various words used by the Norse for parts of the soul. Some of these, particularly *hugr* and *munr*, are in common use among Ásatrúar today; others are more obscure. In Old Norse, the word *hugr* can mean thought, bravery, or general mood; one can be in good or ill *hugr*, for example. Thorsson uses the term *hugr*, or "hugh", specifically for the intellectual/rational part of the mind - the left hemisphere of the brain. However, the Norse often used the word to mean intuition; it is the *hugr* that passes knowledge gathered by various soul-parts to the consciousness. It can be used for the general psychic-emotional complex as well. As Grønbech says, "(Hugr) inspires a man's behavior, his actions and his speech are characterised according to whether they proceed out of *whole hugr*, *bold hugr*, or *downcast hugr*...when the *hugr* is uneasy, as when one can say with Gudrun, "Long have I hesitated, long were my *hugrs* divided within me", then life is not healthy. But when a man has followed the good counsel from the within, then there rises from his soul a shout of triumph, it is his *hugr* laughing in his breast" (I, p.250).

Munr can mean memory; it can also mean desire. After the model of Wodan's ravens, Huginn ("Thoughtful" or "Bold") and Muninn ("Mindful" or "Desirous"), true folk today often couple the *hugr* and *munr* as thought and memory/left-brain and right-brain/analytic intellect and creativity.

Aldr, "life-age", is seen as one's store of life, which is given at birth by the idises or norms (see "Idises"), but can be taken away or lessened by dishonourable deeds, or in fight: Grønbech mentions that "A man can hazard his *aldr* and lose it, he can take another man's *aldr* from him in battle. *Aldr* is the *fjör* (life) residing in the breast, which the sword can force its way in to bite" (I, p. 255). It determines both the quantity and the quality of life.

Fjör is the life itself, encompassing both consciousness and luck.

Önd, "life-breath", is Wodan's gift. It can also be used as a general word meaning "soul", or "awareness" (as opposed to the wild inspiration of wod). As the *Flateyjarbók* saga of "St. Óláfr" (quoted below) shows, this breath/awareness was one of the elements which could be reborn, and bore a specific individual character.

Móðr, like its Saxon cognate *mód*, means bravery. However, in Old Norse it is often used very specifically for a state of intensity in which one suddenly brings forth all one's innate powers. For instance, when fording the swollen river on his way to Geirröðr's dwelling, Þórr must take on his "Ásmóðr". When the great Wyrn Jörmungandr awakens at Ragnarök to thrash the seas, he takes on his "jötunmóðr", as does the etin who built the walls of the Ases' Garth when he realizes that the gods have tricked him and goes into a rage.

The *hamingja* is one's store of psychic power and "luck". It is possible to lend part of one's *hamingja* to other folk; *hamingja*, like *aldr*, speed, and other related elements, is made greater by deeds of honour and lessened by dishonour.

Might and main (or "main-strength"), *máttir ok megin*, usually appear together. They speak of a blending of earthly strength and soul-strength - the exertion of all physical power together with total concentration and spiritual force. To our forebears, bodily might and soul-might could hardly be separated; one often reflected and perhaps even shaped the other. *Megin*, in particular, was the strength that supported the soul, while *máttir* was more the strength of the muscles.

Ørlög, the "ur-law", is the root of being: it is the first layer of Wyrd which shapes all that follows. To be "without ørlög" is not to exist in any meaningful way; in *Völuspá*, the phrase is used of the logs on the beach before Óðinn, Hoenir, and Lóðurr make them into human beings. Ørlög is that which determines how all of life shall be shaped, from beginning to end: it is the that-which-is, the *wyrd* of the individual.

The *hamr*, or hide/hame, is, as Swain describes, the "astral body" underlying the physical shape. Shape-shifters, such as Egill's grandfather Kveld-Úlfr, are said to be *hamrammr* (hide-mighty) or *eigi einhamr* (not one-hidden).

Together with the fylgja, or fetch, there are also other warding-wights tied to the soul, most particularly the sort which has previously been called the "valkyrja" but, as discussed in "Walkurjas", probably was not known as such by our forebears. In *Völsunga saga*, however, there is a description of Sigmundr's last battle in which the Völsung is bloody to the elbows, "but his *spae*-idises helped him so that he was not wounded". These women are clearly not walkurjas, as this is the battle in which Óðinn has decided that Sigmundr shall die; but they are both protective and, as the name "*spae*-idis" shows, wise and foresighted. This is the role which the thrice-reborn Sváva/Sigrún/Kára plays to the thrice-reborn Helgi, and perhaps the role to which Sigrdrífa has been demoted from her former station as walkurja: warder, rede-giver, and soul's shining bride or Higher Self, who also incorporates elements of the Jungian anima. Although there are no sources showing a manly warder, rede-giver, and soul's shining husband for women, if the anima/animus theory is indeed valid here, we may guess that women's Higher Selves may appear in manly shape, and be called "*spae*-alfs". These wights cannot be commanded or controlled: although they are part of the soul, they seem to have their own consciousness, and indeed perhaps to serve as a bridge between their humans' individual awarenesses and the specific god/ess to whom the individual's soul is closest.

Many families have a kin-fetch, who appears as a great woman clad in armour in both *Hallfreðar saga* and *Víga-Glúms saga*. This wight usually attends the head of the family until death, when she goes to the next family member whom she finds fitting. If that person is not willing to have her (as in *Hallfreðar saga* where Þórvaldr refuses), she will continue until she finds someone who is. The kin-fetch may probably be thought of as a specialized type of idis; H.R. Ellis cites several examples of such women warning their descendants or prophesying their deaths (*Road to Hel*, p. 131).

Another form of clan-soul is that which seems to be embodied in a sword. The most famous blade of this sort is the sword of the Völsungs, which Óðinn thrusts into the tree Barnstokkr (Bairn-Stock). When Sigmundr draws it forth, he is taking up his inheritance as Óðinn's great-great-grandson; when his posthumous son Sigurðr has the broken blade reforged, he is initiating himself fully into the clan of which he is the last survivor. A similar act is performed by Angantýr's posthumous daughter Hervör (*Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*), when she claims the ancestral sword *Týrfingr* from her father's burial mound. As H.R. Ellis has discussed at some length in *The Road to Hel*, and Stephen Flowers in *Sigurðr: Rebirth and Initiation*, the belief in clan-soul is closely tied up with the Germanic beliefs about rebirth. The Óðinn-hero Starkaðr, for example, was born showing the marks on his body where Þórr had ripped off the extra arms of his grandfather, Starkaðr the giant. The younger Starkaðr, thus, had clearly inherited the elder one's *hamr* together with his name (and the continued enmity of Þórr). A similar occurrence is seen in *Þórðar saga hræðu*, where the posthumous son of Þórðr is given his father's name, and has a scar on his left arm where his father had been wounded.

Luck, *hamingja*, *aldr*, and the related elements are also reborn in the family line. There is some question as to whether the individual consciousness is reborn (through inheritance or name-giving) or not: however, the Helgi poems seem to suggest that it can be, as Helgi's own *spae*-idis is reborn with him, and the *spae*-idis (or *spae*-alf), though a separate aspect of the soul, seems to be very closely bound to the individual awareness. Rebirth is also especially connected with name-giving: Ellis cites a number of examples in which a dying man asks another to be sure that a child is named after him. In *Svarfdæla saga*, Þórólfr specifically states that he will give all his luck to the child who bears his name. This is usually within the family line, and many families were actually characterized by the use of specific name-elements for all members (as with the Völsungs, Sigmundr, Sign or Sieglinde, and Sigurðr or Siegfried), which may have assured the oneness of the clan-soul. However, it did not have to be a blood relationship. None of the three Helgis are known to be related to one another, but the second (Hunding's-Bane) was named after the first (Hjörvarðsson), who in turn received his name only when full-grown, while sitting on a howe. Ellis also mentions that there seems to be a close connection between howe-burial/howe-sitting and rebirth.

The most famous prose description of the Norse belief in rebirth comes from *Óláfs saga ins helga* (Flateyjarbók). In this saga, it is told how the dead Óláfr Geirstaðaálfr comes to a man named Hrani (which is also the name by which Óðinn goes in *Hrólfs saga kraka*) in a dream, telling him to break into Óláfr's own howe, cut the head off the corpse, and take the sword, ring, and girdle from the mound. He is to put the girdle around the waist of the pregnant queen Ásta and tell her that if her child is a boy, he is to be named Óláfr, and he shall have the ring and sword. All of this duly happened - but as

we know, Óláfr chose to convert to christianity, and became a tyrant to Norway rather than a hero. Later in his saga (chapter 106, titled "Óðinn came to King Óláfr with deception and wiles"), Óláfr is visited by Óðinn, who speaks to him of kings of old and asks which among them he would prefer to have been if he could choose. Óláfr says that he would not prefer to be any Heathen man, king or otherwise, though eventually he admits to a grudging liking for Hrólfr kráki. When he recognises Óðinn, he tries to hit the god with a prayer book. The next event in the chapter has Óláfr riding past the howe of Óláfr Geirstaðaálfr, where one of his followers asks him, "'Tell me, lord, if you were buried here.'" The king answered him, "My soul (*önd*) has never had two bodies and never will it have, neither now nor on the day of Resurrection. And if I said otherwise there would be no right troth in me." Then his follower said, "Men have said this, that you came to this stead before and you had spoken thus: 'Here we were and here we fare'." The king answered, "I have never said that and I shall never say that." And the king was greatly shaken in his thoughts (*i hugnum*) and spurred on his horse and flew most swiftly from that stead.' As H.R. Ellis comments, "Here the belief in rebirth seems to be clearly expressed, all the more convincingly because of the christian king's determined denial of it later on" (*Road to Hel*, p. 139). To this, it may be added that it seems clear that Óðinn was making an effort to make Óláfr aware of the source of his soul - to awaken his ur-thoughts, or inherited memory - and the king's rejection of the god is of a piece with his reaction at the howe of his predecessor.

It seems, then, that all the sundry aspects of the soul have the potential to be reborn, either separately or together. However, there are many things besides rebirth that can befall the soul. There are some folk who continue to live within the howe, as both the (usually) well-meaning *alfs* and the malign *draugar* (walking corpses) do. The mound-dead (or often undead) are particularly seen as still dwelling within their bodies in the grave; the Germanic link between body and soul is generally much stronger than that of Abrahamic religions. Ellis also cites several families who believed that all their kin would "die into" certain holy mountains, such as the clans of Þórólfr Mosturskeggi, Svanr the wizard, and the matriarch Auðr (pp. 87-89). The life in howe or hill does not seem too bad: *Eyrbyggja saga* describes how, after the drowning of Þórólfr's son Þórsteinn, the mountain opened and there was a great feast within, at which Þórsteinn was welcomed among his kinsmen. After Gunnarr of Hliðarend's death, he is seen lying in the mound with lights shining from within, and seems cheerful and in the best of spirits as he chants verses (*Brennu-Njáls saga*, ch. 78). The giving of grave-goods, food, and drink to the dead - continuously done from the earliest times through the end of the Viking Age - also strengthens the thought that they were thought to live in the howe. Often the atheling-dead were given company - a man's thrall, as seen in the double graves of Stengade and Lejre, or woman's maidservant, as in the Oseberg burial - but they did not always appreciate it. *Landnamabók* tells of how a man named Ásmundr is laid in his howe and a thrall slain to go with him, but he is later heard (or appears to his wife in a dream) complaining loudly of the lack of room, so that the mound has to be opened and the thrall removed.

However, there is also a strong belief that the soul fares between realms. Ellis links these paired beliefs with the paired practices of howe-burial and burning, a view supported by the account of ibn Fadlan, who claims that a Rus told him that they burn their bodies so that the dead could enter swiftly into "Paradise", and added that the wind which had sprung up to fan the recent ship-burning was sent by the dead man's "Lord" out of love, to take him away. Burning was certainly a very important practice to our forebears, as seen both in the legendary examples of Balder, Sigurðr and Brynhildr, Beowulf, and Sigurðr Hringr and in the archaeological record (for instance, the kings' bodies in the great mounds at Gamla Uppsala were burnt before burial). The importance of it becomes clearer when one thinks on how difficult the actual process of cremation was: a great deal of fuel, time, and effort is needed to char flesh from bones (Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death*, pp. 76-8), but our forebears seem to have thought burning the dead to be worth the trouble. Part of this practice surely stemmed from the fear of the walking dead, and it is only the bodies of draugar that are burned in the sagas of the Icelanders - though even their ashes can make trouble: according to *Eyrbyggja saga*, when Þórólfr Twist-Foot is burned, a cow licks the ashes up and from that gets a calf which grows up into a man-killing bull. However, the other sources mentioned show that burning could also be a rite of great respect. Snorri tells us in *Ynglinga saga* that the practice of cremation was introduced by Óðinn, and it is thus particularly thought to be associated with that god's cult. The popular idea of a "Viking ship-burial" where the burning ship is sent out on the waves actually only appears in the description of Baldr's funeral in the Prose Edda, but ibn Fadlan's account tells us that ship-burning was done on land. Our only known male Viking grave in France, a double cremation grave, also showed that the bodies had been burnt in the ship; both the boat and the grave goods were badly charred (Roesdahl and Wilson, *From Viking to Crusader*, p. 322). Some effort was often taken to make sure that the ship did not return from the world of the dead: the ship of the Oseberg grave was moored to a great stone, and a like practice is described in *Gísla saga Súrssonar*.

Death was sometimes seen as a literal journey: Bede's "Death-Song" refers to his passing as "that need-faring"; the Old Norse phrase for dead relatives was *framgengina frænda* (kin who have gone before), and the modern German word for "ancestors" is *Vorfahren* (Gundarsson, *Teutonic Religion*, ch. 8). However, faring between the worlds and howe-burial were not mutually exclusive, nor were faring between the worlds and rebirth. As spoken of below, many folk were put into the mound with those things they needed to reach the next world (ships, horses, wains). Helgi Hunding's-Bane offers us the rare example of someone who goes through all three stages: laid whole in the mound, he rides to Walhall, but comes back to his lich again for a last night with his living bride Sigrún; after that, he does not come back from Walhall while she lives, but

the two are born again as Helgi Haddingjaskati and his beloved Kára. Gunnarr of Hliðarend (*Brennu-Njáls saga*) may also be one who fared between mound and God-Home: though he spoke verses from his mound, when his son Högni took his thrusting-spear with a mind for revenge, he said that he was bringing the weapon to his father so that Gunnarr might have it in Valhöll. It is also possible that some rocks or mountains such as the Helgafell of *Eyrbyggja saga* may have been thought of not only as halls in which the dead continued to dwell, in a sense, on this earth, but also as gateways to the worlds of the god/esses. This is hinted at in the *Ynglinga saga* description of how King Sveigðir, seeking Óðinn and Valhöll, entered into a dwarf's stone and was never seen again; Turville-Petre, indeed, suggests that "Valhöll" may have first derived, not from Valhöll ("Hall of the Slain"), but Val-hallr ("Rock of the Slain").

The most common means by which our forebears fared between the worlds after death was the ship: as spoken of in "The Nine Worlds: Their Shaping and Ends", the boundaries between the worlds are usually seen either as seas or as great rivers. The Eddic prose section *Frá dauða Sinfjötla* (Of Sinfjötli's Death), describes how Sigmundr carried his dead son's body until "he came to a long and narrow firth, and there was a little ship and a man in it. He offered Sigmundr passage over the firth. But when Sigmundr bore the lich out to the ship, then the boat was (fully) laden. The man said that Sigmundr should walk around the firth. The man shoved the boat off and disappeared". The ferryman is clearly Wodan, who also appears, in a lighter mood, as the ferryman between the worlds in *Hárbarðsljóð*.

The oldest sort of "ship-grave" in Scandinavia dates from the end of the Bronze Age/beginning of the Iron Age in Gotland, where the dead were put into graves marked out by upright stones in the outline of a ship. The greatest treasure-burials of the Migration and Viking ages are ship-burials: Sutton Hoo, the Vendel graves, the Oseberg and Gokstad burials - all these rulers were laid in their ships, just as written of in the literary sources. In the oldest of the Vendel graves, the only one in that group from the Vendel Period in which a full skeleton was found, the chieftain was "seated in full war-gear in the stern of his ship with his horse behind him" (Ellis, *Road to Hel*, p. 16) - showing not that he had been "laid to rest", but that he had been gotten ready for his journey. Ship-burials are also described in *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, *Harðar saga*, and *Landnámabók*. Many of the Gotlandic picture stones, from the fifth century through the tenth, show ship-farings; some of these may be the journeys of legendary heroes (such as Hammars I, which is often interpreted as showing a scene from the tale of Högni and Hildir), but others are clearly the voyages of the dead. The earliest of these is the Sanda stone (ca. 400-600 C.E.), which has a sunlike design above, two wyrms coiled about spheres enclosing eightfold swirls and a rough tree-like shape in the middle - and below, another dragon above a ship (Nýlen, Erik; Jan-Peder Lamm. *Stones, Ships, and Symbols*, p. 29). This is likely to show that the men on the ship are journeying over the waters to the Underworld. The more famous stones of Tjängvide II and Ardre VIII (ca. 700-800), appear together with scenes that have a figure who is likely to be the memorialized dead man riding Sleipnir to his welcome in Valhöll; it is suggested that "the Gotlanders who carved the stones thought of the road to Valhalla as the road home. First one had to travel over the wide seas to a distant coast where a horse awaited the dead, a horse from the great farm or lordly hall of the neighborhood, and then one was welcomed with a flowing horn of mead" (*Stones, Ships, and Symbols*, p. 70). The roots of this belief may stretch back to the Bronze Age; it is quite possible that some of the many ships of the rock-carving are the ships of the death-faring as well as of the fruitfulness-procession.

Our forebears also travelled between the worlds by horse or, less often, by wain. The horse is very often found in graves: sometimes this is clearly based only on its status as a valued possession (as when it appears in ship-graves such as the one from Vendel), and in *Egils saga ok Ásmundar*, the horse in the mound provides a nice meal for the voracious draugr Aran; but it is also quite possible that in many cases, the horse could have been seen as the means of bearing the dead person to the Otherworld. Certainly in the literature, it is the most usual kind of transport between the worlds. Hermóðr must borrow Wodan's horse Sleipnir to ride down to Hel in search of Balder; to reach Etin-Home and pass through the flames that ring Gerðr's hall, Skírnir needs Freyr's horse; and only Grani can pass the fire around Brynhildr (*Völsunga saga*). The way through the clouds to and from Walhall is one that is usually ridden. In *Hákonarmál*, the walkurjas Göndul and Skögul ride to fetch King Hákon, speaking to him where he lies dead "from the steed's back"; Skögul then mentions that "We two shall ride...to the green worlds of the gods" (st. 13). *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* II has the dead Helgi riding back from Valhöll to spend a last night with his living bride; when dawn comes, he says, "It is time for me to ride the reddening ways, let the fallow horse tread the flight-path; I must go westward over the wind-helm's bridge before Salgofnir wakes the sig-host" (st. 49). In *Sturlunga saga*, Gúðrún Gjúkadóttir (wife of Sigurðr the Völsung) rides from "Corpse-World" on a grey horse to tell of a coming disaster. Saxo describes Óðinn as wrapping Hadding in his cloak and carrying him away on his horse; Hadding looks down just once, and sees the ocean beneath him.

One of the Gotlandic picture stones, Lärbro Tängelgårda I, bears out this emphasis on the horse as the beast of death. The first scene shows a battle, in which the rider has fallen from his horse and lies dead. The second, Sune Lindqvist reads as a funeral: the living have turned their backs and walk away with swords pointed down as the horse bears the dead man away. This horse has two sets of crossed lines between its legs: Lindqvist suggests that the horse could be a dead one which has been propped up with these supports, but prefers the explanation that "The two crosses represent...a 'standing fence', that is, one of the notable, particularly strong cemetery-fences, working almost as a fortification, which for a long time have been usual in Gotland...In this case the horse would be alive; in agreement with the horses in the ceremonial burial processions of later times, (its head would be) covered...so that the eyes might not gaze upon the living when it bears

the dead through the enclosure that separates the world of the dead from the world of the living" (*Gotlands Bildsteine*, I, p. 99). The belief in a horse bearing the dead by itself appears in later Norwegian folk-tales of the Black Death. There is even a tune, "Førnes Brown", based on a story in which there were so few people left in the town Møsstrånna that no one was left to walk with the churchyard horse, so the grave-diggers put snowshoes on its feet and sent it off by itself, and every time it came back to the cemetery, it had to go out by itself again to fetch another body (Kvideland & Sehmsdorf, p. 349). But one snowshoe came off and the horse limped; a limp which can be heard in the tune.

The story of a corpse-fetching horse is clearly not realistic (among other things, how did it know who had just died, and how did it get the body out of the house and onto the sleigh?); the horse that knows where to go to find the newly dead and the way to bear them is likely to go back to Heathen belief. Possibly because of this connection with the faring between the worlds, the horse is often thought of as a particular beast of death. A creature called the *helhest* (Hel-horse) appears in Scandinavian folklore; this is a three-legged horse which goes noisily about the church-yard and fetches the dead - limping like the horse of "Førnes Brown". Grimm cites a Danish story that a live horse was buried first in every new churchyard, and that its ghost became the *helhest* (*Teutonic Mythology*, II, p. 844). Wild Hunt is made up almost wholly of mounted ghosts, and the traditional Northern European hobby-horse often has a skull for a head. Hel herself sometimes rides on a three-legged white horse, or even appears as one herself; her title *jódis*, "horse-idis", has often been thought to speak of the relationship of the horse to the cult of the dead (though this is not universally accepted by academics); and when a man recovered from serious illness, it was said that he had given Death a bushel of oats (Karlsdóttir, "The Lady Death", p. 5; see also Grimm, II, pp. 844-45). This may also have been related to the folk practice of leaving the last sheaf for Wodan's horse, though that certainly had the purpose of encouraging fruitfulness as well. In any case, this horse-lore may explain why the horse is thought of as an especially holy beast. As the creature which can go most easily between the worlds, it could well bear the god/esses forth and/or transmit their wisdom into the Middle-Garth; as a sacrifice, it could best bear the wishes and needs of the folk to be heard in the Otherworld - and set in the grave, the horse could likewise bear the dead to God-Home or Hel-Home.

The usual picture of the Germanic afterlife, as given to us by Snorri in his Edda and taken up in popular belief, has battle-slain warriors faring up to Walhall, while everyone else sinks down to the cold and dreary realm of Hel. This seems to be some way from what has come down to us of the thoughts of our forebears: the belief in life in the mound or rock has already been spoken of at length; besides that, there are a number of godly halls to which folk may fare, even according to Snorri's own Edda in which he says that maidens go to Gefjon after death.

The widest realm of death, Hel-Home itself, was probably not thought of as all that bad. As Alice Karlsdóttir mentions, the style of poetic personification (with names such as Hunger for Hel's dish, Famine for her knife, Pit of Stumbling for her threshold, and Disease for her bed) is so late and so christian (it reminds one of *Pilgrim's Progress* or an old mediæval morality play like *Everyman*) that it seems almost certain to have been coloured by the christian philosophy and the need to have an antithesis to Valhalla (Heaven and Hel, get it?)...Besides Snorri's tidy little personifications, there are the descriptions from Baldrs draumar and Hermóðr's journey that show Hel's hall decorated, and equipped with mead to receive Baldr, differing little from the preparations one finds in Valhall.

In fact, the description of how Hel's benches are strewn with rings, the dais adorned fairly with gold, and the mead brewed with a shield set over the shining drink in preparation for Baldr's arrival is very similar to the Eiríksmál description of how Óðinn dreams that he bade "the benches to be strewn, the ale-cups to be washed, the valkyries to bear wine as if a prince came" in preparation for Eiríkr's arrival. In *Walhall*, Neckel lists several other likenesses between Walhall and Hel-Home: both have rivers which must be crossed over, similar to "the death-waters of the most various folks"; both have gates with ominous names (Walhall's *Valgrindr* - "gates of the slain"; Hel-Home's *Helgrindr* - "gates of Hel/Death" and *Nágrindr* - "corpse-gates"); and both have warded bridges which resound beneath the hero's passing (pp. 51 ff.). Neckel ends by suggesting that there was originally a single land of the dead, but that "*Grimnismál*...lifts the hellish territories up into heaven" (*Walhall*, p. 53); and it is quite likely that there was originally a general sense of the landscape of the world of the dead, which was later specialized into the halls of Hella and Wodan, the two deities who have most to do with death.

Even the distinction between battle-dead and other kinds of dead becomes suspicious when the sources are looked at carefully. Like Wodan and the Frowe, Hella (according to "Ynglingatal") also *chooses* her dead - that is probably to say, determines who shall die. To slay someone in battle can be to send them to guest with Óðinn, as mentioned several times in the Samsøy section of *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, or it can be to send them to Hel. Sinfjötli, who dies of poison, is taken to Walhall by Óðinn, as, according to Egill's poem *Sonatorrek*, are the sons of Egill Skalla-Grímsson - one of whom died of fever, the other by drowning. However, Sigurðr and Baldr are both weapon-slain, and they both fare to Hel-Home, as do many other edge-mown men (and "Eggmóinn", "edge-mown" - killed by the sword - is also a dwarf-name in the þulur, or poetic name-lists). Since Sigurðr is thought of as the greatest of heroes, the distinction between the dead of Walhall and Folkvangr and those of Hel also cannot be a matter of only the best going to the higher realms.

The most significant way in which Hel's realm does differ from Walhall is that it seems rather a quiet place where the dead rested after the labours of life. Terms for dying such as *hvilask í helju* ("to rest in Hel") and Saxo's *placidae sedes* ("quiet homes") support this. Perhaps this would seem like torture to an adventurer or professional warrior, but surely *some* would view the idea of a little peace and quiet as not necessarily a bad thing. There are also references in the myths and

sagas that seem to indicate Hel occasionally took some of her more notable guests into her "embraces" (just what is Baldr doing down there, anyway?). Saxo mentions Baldr dreaming of the embraces of "Persephone", and in *Fostbroeðra saga* ch. 4, Þorgeirr warns Þórbrandr of a dream he has had foreboding that "Hel, your housewife (húsfreyja) shall lay you in her embrace".

In Walhall, however, as we know, the *einherjar* slay each other every day, then feast as friends together every night. The hall is well-spoken of in *Grímnismál*: its pillars are spears, its benches strewn with byrnies, and the roof is thatched with shields. A warg hangs before the west door, and an eagle swoops low above. Walhall has either five hundred forty doors (if the "hundred" of stanza 24 is a short base-ten hundred) or six hundred forty (if it is the long Germanic base-twelve hundred), out of each of which eight hundred (or nine hundred sixty) *einherjar* will fare at Ragnarök. On the hall stands a goat named Heiðrún, who bites at the World-Tree's leaves and fills the cauldron with mead from her udders; a stag called Eikþyrnir stands beside her, and shining drops from his horns fall down to Hvergelmir. The cook is called Andhrímnir ("the sooty one"; also an eagle-*heiti*), the kettle Eldhrímnir ("the fire-sooty"), and the boar whose flesh is seethed in it every day and who is whole in the evening again is Sæhrímnir ("sea-sooty"). The walkurjas bear ale to the *einherjar* there at the night's feasting, and may well be the ones to bring them back to life and make them whole again after the day's fighting.

As well as Walhall, the halls spoken of in the sources include Gefjon's (Snorri's Edda, spoken of above), the Frowe's (see "the Frowe"), and Thonar's. In *Hárbarðsljóð* 24, the old ferryman says that "Óðinn has the jarls who fall in fight, but Þórr has the kin of thralls", to which Þórr, rather miffed, replies, "You would divide the hosts of the gods unevenly, if you had much choice" (st. 25) - strongly suggesting that matters are not as Hárbarðr has stated them - certainly no one else, not even Loki, would dare suggest to Thonar's face that he was a patron of thralls! Since all the god/esses have their own halls, and their own beloved friends in Middle-Earth, it is generally believed in the Troth that those folk who do not stay in mound or rock fare to the dwelling of whichever deity is closest to their own souls.

Probably the most important single element in Germanic beliefs of the afterlife, however, was the oneness of the clan. In the *Vita Wulframi*'s account of the attempted conversion of Radbod of Frisia, the king, at the edge of the baptismal font, asks what has become of his forebears. The christian convertor replies that they are surely in Hell, whereupon Radbod, appalled by the idea of being parted from his kin in this life or the hereafter, refuses baptism on the grounds that he could not do without the fellowship of all those who ruled the Frisians before him. In Scandinavian sources, we have not only Helgafell, but also Egill's statement in *Sonatorrek* 18 that his dead son has gone "to visit his kin", and Sigmundr's dying words in *Völsunga saga*, "I must now go to our kin who have gone before". As the whole splits into its parts after death, this is true in several ways. The consciousness seems to be that part which fares between the worlds to God-Home or Hel-Home, or else dwells in the family crag or howe (when enough other soul-elements, such as hamingja, hamr, might and main, and so forth stay with the body after death, then you get a draugr - this is most common in cases of sudden violent death, especially if the death had to do with magic or the undead; when the dead were magic-workers or berserks; or when the dead were strong, stubborn, and/or really obnoxious in life). Many of the other elements literally go "to join the kin", either by adding to the might of those living or by being reborn in the family line. Even when the dead are in the worlds beyond, they do not forsake the living clan, just as the living ever speak and share their feasts with the dead. Some have wondered how such a belief can fit in with the sundry halls and worlds to which folk fare after death: the answer may perhaps be found in the words of the walkurja Skögun, when she speaks of the "green worlds of the gods" in *Hákonarmál*. God-Home is clearly a very wide land indeed, which borders on (and even seems to take in parts of) many other realms, including Alf-Home, Etn-Home, the Middle-Garth, and Hel. There is no reason to think that the dead are bound to a single stead or world only: indeed, the examples of Helgi and Gunnarr show us that they are not. Rather, different folk may have favoured dwelling places, but all clan members, god/esses and humans, living and dead, come together in times of need and at the holy blessings of the year which bind us together.

The Heathen Norse (and other Germanic folks) did not put as much emphasis on the afterlife as the christians did, and do, which explains why their ideas on afterlife were so diverse and scattered. They also did not have the dread of death and punishment thereafter that later people, influenced by christianity, came to have. The portrayal of death as a demonic figure (whether Hella or Wodan, both demonized in this role by christianity) is very likely to have been a later development. But if we cannot accept death, we cannot accept life, for birth and death are a cycle repeated in all of nature. Though no one with any sense courts death, when she comes in her bright form, we need not fear to accept her embrace.

Contributors

- Grundy, Stephan, from "The Cult of Óðinn: God of Death?"
- Alice Karlsdóttir, from "The Lady Death", in *Idunna* V, i, 18, Rhedmonth 1993 C.E. (note: many sections of this article are also reproduced under "Hella")
- Swain Wodening, "The Anglo-Saxon Soul"

Chapter XXVII

Troth and the Folk

Ethics and philosophy are as important to any religion as deities and rites, yet most religions seem overly complex or simple in these matters. We in the Troth are thankfully blessed with a philosophy that may be as simple or as complex as any follower of our gods desires. Our philosophy may be as complex as the systems put forth by the Greek philosophers or as simple as the lessons we learn in kindergarten. Such a belief system allows for mystics and sages, farmers and factory workers, corporate lawyers and politicians; all with a comprehension ranging from the most basic tenets of our faith to the most complex. What's more, the simplest aspects of our religion are compatible with the most complex: there are no contradictions, as there are with other faiths. Therefore, a Trother can learn the basics of our faith and then apply these basics as they delve deeper into the lore without encountering the setbacks students of other religions suffer when they run into contradictory lore. The first thing any Trother should study is the ethical system of our forebears, and foremost among our ethical concerns is the matter of how our spiritual forebears viewed society.

The Germanic folks were strong on individuality, a trait noted by the Romans even in battle. At the same time, they had a strong sense of loyalty, first to their kindred, and then to the community in which they lived. These bonds of loyalty were reflected in how our spiritual forebears viewed the institutions of family, community, nation, and so forth. Each institution, beginning with the smallest (the individual) ranging up to the largest (the nation or tribe) was seen as an enclosure or fenced-in area. Just as Asgard consists of the smaller enclosures of the gods, Midgard consists of enclosures, each one consisting of even smaller enclosures. Thus individuals make up kindreds, kindreds make up communities, communities make up the nation or tribe. And just as each individual has their own personal wyrd, each kindred has its own wyrd, as do communities and tribes (in the form of common law). This concept of enclosures, or garths, is best known from the scholar Kirsten Hastrup's works (esp. *Culture and History in Mediæval Iceland*), and is based on the opposition of innan-garð (within the garth) and utan-garð (outside the garth). The innan-garð is the human community, the utan-garð is the 'wilds'. According to Hastrup, this opposition may also be seen in the opposition of law and non-law, the law being coexistent with the human community. Of course, the law was seen by our spiritual forebears as the collective wyrd of a community or tribe. More accurately, perhaps, the law is the customs of a folk, deeds that are done because they are helpful to society, deeds that ensure mutual survival within the innan-garð (see "Tiw and Zisa"). But what are these things that form the law or custom of a folk? They can be found by looking at the qualities our spiritual forebears found desirable in individuals.

In order for mankind to survive, individuals must possess certain traits that allow them to get along with each other. In addition to these traits are other traits that actually allow individuals to benefit each other. Together these traits comprise what most religions consider virtues or thews. Our spiritual forebears held certain thews much higher than others. One description of these thews is the Odinic Rite of England's "Nine Noble Virtues" (or, in Saxon English, Atheling-Thews): Boldness ("Courage"), Truth, Are ("Honour"), Troth ("Fidelity"), Self-Rule ("Discipline"), Guest-Friendliness ("Hospitality"), Busyship ("Industriousness"), Free-Standing ("Independence"), and Steadfastness ("Perseverance"). These have been taken by many groups as the chief traits which true folk should strive to show: the Raven Kindred, for instance, has adopted them as an "official" statement of its beliefs, "not only as a moral guide for our members, but also to say to the world what it is that we stand for - our good name in the community being important to us. Finally, this list is used when someone formally joins the Raven Kindred and we hold a sumble and toast the 9 virtues to the new member in the hope that they will apply them to their life" (Raven Kindred Ritual Book, p. 20). Other thews which our forebears thought most important were Evenhead (equality), Friendship, Strength, and Open-Handedness - and, perhaps highest of all, Wisdom.

The Nine Atheling-Thews

Boldness

Bravery or the refusal to allow fear to take one's mind was needed in the harshness of early Europe. Today this thew is reflected in the Troth's move towards acceptance in general society. Fálnismál 31 shows the true meaning of Germanic boldness: "It is better to be whetted than not to be whetted when you go into battle; to be glad is better than to lose heart, whatever comes to your hand". According to Lew Stead,

In almost every statement of Ásatrú beliefs, courage comes first. As Stephen McNallen has said, courage and bravery are perhaps the values for which the Vikings are best known. However, despite our history, few of us face such turmoil as a literal battle for one's life. In fact, I believe it might be easier to manifest courage in such a situation than to do so in the many smaller day to day occurrences in which

courage is called for.

The most common of these occurrences for modern Pagans is the courage to acknowledge and live one's beliefs. It is also, sadly, the one that we most often fail at. While we may often be full of the type of courage that would lead us to face a shield wall, many of us quake at the thought of the topic of religion coming up at the office or a friend asking what church we attend. We won't offer easy answers, but we ask this: if you toast the courage of your ancestors to fight and die for what they believe in, can you trade away your religious identity for a higher salary or social acceptance?

In an essay on values there is also the question of moral courage. The way of Tyr is difficult - to lose one's hand for one's beliefs - but Tyr thought the price worth paying. In a million ways modern society challenges our values, not just as Ásatrúar who are estranged from mainstream religious practice, but for religious people in an increasingly not just secular, but anti-religious culture. Values are also not in favour in modern society. Breaking or getting around the rules is encouraged to get ahead. Living honourably is simply too inconvenient. I think most people, Ásatrú or otherwise, find this repugnant, but the only way to change it is to have the courage to refuse to take part in it.

Truth

Truthfulness or honesty was a prized trait, as was modesty. At first, this might seem to conflict with the idea of heroic boasting, but it does not. The boasts made before battle or in sumble were not the idle boasts of unaccomplished men, but tales of past accomplishments and vows to do deeds within one's ability - perhaps barely so; perhaps deeds that would test the boaster to his utmost or beyond in his fulfillment or death; but nevertheless, which the speaker expected to fulfill. Perhaps it is best if one heeds this warning from the Anglo-Saxon poem "The Wanderer" (lines 65-72):

"Wita sceal geþyldig...
ne næfre gielpes to georn, ær he geare cunne.
Beorn sceal gebidan, þonne he beot sprice_,
oppæt collenferð cunne gea`rwe,
hwider hreðra gehygd hweorfan wille".

(A wise man should be patient...nor ever cry out too eagerly, before he is readied. A stout-hearted warrior (lit. "bear") shall bide his time when he would speak an oath, till he knows quite where the thoughts of his heart will turn).

As a Troth value, truthfulness does not necessarily mean "always tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth regardless of any consequences." Truthfulness was something that came in many shades to our forebears, who delighted in riddle-games and kennings, and at least some of whom worshipped a god who is not best known for straightforward and literal-minded honesty. Both the subtleties of Wodan (and those folk who practise it in the Middle-Garth), and the truthfulness of Thonar are needful to Ásatrúar: there is a time for truth to be cunningly woven, and a time for it to be spoken out boldly (see discussion of Wisdom, below). Still, truth - in whatever form - is always thought better than falseness, and is a goal towards which all Troth folk strive. Truth, in the sense of honesty, is essential to personal honour and also to any system or morality that is not based on rigid legalism. If one is to uphold an honour code, one must be brutally honest with oneself and with others.

Are (Honour)

Truth and Are go together in all things. Honour is the strength of your word in which others may trust. More, it is that soul-might gained when your words uphold your deeds, when your oaths are sworn and kept - especially those oaths made on the hallowed Yule boar or cup, which only the worst of nithlings (or the greatest of fools, for swearing an oath that could not be kept) would fail to fulfill. When an oath is broken, the whole soul and being of the swearer are broken with it: it is upon Are that the many parts of soul-strength are based. Someone with no are, however strong he or she may be in body and mind, is yet lacking in true might, and leeches away the life of her or his clan. But someone who has great are calls upon the god/esses, makes blessings, or rists runes with a might that others cannot match, and that might is passed on to her or his kin after death.

Honour is also that name which lives after you when your life is over, as in the well-known verses from Hávamál (76-77): "Cattle die, kinsmen die, you yourself shall likewise die. But word-glory dies never, for him who gets it well. Cattle die, kinsmen die, you yourself shall likewise die. I know one thing that never dies: the deeming over every dead man." This is true even among the god/esses: Völuspá tells us how Þórr, even as he sees the Middle-Garth's Wyrms die beneath his hammer, steps back nine feet and dies "fearing no shame"; and how, in the new world, those deities who have lived through Ragnarök speak of his deed again and deem its worth. The Raven Kindred Ritual Book says that,

Honour is the basis for the entire Ásatrú moral rationale. If anything comes out in the Eddas and Sagas it is that without honour we are nothing. We remember two types of people from ancient times: those whose honour was so clean that they shine as examples to us and those who were so without honour that their names are cursed a thousand years after they lived...

However, honour is not mere reputation. Honour is an internal force whose outward manifestation is reputation. Internal honour is the sacred moral compass that each Ásatrúar and God should hold dear. It is the inner dwelling at peace which comes from living in accordance with one's beliefs and with one's knowledge of the Truth of what one is doing. It is something deeply personal and heartfelt, almost akin to an emotion. It's a "knowing" that what one is doing is right and correct.

In many ways, while the most important of all the virtues, it is also the most ephemeral in terms of description. It is all the other virtues rolled together and then still more. The best way I have found to describe honour is that if you are truly living with honour, you will have no regrets about what you have done with your life.

Troth

Closely tied to are is troth - good faith or loyalty to one's friends, kinsmen, or gods. One might see troth as the soul-might of honour shown forth among folk: it is the holy bond of oaths and friendship, tying sib to sib, spouse to spouse, friend to friend, drighten to thanes, and god/esses to humans.

Northern literature is full of folk who have shown the worth of their troth, but one example will serve. When Beowulf, as an old king, went out to fight the dragon that was devastating his land, he took with him a picked band of guards. But Beowulf's first blow failed, only angering the dragon so that it spewed fire everywhere. Then all the house-thanes fled except for young Wiglaf, whose first battle it was. He, seeing his drighten hard-pressed and thinking of all the good treatment he had gotten from Beowulf, charged through the dragon's fires and into the middle of the fight, and "they killed it together, sib-athelings. Thus should a warrior be, a thane in (time of) need" (2707-9).

The Old Norse word trú was used for troth, trust, or belief: a patron god/ess or wight was the fulltrúi (manly)/fulltrúa (womanly) - the fully trusted one, or the holder of full troth. To hold troth with others is not only to keep your word to them, which is needful even in the case of foes, but to work for their weal in all ways, to fight for them when there is need, and to share your own good and your thoughts with them as a true friend - in short, to be a fellow to them both on mead-benches and in the shield-wall. Troth is the very wall that hedges the human world within the garth from the wild world outside: breakers of troth are outlaws and trolls, no longer human folk.

Troth is also the bond that ties us to our kin (both living and dead) and to the ways of our forebears; and for this reason, it is the word that we have chosen to describe our religion - for Troth is the very heart of the Northern beliefs. We must remain true to the Aesir and Vanir and to our kinsmen. Like marriage, Profession (the rite in which one enters the Ásatrú faith, similar to Christian confirmation or Wiccan initiation) is a sacred bond between two parties: in this case, an Ásatrúar and the Gods. In order for such a relationship to work, both must be honest and faithful to each other.

Ásatrú, although currently being reborn, is at its roots a folk religion and we also uphold the values of fidelity to the ways of our ancestor. This is why historical research is so important to the Ásatrú folk: it is the rediscovering of our ancient ways and our readoption of them.

Self-rule

As Grettir says in his saga, "A thrall takes his revenge at once, a coward never". Self-rule was one of the best traits a Norseman could have: loss of control was thought of as a shameful thing, but the person who could bear pain without reacting to it, or control his or her desire for revenge until the time came when it could be most effectively done was greatly respected.

A fine example of the difference between self-rule and the lack of it (not to mention the result of that lack) is shown in Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar (Heimskringla): Óláfr has come to court Queen Sigríðr the Proud, but wants her to convert to Christianity. She replies reasonably, with a calmness and tolerance to be envied by anyone who has to deal with folk from a faith strongly opposed to their own: "I shall not go from that troth which I have always held, and my kinsmen before me. But I will also not object to it if you trust in that god whom you prefer". Óláfr then loses all his self-rule and "became greatly angry and answered hastily (one imagines his voice rising to a shrill shriek - KHG), 'Why should I want to marry you, Heathen bitch?' - and struck her in the face with his glove". Sigríðr, though she is in her own hall, does not call on her warband to deal with Óláfr at once, as she thinks the time has not come for a pitched battle in her home and/or a major international incident. Instead, she only answers with great dignity and self-control, "That may well be thy death." And it is: she is largely responsible for the alliance which brings about Óláfr Tryggvason's fall. While anger and other passions,

and expressions of them ranging all the way from a change in tone of voice to man-slaying, were understood as both needful and often good and useful by our forebears, such expressions were only respected as they stemmed from a willed decision to act - to use feelings and the deeds rising from them as tools, rather than to be used by them.

Self-rule is also the will and judgement which makes honour and truth possible: having no legalistic code of behavior, the true wo/man must rely on her or his own ability to decide what is right, then stick to the path to carry it out, however difficult and fraught with unforeseen problems it may be. It is the exercise of personal will that upholds honour and the other virtues and translates impulse into action...If one rejects legalism, one must be willing to control one's own actions. Without self-discipline, we have the mess we currently see in our culture. Self-Rule is closely tied to Free-Standing; one cannot have one without the other.

Guest-Friendliness

Guest-friendliness was one of the most needful thews of the old days, when travelling was made dangerous by weather, outlaws, and other hazards of the road. Then folk always had to be ready to open their doors to wayfarers - and some of those wayfarers were more than human. *Hávamál* begins with Óðinn coming into a home or hall after a long faring: he speaks to the host. "Hail to the giver! A guest has come in, where shall he look to sit? He is hasty to get to the fire, for his own good. Fire is needed for him who has come in and has cold legs; meat and drink are needful to one who has fared over the fells." *Landnamabók* (*Hauksbók* ch. 74) describes how the chieftainess Geirriðr "spared no meat for folk, and let her hall be set on a major roadway; she sat on a stool and invited guests, and her table within stood ever with food on it" - as fine an example of guest-friendliness as one could hope to find!

Although it is seldom that folk today wander on foot through the snow and must rely on the guest-friendliness of those houses they chance to find, this thew is still needful - the more so as hotel bills get higher. It is the duty of true folk to take care of other true folk where-ever they may be - to offer a place in their own homes or at least see to it that travellers have a place to stay. Lew Stead points out that,

In our modern Asatru community, we need to treat each other with respect and act together for the good of our community as a whole. This functions most solidly on the level of the kindred or hearth where non-familial members become extremely close and look out for each other. It can mean hospitality in the old sense of taking in people, which we've done, but in modern times it's more likely to mean loaning someone a car or a bit of money when they need it (that's need, not want).

Part of hospitality is treating other people with respect and dignity. Many of our Gods are known to wander the world and stop in at people's houses, testing their hospitality and generosity. The virtue of hospitality means seeing people as if they were all individuals with self-respect and importance. Or perhaps from time to time, they are literally the Gods in human form. This has profound implications for social action in our religion. Our response to societal problems such as poverty (that's poverty, folks, not laziness) is in many ways our modern reaction to this ancient virtue.

In terms of our modern community as a whole, I see hospitality in terms of frontier 'barn raisings' where a whole community would come together and pool their resources. This doesn't mean we have to forget differences, but we must put them aside for those who are of our Folk, and work for our common good.

Guest-friendliness is also important in that most of our blessings are still held in folk's homes and yards, and thus most Hearths and Garths rely on this thew as the underlying one which makes it possible for them to gather together in frith with each other and the god/esses.

Guest-friendliness also stretches to the way in which guests are treated, whether they come alone or in groups at a feast. A good host/ess will offer a guest a choice of drinks when the guest steps over the threshold (see "Rites"), make sure that her or his guests are never thirsty, hungry, or bored; that the music or television programme playing is to their taste; and that the places into which they are likely to go are clean and well-appointed. This means planning ahead for a number of possibilities.

As well as being sure that his/her guests do not thirst, the host/ess should also be sure that they have sober transportation home. This was less important in the old days (when was the last time you saw an ox-cart wrapped around a telephone pole or a tree?), but is literally a matter of life and death today.

Likewise, guests have certain duties to the host/ess. They must leave a place in which they have been at least as clean as it was when they got there; if the host/ess cannot afford the best of food or drink, the guest must still partake of it with as much enthusiasm and respect as if the finest table had been spread. An example which all should take note of is that of *Rígsþula*, in which the god Heimdallr behaves in exactly the same way in the lowly hut of Great-Grandfather and Great-Grandmother as he does in the high hall of Father and Mother. If a guest should chance to break something, she/he is responsible for telling the host/ess and, if the host/ess will accept it, making recompense.

It is traditional in all the Northern countries for a guest to bring a gift; sometimes a symbolic bouquet of flowers,

sometimes something more practical such as a bottle of wine or spirits, or a six-pack of beer. The latter gifts are especially strongly recommended at a feast where many folk will be drinking, as it is very rude to expect a single person to provide all the refreshments for a single feast (a potentially bankrupting prospect).

Busyship

Busyship was also needed for survival in the elder days. Those that would not work, starved or froze to death. Although the clan took care of its own, it also called for all its folk to do their share: even small children had their place in the daily work of farming, spinning, and tending beasts. As Hávamál 71 tells us, "The lame rides a horse; the handleless can herd; a deaf man can also fight well. To be blind is better than to be burned; no one has use for a corpse". Those who were too old and decrepit to take any part in the household labour were still cared for, honoured for the deeds they had done and the wisdom they had learned in their long lives: Hávamál 134 counsels: "Never laugh at the hoary thule (speaker)! Often what old men say is good, and wise words come out of the wrinkled bag that hangs with the skins". However, so long as there was any contribution a family member could make to the good of the whole, they made it. Hávamál has much to say on the matter of busyship, but chief among the High One's redes in the matter may be this: "Seldom does a lying-down wolf get the lamb, or a sleeping man victory. He who has few workers should rise early, and go himself to work: he who sleeps in the morning will miss much" (58-59).

Modern Ásatrúar must be industrious in their actions. We need to work hard if we are going to achieve our goals. There is so much for us to do...We can't do this by sitting on our virtues, we need to make them an active part of our behavior. Industry also refers to simple hard work in our daily vocations, done with care and pride.

Here's a few concrete examples. If you are reading this and don't have a kindred, why not? Stop reading now. Go and place ads in the appropriate local stores, get your name on the Ring of Troth, Wyrð Network, or Asatru Alliance networking lists, and with other Pagan groups. Put on a workshop. OK, now you're back to reading and you don't agree with what I'm saying here? Well, be industrious! Write your own articles and arguments. Write a letter to the editor and suggest this material be banned - better than passivity. Get the blood moving and go out and do it. That's how it gets done. The Gods do not favour the lazy.

The same holds true for our non-religious lives. As Ásatrúar we should offer a good example as industrious people who add to whatever we're involved in rather than take from it. We should be the ones the business we work in can't do without and the ones who always seem to be able to get things done. When people think of Ásatrú, they should think of people who are competent and who offer something to the world.

This doesn't just apply to vocational work, but to the entire way we live our lives. It is just as much a mentality. The Vikings were vital people. They lived each day to its fullest and didn't wring their hands in doubt or hesitation. We should put the same attitude forward in all that we do whether it is our usual vocation, devotion to the Gods, or leisure time. (Raven Kindred Ritual Book)

Free-Standing

"A dwelling is better, though it be little; everyone is master at home. Though you have but two goats and a thatched roof, it is far better than begging. A dwelling is better, though it be little; everyone is master at home. Bloodied is the heart of him who must beg every time for his meals" (Hávamál 36-37).

Individualism or free will, the freedom to be one's own man (or woman) was very important to our forebears. However, free-standing carries with it certain duties. Greatest among these is responsibility for yourself - all your choices, all your deeds. Germanic Heathens have no "original sin" to blame; we cannot claim that "Loki made me do it". True, an ill wyrð, or unfriendly folk or wights, may put us in the worst of situations, as happened to many of the great hero/ines of the Northern people; but that is where such thews as boldness, honour, and self-rule come into their own - for at the end, what is remembered is not simply that you have suffered and/or even died, but the manner in which you did it. A good example of such free-standing despite the worst of circumstances is the tale of Högni's (Hagen's) death as told in *Atlamál hin groenlenzsku*. Gunnarr has told Attila that he will not reveal the hiding place of the hoard of the Rhine until he sees Högni's heart before him (presumably fearing that threats to himself might persuade his brother to give in). Högni is taken outside, but it is suggested that it would be better to cut out the heart of the thrall Hjalli, who is good for little. Hjalli whines and moans about how dreadful it is that he should have to pay for their battle, and screams before the knife ever touches him. Then "Högni asked, as few would do, that the thrall be unfettered, and he himself go under: 'I think it will be a lesser thing for me to play this game; why should we wish to listen to this shrieking?'" As his heart is cut out of his breast, Högni laughs. Even though he is a battle-captive, disarmed and bound among his enemies with almost no power over his external circumstances, the hero is still free-standing - willing to take full responsibility for the choices which have led him to where

he is, without blaming any of the other folk whose actions contributed to the situation, or regretting either his deeds or his death.

As many of us do, Lavrans Reimer-Møller counts free-standing as the greatest and most over-arching of the thews of the way of the North, believing that the single unifying principle at the root of our beliefs "is this: one must always be prepared to take full responsibility for one's actions...If a christian should challenge the moral basis of our beliefs, then this can serve as a rational response. We always take responsibility for everything we do. Period. Good, bad, or otherwise...I would imagine that the practical application of our religion would mean to simply think through the consequences of any act, and then decide whether or not the price is worth it.

Say someone insults and offends you. Your instinctive reaction may be to attack the offender physically. But think: you will be arrested and charged with assault; you will have to hire a lawyer, a member of a profession which no longer carries the honour it once did; you will play the game in the legal system of pleading not guilty in spite of the evidence and force your victim and the court to prove otherwise. The whole legal system in this country has become based on the principle of avoiding responsibility. To take part in the game is morally corrupting. So unless you are willing to go to jail and pay a fine, don't hit him! Of course, if you decide that it's worth it, then go ahead and give your enemy what he deserves, but be prepared to enter the court and proudly say, "Yes, I did assault him". Don't do the crime if you can't do the time. Always have the wergild handy, just in case!" ("Taking the Rap")

As the sagas show us, this straightforward approach was the way of our folk. Whatever the circumstances, a killing was only a "murder", a shameful slaying, if the killer hid the body and/or tried to conceal having done the deed: the expected thing was for the slayer to announce what he had done, then deal with whatever consequences arose. As Lavrans says,

For me, a basic mental and spiritual checklist before I go out into the world seems to give me the confidence and inner strength to ride a subway into downtown Boston and do my business without being crippled by the kind of fear I feel all around me. A very large factor in that process of self-empowerment is the constant application of the basic ethic of Odinism as I understand it. I will not take any action unless I am prepared to take full responsibility for the results of that action. All else follows from that. Thus I honour and emulate the Gods and Goddesses of Asa/Vanatru. Even Loki told the truth, and took his punishment ("Taking the Rap").

As expressed by Raven Kindred,

Traditionally, our folkways have always honoured the ability of a man or woman to make their own way in the world and not to lean on others for their physical needs. This is one of the way in which the several virtues reinforce and support each other. Hospitality cannot function if people are not responsible enough to exercise discipline and take care of themselves. It's for those that strive and fail or need assistance that hospitality is intended, not for the idle who simply won't take care of themselves.

In terms of our relationships with the Gods, self-reliance is also very important. If we wish the Gods to offer us their blessings and gifts, we must make ourselves worthy of them - and the Gods are most pleased with someone who stands on their own two feet. This is one of the reasons for the Asatru "rule" that we do not kneel to the Gods during our ceremonies. By standing we acknowledge our relationship as striving and fulfilled people looking for comradeship and a relationship, rather than acting as scraelings looking for a handout from on high...We, as Asatruar, are people who can make our own way in the world, but who choose to seek a relationship with the Gods...

Being self-reliant also means taking responsibility for one's life. It's not just about refusing a welfare check or not lobbying for a tax exemption, but also refusing to blame one's failures on religious intolerance, the patriarchy, or an unfair system. The system may, in fact, be unfair, but it's our own responsibility to deal with it.

True folk should also remember that, though responsibility comes down to individual actions, our deeds and their consequences can stretch far beyond the self, as spoken of by Eric Wodening:

...all the threads (of the web of Wyrð) are interconnected throughout the web. This means that we, as Heathen, must take responsibility for our actions lest they affect others through the web. What seemed like "an innocent white lie" could become a vicious rumour that ruins another's life. Such actions ultimately weaken various threads in the web, and one of those threads so weakened will almost always be that of the culprit. For instance, a factory dumping toxins in a local stream may well foul their own water supply, resulting in cancer deaths for the lot of them. Similarly, as all life on the planet is represented by various threads, Man is interconnected to all the other forms of life. For this reason, Heathens must extend the same respect to other forms of life that they have for humans. If mankind damages enough of the other threads that make up our environment, the pattern on the web of Wyrð called "Earth" could well unravel. In other words, man could

destroy the earth. It is for this reason that interconnectivity is a concept one should be familiar with.

Free-standing can also be a matter of the heart. As a troth based on kinship and folk, reputation has always been of the highest value to us; the culture of the North is not a guilt-culture like the Judeo-Christian one, but rather a shame-culture, in which ill-doing is shown by the eyes of the community. Nevertheless, to rely on others as the final judges of right or worth, and to act to please them rather than guiding yourself by what you believe to be right, is to be, in effect, a thrall. This can be seen in extreme cases by abusive relationships, in which the abuser convinces the abused partner that (most often, at least when the abuse is physical) he is the sole judge of her worth, and hence has the right to do her violence. In lesser instances, it can be seen by concealing your religion or other beliefs and feelings for social advantage or because you are afraid of how another will react if you tell them, or by trying to change against your own will to please another. In this sense, it can be seen as an anti-social thew, and I (KHG) am not necessarily counselling that a true person needs to, for instance, give his eighty year-old Baptist granny a heart attack by saying, "I don't believe in Jesus and what's more, I sacrificed a pig to Freyr this Midsummer past. Oh, and by the way, I'm gay and this is my boyfriend Billy." In that sense, no one can (or perhaps should) be completely free-standing, unless they live in a mountain cabin all by themselves.

In order to live within a family, kindred, or community, we all must surrender a little of our free-standing in order to support and be supported by our folk: no matter how firmly you believe that someone has given you an insult that should be washed out in blood, for instance, unless you are ready to go to jail for that belief, ignoring society to do what you think best is probably not a good idea. Grettir the Strong offers us a warning about the perils of being completely self-willed: because he would not be ruled in the least by his father, he was cast from his home; because he would not be ruled in any way by law or custom, he was repeatedly outlawed, and no luck came to him. Even in a close marriage, sometimes there are times when, however strongly you feel, you really should keep your mouth shut (assuming that you want to continue having a close marriage, that is). On the other hand, if you are regularly forced to deny your own opinions, beliefs, or feelings for the sake of appeasing someone who should reasonably be expected to respect them - or have put yourself in a situation where you cannot expect those around you to respect what you hold dear - then you have lost more of your free-standing than is good for you, and need to consider how to regain it. Going out of your way to get yourself fired on the grounds of, for instance, religion or sexual preference, may not be a good idea; however, if your job rules you so completely that you cannot live as you please for fear someone might find out about it, are you not a thrall to your employer?

Especially with family and friends, free-standing and socialization can be a delicate balance: relying too much on one can mean giving up too much of the other. Offending your boss by not denying your religion may mean losing your job, which is something that most people can deal with; but offending your rigidly Christian parents in the same way, if it means the risk of losing your family, is a different matter altogether. The best relationships, of course, are the ones where all parties allow the others to keep as much of their free-standing as possible; but in real life, there will always be a struggle between, "I want you to be what you are" and "I want you to be what I want you to be". There are no hard and fast guidelines for what to do in such situations. It is, as always, a matter for your own choice - but it is well to be aware of what you risk on both sides, and what price you are willing to pay for whatever path you take. The only person who is absolutely free-standing is an outlaw; but the person who is absolutely dependent on others is a thrall. Both are ill to some degree in the eyes of the North - although the tales of both Grettir and Eiríkr the Red suggest that, if those were the only choices, the free-standing and brave outlaw is a better person than the dependent and honourless thrall. Yet, like all thews, free-standing must be ruled by wisdom.

Steadfastness

Endurance and tenacity, the enduring of one's wyrd, was and still is a desired quality. Our forebears had to be steadfast to survive. The Anglo-Saxon poem "Deor", written by a poet in a bad situation, recounted the sufferings of various heroes and heroines, with the refrain, "Þes offereode, þisses swa mæg" ("That passed over; this may also"). Such steadfastness may be seen in the story of Weyland (see "Alfs, Dwarves, and Huldfolk"), who, forsaken by his swan-wife, imprisoned on an island with his hamstrings cut, and forced to work for his foe, did not give up and die, but instead worked ceaselessly until he was able to forge not only a full revenge, but his own freedom. Such steadfastness is what we need as true folk today, if we are to bring back the ways of our forebears. The Raven Kindred Ritual Book says,

The final virtue is perseverance, which I think the most appropriate because it is the one that we most need to keep in mind in our living of the other values. Our religion teaches us that...nothing comes easy. We need to continue to seek after that which we desire...there are no free lunches or easy accomplishments - especially in the subjects we have set before ourselves. If we truly wish to build an Ásatrú community that

people will hold up as an example of what committed people can do, then we must persevere through the hardships that building our religion is going to entail. We must be willing to continue on when we are pushed back. If one loses a job for one's religion, the answer is not to go back and hide, but to continue until one finds a vocation where one can move forward and live as an Ásatrúar should.

Finally, we must persevere when we simply fail. If one's kindred falls apart because of internal strife, one should go back and start over. Pick up the pieces and continue on. If nobody had done this after the disintegration of the Asatru Free Assembly, this would probably never have been written. We must be willing to continue in the hard work of making our religion strong - not just when it is convenient and easy to do so, but when it gets hard, inconvenient, or just plain boring. To accomplish without striving is to do little, but to persevere and finally accomplish a hard-fought goal brings great honour.

The will to keep going even after failure is the will of the true hero. When Sigmundr Völsung was defeated in battle by Siggeir, his father and brothers slain, he still did not give up: he waited for his revenge long enough to father a son and raise him to manhood. Völundr lost his love but did not give up hope of her; his sword - the self-forged embodiment of his luck - was taken from him by force, and he was physically crippled and made into a thrall, losing all that our forebears saw as honour and the various aspects of soul-strength; yet he regained that, and more. Everyone will fail sometime, perhaps repeatedly. A vow may be made that cannot be kept; a recovering alcoholic may fall off the wagon; countless things, which may or may not be your own fault, can happen to diminish your soul-might or break your heart. The only way to deal with such failures is to keep going, to rebuild what you lost (and like Völundr, to strengthen yourself more than before in the process); defeat in a battle need not be defeat in the war unless you choose to surrender to it, and usually the despair of having failed at something important to you does more damage than the failure itself. It is a truism that if you fall off a horse, you have to get right back on in order to keep the fear from being graven in; the same is true of every struggle and failure in life. Even the god/esses themselves sometimes know defeat: Thonar was shamed and mocked in the hall of Utgarð-Loki; Frija could not protect Balder from his doom; Wodan knows that at Ragnarök, he must be slain by the Wolf Fenrir. Yet Thonar has never ceased to fight etins, nor Frija to bless and ward those she loves. Sometimes perseverance means finding a way around the impossible rather than facing it straight-on: Wodan sired Víðarr to be his avenger and do what he himself shall not be able to. Sometimes it means drawing back and waiting as Sigmundr did; Wodan's advice to praise no day till it is done, no man until he is dead, is not only a warning against taking victories for granted, it is a reminder that defeats are not final while you can live and struggle.

One of the rune-poems tells us that "Need is the help of heroes": it is the stubbornness that kindles the need-fire to work around Wyrð and overcome in the end which proves the hero's heart at the last, so that failure is not a true defeat, but a challenge. And, in the end, that steadfastness will suffice for all the thews of the North: a coward who is too stubborn to let his fear stop him becomes brave, a lazy person who is too stubborn to leave a task unfinished becomes the embodiment of busyship. Steadfastness will see you through the suffering brought by troth and truth; if you force yourself steadfastly to guest-friendliness, however uncomfortable you find it, you will find that others come to speak of you as the best of hosts or hostesses. Steadfastness is the heart of free-standing: where others may come to doubt you completely when you have failed, you must have the stubbornness not to doubt yourself, but to keep going in spite of their mistrust and not let it daunt you - if you have that steadfastness in yourself, you will never become truly dependent on another's will or words, and thus never be a thrall in your heart. Steadfastness is the essence of self-rule; it is your shield-wall in every battle of life, great or small - where one shoulder-companion of your deeds or hearts may fall, so long as you are able to summon your steadfastness to you again and go on, you will triumph in the end. There is a poem by Rudyard Kipling (and not "If", for a change) which, even with a mildly christian reference, best expresses the truth of steadfastness in the face of all that may befall:

The careful textbooks measure - let all who build beware! -
The load, the shock, the pressure materials can bear,
So when the buckled girder lets down the grinding span,
The blame of loss or murder is laid upon the Man,
Not on the Steel - the Man!

The prudent textbooks give it in tables at the end,
The stress that shears a rivet or makes a tie-bar bend.
What traffic breaks macadam - what concrete may endure -
But we, poor sons of Adam, have no such literature
To warn us, or make sure.

So in our daily dealings with stone and steel we find
The Gods have no such feelings of justice towards mankind.

To no set gauge they make us, for no laid force prepare,
In time they overtake us with loads we cannot bear,
Too merciless to bear.

We hold all earth to plunder - all time and space as well -
Too wonder-stale to wonder at each new miracle,
Till in the mid-illusion of godhood 'neath our hands
Falls multiple confusion on all we did or planned,
The mighty works we planned.

We only in creation - how much luckier the bridge and rail! -
Abide the twin damnation to fail and know we fail.
Yet we - by which one token we know we once were gods -
Take shame in being broken, however great the odds,
The Burden or the Odds.

O veiled and secret Power, whose paths we seek in vain,
Be with us in our hour of overthrow and pain,
That we - by which sure token may know thy ways are true -
In spite of being broken - or because of being broken -
May rise up and build anew,
Stand up and build anew!

Even so, after Ragnarök - in large part because Wodan would not accept his own defeat and death as being final - the world is built anew, and the heirs of the god/esses take up their might; it is not by chance that the forebears of the new humanity are named Líf and Lífþrasir - Life and the Stubborn Will to Live.

Further Thews

Evenhed

Equality of the sexes probably was not considered a thew by our forebears, but simply a fact of life. Obviously some roles were divided by gender: most of the heavy fieldwork and fighting was done by men, most of the housework, spinning, and weaving by women. Both sexes could hold rule, in both the religious and social spheres; women, thought to be especially wise from early times, were very often the ones who determined the course of a household or kingdom, though men, especially in matters of battle or law, were usually the ones who carried out the plans.

In modern times, now that physical combat and actual muscular strength are less important than they were in days of old (and now that more women are seriously training in various forms of fighting in any case), there is no reason to expect any sort of division by gender in anything that true folk do, with the exception of adulthood initiations (see "Man-Making" and "Woman-Making"), the exploration of such spiritual mysteries as some folk may think are specifically gender-linked, and certain traditional customs (for instance, the Yule-Buck is only ever played by a male guiser, while it is far more fitting for women to pour out drink). As far as leadership and religious activity, the Troth places full worth on both men and women, as on both goddesses and gods: the highest post in the organization was first held by Steersman James Chisholm, then by Steerswoman Prudence Priest.

Seen in a broader light, evenhed applies to more than gender. In its fullness, it means treating all folk evenly - that is, as their deeds merit. Folk are known as worthy by how well their works and their lives show forth the thews of the Northern way - not because their chromosomes are XY, their skins are white and hair fair, or because their sexual preferences conform to the ideology of mainstream Western society. Neither snobbery nor reverse snobbery, neither discrimination nor reverse discrimination has a place here: evenhed means seeing individuals in terms of their own abilities and worth. It is one of the easiest thews to talk or write about, but one of the hardest to carry out.

Strength

Strength has always been one of the most notable characteristics of the Northern folk - the emphasis we place on strength and health of body as well as mind and soul. This has to do with the way in which the Teutonic peoples looked at the being: rather than separating the physical body from the other elements, our forebears saw it as reflecting them, feeding and being fed by the various sorts of soul-might (see "Soul, Death, and Rebirth"). For us, intellectual, spiritual, and physical

capabilities are equally important, and each of us should strive to develop all of them to the best of our abilities. This does not mean that to be really true, you have to have a Ph.D., be a great godwo/man, runester, or seith-worker, hold a black belt in some martial art, and look like Arnold Schwarzenegger or Cory Everett (even if that would be the modern equivalent of the ultimate Viking ideal). It does mean that scholars should meditate for a little while every day, that deeply spiritual folk should balance their own revelations with research and left-brain intellectual discipline, and that both of them should have some form of regular exercise and training in defending themselves should it become necessary - just as those who are physically strong and active should not neglect to develop their minds and souls, or trust only in bodily strength and a good heart to see them through all life's trials: even Thonar, mighty as he is, is both deep-minded and cunning in his way, with, quite probably, his own magic (see discussion in the chapter on "Thonar"). Our forebears had less respect for the weak-minded than for the weak of body; a cripple such as Völundr could still be a hero, but never a true fool (the image of Siegfried as a muscle-bound dimwit is a creation of Wagner, who seemed, as he makes explicit in Parsifal, to confuse idiocy with purity of heart).

Strength of will was also highly prized by our forebears: the weak-willed can hardly hope to show forth any of the atheling-thews, for they all depend more on will than on any other trait. The same strength of will should ever test both mind and body - the true wo/man should ever strive to make him/herself as mighty in every way as s/he can.

Wisdom

Wisdom was one of the traits most highly prized by our forebears - both in the sense of "knowledge of lore" and of "good judgement". Someone who is truly wise has both a broad background of information and the ability to apply it to the current situation to see what is needed to deal with it in the best way possible. Without wisdom, the other thews can be suicidal and destructive, as well as helpful: a bold fool in battle, for instance, is not only likely to get him- or herself killed, but her or his comrades as well; while truth told without wisdom can be more dangerous than a randomly tossed hand grenade; unmeasured busyship leads to nervous collapse or heart attacks; offering guest-friendliness beyond one's means can bankrupt one's own family and offering it to the wrong people can lead to all sorts of difficulties; unmeasured free-standing leads to outlawry; steadfastness in regards to the wrong thing is the path to destruction; and so forth.

While the wiser characters in the tales of our folk often seem less heroic than others, events usually prove their caution to have been well-founded. Both in Nibelungenlied and Þiðreks saga, Hagen is most often the character who counsels restraint, and is criticized for it - but the deaths of all around him are the direct result of his wisdom being ignored (while his own death is the price of his heroic choice of troth above all the other thews).

Wisdom is understood in different ways by the followers of different god/esses. For those folk to whom Thonar embodies the highest hopes of their beings, for instance, wisdom is the practicality and common sense which deals with a problem directly at its roots; while to a follower of Frija, wisdom might be fore-sight (of one sort or another), and preparing for a difficulty in advance. Much of Wodan's wisdom is knowing when the other thews serve and when they will not. Some examples of this are given by Lavrans Reimer-Møller:

In the Hávamál verses 42 through 48 we get some ideas how to deal with various relationships. 'If you have a true friend, then to that friend be true' seems to be the general message. But, 'eke lesing for lies': that is, give falsehoods to one who lies to you. Further verses make the point clear: all's fair in love and war.

An oath taken within your kindred to be true to each other as well as the Aesir and Vanir is a strong bond, and not to be taken lightly. But it is only an oath to which you share troth... You are not always honour-bound to play fair and truthfully when dealing with enemies, especially those who attack you because of your faith....

Remember that Odin is a god of wisdom. That means having the smarts to outwit an enemy. Not just overpower or overwhelm, but outsmart him! Time after time in the Sagas, we see examples of men winning over their enemies by the simple expedient of fighting dirty. There is the story of two neighbors arguing over a piece of pasture. In spite of the established ownership, one neighbor runs his sheep up to the meadow in summer to graze. Finally, the owner hires a warrior to tend his sheep. The neighbor sends his own warrior to settle matters once and for all. It is agreed that they will fight, but while the shepherd-warrior sits down to tie up his bootlace, the other kills him with an axe-blow. Not a fair fight, but certainly decisive! As in so many other cases, it is clear that expediency takes precedence over ethics. It could be argued, of course, that this kind of foul play is indicative of the weakening of honour among the Norsemen, which made it possible for the christians to take over. The last days of a free Iceland would seem to almost prove my point. But there are too many earlier examples of winning by any means to give that argument much credence.

By comparison, there is the honourable example of the captured Jomsvikings going cheerfully to their deaths. But they had little choice except to die on their feet like men and warriors, or behave like cowards. Given an (honourable) out, I'm sure they would have taken it. In fact, the hero of that episode does succeed in saving 12 of the remaining vikings from execution. There is a time to stand bravely and a time to

wheel and deal.

I've always thought that it would be a good idea to send troops into battle armed with an affidavit which clearly states that any statements or confession made under duress while in enemy hands are invalid. It would sure save a lot of wear and tear on POWs! And it would not compromise their integrity.

So if an official from the local DSS comes into your home to see if you are corrupting your children with your 'pagan' ways: lie! If you have to, tell them whatever you must in order to protect your family. Then once you are in the clear, figure out a way to protect yourself from them in the future, either by moving, or by preventing such stuff and nonsense from occurring. I don't think that your fellow Asatruar or the Gods themselves will think any the less of you for using whatever trickery or deceit is necessary.

If you found yourself confronted with a parole board hearing and your freedom depended on the judgement of the chaplain, who happened to be a christian fundamentalist, LIE! Tell him that you have given up your pagan ways and have seen the light. Praise Gee-Zuzzz! Get out of prison, and then get away, and then get even. One's first responsibility is to family, folk, and faith. One can better serve one's holy oaths by getting free, by any means possible.

This is not to say that any of us who has acted in what he believes to be an honourable and true manner is not worthy of our support, respect, and trust. It is that given the results of some attempts at honourable actions which have been met with trickery and deceit, we must reconsider when and where and how to honour our oaths.

Hindsight is not a lot of use to someone who has made a choice and paid the price, but we can all hope to learn and prepare for a better future. Further, if one of us has misrepresented himself in any way to his fellow Asatruar, then the means must exist for him to make reparations and take responsibility for his actions. But when dealing with religious fanatics of the extreme right-wing fundamentalist type, remember that they truly believe that they are in the right and that any and all actions against you and yours are justified. Be prepared to defend yourself by any means available. Again, not just the courage of Tyr or the steadfastness of Heimdall or the wisdom of Odin or the strength of Thor - but also the cunning of the trickster, Loki!" ("An Oath is an Oath, Or..?")

A large part of wisdom is also the willingness to learn, and the ability to be on the watch for new knowledge. Most broadly stated in Wodanic terms, it is to have one eye in the Well of Mimir - to see all that has gone before - and one eye looking at what is about one, so that one can draw conclusions based on our knowledge and apply them to what is happening today. One who follows all the advice of H⁺vam⁺l and is able to use it will be truly wise...at least in the opinion of the Wodanist who is writing these particular sentences.

Open-Handedness

The worst thing that could be said of a Germanic leader was that he or she was stingy; but the best thing that could be said was that she or he was open-handed and free with food and gifts. In his praise-poem for his friend Arinbjörn, Egill Skalla-Grímsson says that "he is grim towards gold, he is a foe to Draupnir's descendants...the gold-dealer, dangerous to rings" - meaning that Arinbjörn often broke pieces from the coiled gold arm-rings that were the chief Germanic currency in order to give them away. "Ring-breaker" and "ring-giver" are two of the most common poetic phrases for a leader.

In elder days, the ruler was the chief giver of gifts, food, and ale; and in turn got the troth of strong thanes in frith and in battle. Today, there are few of us indeed who stand as major political figures with appropriate budgets for keeping a warband, so our views on open-handedness have to be modified slightly. This is not a thew expected only of the leaders of Hearth, Garth, and Hof, but of all the folk. As spoken of under "Guest-Friendliness", all should be willing to put in their share of food and drink at feasts; likewise, everyone should be willing to give when it will help their own group or Ásatrú folk as a whole.

It should also be remembered that in elder days, the ring-giver was the source of gifts and food, but s/he got back as much as she gave, in terms of both presents and services. The thew of open-handedness is not just a matter of money, but of all forms of energy. In the modern age, time and personal effort are every bit as valuable as money - sometimes more so. The open-handed wo/man is the one who is ready to lend car and/or muscles to hauling stones for a harrow, to spend several hours cooking for a feast, to stay up until weird o'clock typing so that a newsletter can go out on time - or drive a kindred member whose car has died to work. In its greater sense, open-handedness is that mutual support which makes it possible for a community to be strong.

Kinship

The basic unit of the Germanic people was not the nuclear family, but the extended family. As spoken of earlier, every member of this family was a contributor in some way. It was the responsibility of the family to take care of those members who were no longer bodily able to support themselves, or who had fallen on hard times. Foote and Wilson quote a passage of Icelandic law describing the hierarchy of responsibility:

A man must first maintain his mother. If he can manage more, then he must also maintain his father. If he can do better still, then he must maintain his children. If still better, then he must maintain his brothers and sisters. If better again, then he must maintain those people whose heir he is and those he has taken in against promise of inheritance. If yet better, he must maintain the freed man to whom he gave liberty.

They add that "If a man cannot maintain his mother and father, he must approach his nearest kinsman who has the means and offer to work as his slave in order to pay off the loan necessary to keep his mother and father alive" (The Viking Age, p. 120). Only when all family resources had been exhausted did the care of the disabled or destitute become the responsibility of larger society.

These were the most important and best of the thews held in high esteem by our forebears. To hold such thews is to be worthy (respected, valued) or have ar (honour); to lack them in the elder times could mean at best to be forgotten after death, at worst to be outlawed in shame.

Of course, by showing forth the thews and thus achieving a good name, Trothers not only help their own self-esteem, they also help the Troth, the folk, and even the general society. The reasons for this are that the things that help society are the very things that individuals must do to help themselves. Selfish people, braggarts, and those who commit crimes or do wrong in other ways may help themselves in the short run, but they eventually incur a shild (debt) to society. Just as "every gift calls for a gain", every gain calls for a gift in return. Theft, over-reliance on others, even over-charging for one's services not only destroys individuals, but societies as well. A look at our world and such things as the changing prices of commodities and labour today quickly shows this: the corporation that overcharges and/or deliberately sells an unsafe product is as guilty as the murderer or rapist when it comes to the destruction of the modern world. As Trothers, we can either play by society's rules of selfishness or we can keep the thews held dear by our forefathers. After all, if we maintain a high standard of worth for ourselves, we can change society. As members of a larger society, our deeds form a part of its collective wyrd. So by keeping the thews of our spiritual forebears, we make that part of society which interacts with us do the same, because it will be our deeds that are helping to maintain or restore the wholesomeness of that society. If we fail to keep the thews of our forebears, we wind up living the wyrd of the non-Heathen majority, and join them in the destruction of not only Middenerd, but all the worlds about it. It is our choice.

To this, Lavrans Reimer-Møller adds his thoughts on politics and the relationship of Heathens to both our own and general society ("Politics: Left, Right, or Wrong?"):

During the last several years, as I have become more deeply involved in Asatru, I have observed a wide variety of attitudes regarding politics. The problem seems to be one of how to apply the basics of our philosophy to the reality of everyday life. The most often expressed viewpoint seems to be that Asatru does not have a political agenda. That's fine with me and many of the folk but we are surrounded by others who do have a political agenda. If we find ourselves confronted with these kinds of choices, do we choose the left or the right?

Are we as a group more liberal? We tend to agree with the general ideas of social responsibility that are associated with so-called liberalism. We also seem to value the idea of the right to individual freedom and liberty, and thus would seem to be "conservative". But wait; each position has flaws which we might consider to be unacceptable. A "liberal" institution, the Department of Children and Social Services, has threatened to take away the children of one of us because of false charges of abusive treatment (involving a "cult"). Liberals can be very narrow-minded. Many of us are concerned with protecting the environment, which "conservatives" oppose. In fact, many of the views held by conservatives are generally selfish, mean, and nasty. We are not that either. Confusing?

It all becomes less confusing when we look at the problem from a different viewpoint. Here in America and the West we live in a society which is dominated by the so-called Judeo-Christian code...which I call "jehovanism". This set of usually misapplied principles rules its victims by the old game of divide and conquer. They keep their power by keeping us at war with each other. The conflict between liberals and conservatives is only one example of this, a policy that is so deeply ingrained in jehovanist thought that it has become instinctive. All of the seemingly different manifestations of this philosophy require enemies in order to even exist, from religions to political parties to cops-and-robbers. For example, we have seen the world economy over the past 45 years maintain the illusion of stability and growth by sustaining the illusion of a "cold war" against imaginary enemies. Those same enemies are now our imaginary friends, but the process

continues as they keep finding new enemies. (This) hypocrisy...rules every aspect of western politics, economics, social institutions, and religion. Because of the nature of Asatru, I think we tend to isolate ourselves from the world out there to some degree. But it is still out there, and we are still forced to deal with that reality. So how do we deal with this, and how do we define ourselves relative to these established ideas?

The answer, to my way of thinking, is to realize that there is no need to deal with these artificially contrived conflicts in jehovanist terms. One can be both liberal and conservative simultaneously! These two viewpoints can work together harmoniously, and need not be seen as conflicting. The conflict is imaginary...

We can, and should, be "conservative" in the real sense of that term, not in the selfish and mean-spirited manner in which it is usually embodied. We honour the freedom and liberty of the individual and loyalty to our word; we respect the family and true values. We Asatru actually do respect our gods, our moms, and even apple pie in ways that the typical American patriot never dreamed of!

But at the same time, we understand that we must work to develop a social structure in which individuals are free to function fully. Beginning with the family, we have a genuine commitment to the collective welfare of the larger social group. There is no real conflict between these ideas!

Those demagogues and ideologues who would prosper from divisiveness thrive on the exploitation of conflict. The preposterous notion that we must either have individual freedom or have social welfare and justice is a contrivance by the establishment to keep us divided against each other.

The simple fact is that the two ideas support each other in an entirely harmonious fashion if rational action is applied. If each of us in Asatru takes full responsibility for our actions as individuals, in keeping with the basic tenets of our religion beliefs, then our society benefits. If we work within the Asatru community to create a society in which our individual rights are protected, encouraged, and respected, then each of us can prosper. I repeat: there is no conflict between these two ideas. The individual and the group can and must work together to succeed.

Unfortunately, we don't live in the Midgardh of our dreams. We live in the real world, and we don't stand a very good chance of changing that world, at least not yet. While America claims to honour honesty, responsibility, and justice, the opposite is usually more true. And the powers that be are not likely to gladly relinquish their power. Some of us found that out the hard way during the Sixties.

So what can we do? We can live true within the community of Asatru. Just as other religious groups practise their own beliefs and spiritual guidelines within the group, so too can we. If Buddhists, Jains, Sufis, Yogis, Wiccans, Druids, and others can live a life of devotion to ideals and still get along in the real world, so too can we. We start by living true as individual members of our collective. Begin each day with a renewed personal commitment to the principles of Asatru: Family, Folk, and Faith; Loyalty, Honour, and Strength. At the heart of true anarchism is the principle of personal responsibility, of always conducting yourself in a manner which is beyond reproach. Before you take any action, always consider that you must be prepared to take full responsibility for the results of that action...If you take that extra moment to consider how your actions reflect your inner spiritual self along with your responsibility to those around you, then you will live true...

If you always conduct yourself in terms of how your acts affect your society of Asatru, then you will complete the balanced, rational approach to life which Asatru establishes for us. Your group starts with you; then your family; then the Kindred or Hearth outside of that; then the Asatru community as a whole. As far as interactions with society outside of Asatru, we must consider that as well: however, the circle of involvement weakens as it grows larger. I will extend my personal concern and support to all within Asatru, starting with my home and extending outward. But I won't, as most of us will not, waste time and energy in concerning myself with those who don't have the personal responsibility to live true according to our terms. I have no concern for liars, thieves, and for those losers who are unwilling to try and help themselves.

What if society attacks us and tries to deny us our rights? When confronted by jehovanists, the best proof of the validity of our beliefs is in the demonstrated quality of our lives and our works. We are faithful to family, friends, and folk. We don't just pay lip service to these ideas; we live them. If we have realized and actualized the principles upon which our religion is based, then we need answer to no one.

We should always, whenever appropriate to do so, try to put Asatru forward in a positive light. Write letters to the editors. Become a religious activist. Enter into public dialogues. Whenever you come up against a condemnation by the ignorant which tries to characterize us "pagans" as Satanists, Nazis, anti-Christians, or anti-Semites, set the record straight. Tell the truth.

It is also useful to know when to stop debating and just walk away from an argument. Don't let them drag you down to their level of lies and hypocrisy. The jehovanist megalomaniacs can't be convinced that there is any reason to give up their stranglehold on society. Do what you can to enlighten the innocent victims, then run for your life. When the game is rigged against you, refuse to play. It's hard to think of my old folk-hero Bob Dylan as an Odinson, but he did once say, "to live outside the law, you must be honest". Live true and

none can stand against you.

Contributors

- Freya Aswynn
- Lavrans Reimer-Møller, Elder-in-training, from "Politics, Left, Right, or Wrong?"; "Taking the Rap", and "An Oath is an Oath, Or..?", submitted to *On Wings of Eagles*.
- Lewis Stead and the Raven Kindred, from The Raven Kindred Ritual Book.
- Eric Wodening, from an article on Wyrð written for *Our Troth*.
- Swain Wodening, Elder-in-training, "Troth and the Folk", written for *Our Troth*.

Chapter XXVIII

Troth and Heritage

"Who is going to tell Þórr that his sons should not participate in something because they are not of "pure" descent?" (Gamlinginn, "Race and Religion", in *Mountain Thunder* 8, Spring Equinox 1993 C.E.)

The Ring of Troth's official, and unshakeable, policy is that we do not permit racism of any sort: we require that our folk affiliate for cultural and religious, not racial and political reasons. However, because Ásatrú as a whole is an ethnic tradition, largely stemming today from the interest in recovering a forgotten heritage, and because our forebears set so much weight on matters of kin and clan, the question often comes up of what role an awareness of personal ethnic background - not to mince words, race! - should play in our practise of our troth. Opinions that have been stated within the general Ásatrú community in the past range from Wilfred von Dauster's "A religion should be in touch with your heritage, or what you feel your heritage really is. Some people equate ancestry with race; I do not. If you feel strongly that you come from, say, a warrior tradition at some point, then that is your ancestry" ("How Can You Believe That Junk?", p. 21) to N.J. Templin's "There is only one 'chosen' race of nature, the Aryan! Only through Odinism can Aryans be true to nature!" ("The Mission of Odinism", in *The Religion of Odin*). A milder statement is made by the Ásatrú Free Church Committee: "Every person of north European descent carries deep within his psyche, or personality, the gods of his race as archetypes. They are in his unconscious, but they are nevertheless there because of his genetic makeup" ("The Nature of Odin", in *The Religion of Odin*, p. 26). This theory is often referred to as "metagenetics": the belief that spiritual characteristics are passed via physical genetic inheritance and thus that the best god/esses for an individual are those which were known to the souls of her/his physical ancestors. Only by returning to the sources of our troth and the culture of our forebears can we hope to discover how close any of these statements are to the beliefs of those who first kept the troth of the Ases and Wans.

The first, and simplest, problem is the question of whether our forebears had an over-arching "racial" consciousness - whether "race" meant anything to them or not. The Anglo-Saxons had laws which separated the "Welsh" from the "English" insofar as weregild and rights were concerned. However, the distinction here seems to have been one of language and culture, not of race as such: intermarriage was not only common, but highly respected. According to our legends, the Saxon woman Rowena was given in marriage to the Romano-Celtic king Vortigern; the Saxon heroes Cerdic and his brother Cynric bear British names, implying that their mother may have been British; and similar alliances - treated with full honour - are recorded through the history of the Saxon folk. Marriage alliances were likewise made between Germanic and Roman persons of high rank. The historical Attila the Hun is thought to have maintained a court of mixed Hunnish and Gothic composition, and his last marriage was to an atheling-maiden of Germanic stock. Further, the Germans who sang tales of the great hero-king Theodoric the Ostrogoth counted it no disgrace for Theodoric to have served in Attila's warband. Although the latter cycle of legends may be historically inaccurate, it clearly shows the beliefs of its tellers. The Norse who settled Iceland brought along Irish thralls to their new land, with whom they interbred so freely that blood-type groupings show the average Icelander of today to be 25% to 75% Irish (and McNallen, the last name of one of the folk who had most to do with the rebirth of the Elder Troth in America, is hardly Germanic!). For those who argue that the Celts are so close to the Germanic folks ethnically and culturally that it makes no difference, it should also be pointed out that the Scandinavians have gone out of their way to breed with, and absorb elements of the culture of, the Finns, who are not only non-Germanic, but not even Indo-European - their language and, as far as we know, ethnic origin have no more in common with ours than do those of any other non-Indo-European group (such as Orientals, Africans, or Amerindians), but we have been interbreeding so long and so thoroughly that now it is hardly possible to tell a Swede from a Finn on the basis of looks. Further, the relations of the Scandinavians with the Saami (Lapps), a Finno-Ugric people who bear a much closer physical, and generally closer cultural, resemblance to the Siberians and Inuit than to any Indo-European folk, were so successful that Saami tradition is now thought to be one of the greater sources for understanding Germanic religion - both in regards to the shamanic practices we learned from them in the elder days and the god/esses and traditions which they learned about from us and held holy through even the last couple of centuries. As Reinhold Gast comments, "The Samis (sic) were long known even in the Viking era as great spiritual teachers, and are the only indigenous European people whose heathen practices survived the attacks of the Christian Church" (Wotan's Kindred report, *Vor Trú* 50, p. 46). Although there was little recorded intermingling between the Norse and Inuit inhabitants of Greenland, that is likely to be due to the fact that the Norse settlers were christians for the vast majority of their stay in that land, and, being extremely concerned to maintain their European identity (cf. the malnourished skeletons of the Herjolfsness settlers dressed in the height of European fashion, and the condition of the country in 1406 as "entirely Norse and resolutely Christian" - Jones, p. 310), were unwilling to learn the things that could have kept them alive from their native Heathen neighbors. The evidence of the Norse relationship with the Finns and, even more, with the Saami tells us that the "Skraelings" were not shunned by the Scandinavians on racial grounds.

This seeming indifference to the concept of "race" is mirrored in the deeds of our gods. As has already been spoken of at some length, Óðinn himself is a "halfbreed" - the son of the god Þórr and the giantess Bestla; Freyr marries the giantess Gerðr; his father Njörðr marries the giantess Skaði. Þórr's statement in *Hárbarzljóð*, that he must kill female etins to

keep them from breeding and overrunning the Middle-Garth, might seem to delight the most extreme racist - except that the god himself has the giantess Járnsaxa as concubine (which is not an illicit relationship, but a legally recognised condition with responsibilities on both sides), and his sons by her, Móði and Magni, shall inherit his hall and hammer after Ragnarök. By genetic analysis, in fact, Móði and Magni are a full seven-eighths etin; Þórr is the son of the etin Earth and the "halfbreed" Óðinn, hence three-quarters giant himself - a resounding refutation to any extremist who might draw a parallel between Thonar's foeship towards woe-willing etins and a supposed human "racial struggle".

The god/esses' hostility towards giants is not based on the race of these latter, but on their deeds. This is shown in the tale of Hrungnir (told in the Prose Edda) where Óðinn makes a friendly wager with the giant and the Æsir invite him in for a drink: not until Hrungnir becomes drunk and begins to make threatening boasts do the dwellers in Asgarðr show any signs of enmity towards him. In short, it can be safely stated that the Germanic folk did not think in terms of "race"; nor does our tradition give us any grounds for considering the idea meaningful; and the suggestion that "racial purity" might have meant anything to a Norseman, Saxon, or Goth is absolutely laughable.

The Norse did have a concept of physical beauty which was closely tied to light skin and fair hair: those folk described as beautiful are almost always blond - especially women, for whom long blond hair was the ideal - while those described as ugly are almost always black-haired (Jochens, Jenny. "Before the Male Gaze", p. 248). The two strains show up particularly in the family of Egill Skalla-Grímsson, the Myramannakyn, which was said to produce the most beautiful and the ugliest people in Iceland. The beautiful ones included the blond Þórólfr (Egill's brother), Kjartan Ólafsson (who was a typical "light hero", a "noble Heathen" in the period before his conversion and an exemplary christian afterwards), and Helga in fagra; the ugly ones included the black-haired Kveld-Úlfr, Skalla-Grímr, and Egill himself (that is, the wise Óðinnists of the line). Since Egill Skalla-Grímsson is thought to be one of the worthiest folk of the Viking Age, and is one of the most honoured by all the true in modern times, while his handsome, fair-haired brother is mentioned only in passing, and only thought significant due to his relationship with Egill, this gives us some idea of the actual importance of blond beauty in our Northern forebears' culture. Another example which shows the Norse view of the same matter is found in *Landnámabók* (*Hauksbók* ch. 86): Ljúfvina, the wife of king Hjör, gives birth to two sons with remarkably dark skins, while her handmaid bears a very fair son. The queen thus changes the sons; but when her husband comes home, he is unhappy with the fair child, and says that he will hardly be manly. When the children are three winters old, the queen asks the skald Bragi to look at them; he does, and it is clear to him that the fair child is the son of a thrall and by far the worst of the three, while the dark-skinned children are the sons of the king. Ljúfvina then confesses, and shows Hjör his own sons. He says that he has never seen such "Hel-skins", but accepts them as his own. Thereafter the brothers bear the by-name their father has given them, "heljarskinn", and become battle-kings and vikings. To our forebears, beauty was a fine thing, but many others were far more important: strength, skill, and bravery, for instance. We have only to look at the many great saga-heroes who were ugly as trolls to see that!

A more difficult question is that of the meaning of one's own ancestry: are only those descended from folk who worshipped the Ases and Wans really suited for the Teutonic Troth? Must every person follow his/her own genetic heritage, or is the simple act of choice enough to make one a legitimate heir to whichever spiritual path one chooses? While this question may seem on the surface to merely recast the issue of "race" in a more palatable guise, the distinction is of considerable significance. Our forebears did not think about "race"; however, they were very strongly aware of individual kinship and ancestry, and to say that these issues were not important to them would be to falsify the evidence of our sources.

If we accept that anyone with any forebears who followed our troth has the full right to follow their own ancestors' ways, we include the entire continent of Europe, North Africa (where the Vandals settled) and the Middle East (where the Crusaders spread their seed), and Russia, which takes its very name from the Swedish Rus who settled there. Still, we are left with the problem of whether those who have no Ásatrú forebears in their clan-lines should take part in our troth and rites. As a faith which is, in large part, based on an ethnic culture and heritage, it is our duty to support all ethnic religions - Saami, Siberian, African, Jewish, Oriental, Native American, and the rest - as shield-fellows in our fight to preserve the unique heritage and diversity of this world's individual folks. Most of us came to Ásatrú because we wished to learn about the way of our own ancestors and the root of our own culture - a culture which christianity and Mediterranean thought worked to suppress in much the same way as they have worked to suppress the native cultures of the Americas, Africa, u.s.w. in more recent centuries. It follows, then, that those folk whose clans do not include any Germanic ancestors, however distant, should be encouraged at least to learn about and appreciate the beauty of their own personal heritage before seeking out a stranger's faith. On the other hand, the English language is still Germanic; although the Germanic origins of many of our ideals and customs have been forgotten by Western society at large, anyone of any bloodline who has been raised in an English-speaking country has a claim to the cultural heritage of the Asa-faith, if not the ancestry stemming from our god/esses. The meaning which our forebears would have placed on this distinction must then be looked at.

To the Germanic folk, the soul was, at least in some of its aspects, something which was inherited (see "Soul, Death, and Rebirth" in *Our Troth* for a fuller discussion). The importance of ancestry to the soul also appears in the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon genealogies where Freyr (in the case of the Ynglings) or Woden/Óðinn (in the case of historical dynasties such as those of the Saxon kings and legendary dynasties such as the Völsungs) is named as the founder of a royal line: the descendants of the god bear the might of the god. Spiritual characteristics such as berserkerang are

hereditary, as is shown in Egils saga; so are many aspects of *wyrd*. In this respect, bloodline can be seen as important to truth: the god/esses and godly ancestors of one's personal forebears are the shapers of one's soul. This appears most clearly in *Völsunga saga*, where Óðinn fathers the Völsung line, acts as needful to further its life, gives Sigmundur the sword which embodies the Völsungs' clan-soul, and shapes the lives of the clan's members from beginning to end. The tendency, indeed, was for a kindred to favour the god/dess who was its own ancestor, as the Saxon kings followed Woden and the Ynglings worshipped Freyr - though this cannot be taken too far: Þórr was the most beloved of the Norse gods, and there are no tales which even hint at his fathering human clans, though certain families (such as that of Þórólfr Mosturskeggi) held him to be their particular friend.

The process of individual rebirth was thought to take place within the family line, but was also tied up with the rite of name-giving. It was the custom to give a newborn the name of the most newly dead family member of the same sex, and the child sometimes bore signs which showed it to be the rebirth of that person: H.R. Ellis cites the *Upphaf sögu* description of the birth of Thordr, in which the newborn is named after his recently dead father, and has a scar on his left arm where his father had been wounded, and is at once given the nickname which his father had borne (*Road to Hel*, p.141). The family connection is important, but the name seems to be even more important, as the Helgi lays of the Elder Edda show. In the first of these, Helgi is given his name and his soul with it; the second Helgi is not descended from him, but is called after him and thus inherits his *wyrd* and his reborn valkyrie. Though only a summary of the third Helgi's tale survives, it seems to repeat this process of naming = rebirth = *wyrd*. Here, it seems to be the ritual action, rather than the actual bloodline, which transmits the soul, memory, and might.

The importance of ancestry stands out most clearly in the worship we give to our fore-gone kin whose ghosts still ward and help us, the *disir* and *alfar*; and in our awareness that the god/esses are our own eldest kin. In the homelands of the Germanic folk, particularly Scandinavia, this belief was bound up with the understanding that those dead who were buried in family lands still looked after their land and kin. This understanding was the source of the legal term "udal" or "inherited" lands - the same word as that of the rune-name *othala*. Udal lands could not be taken from the line, nor sold so long as there was a clan-member to inherit them: the soul of the line was bound up with the soul of the land. When the Norse fared to Iceland, they began hallowing the land with their dead at once. This is shown in Egils saga: when Egill's grandfather Kveld-Úlfr dies on the way to Iceland, he tells his son Skalla-Grímr to toss his coffin overboard and to settle where it comes to land: the living and the dead members of the clan continued to be bound in a single weave of holiness and legal right.

This presents one of the thornier problems in dealing with the ancestral question in modern *Ásatrú*: is it good for someone whose background is wholly non-European to use Germanic names and forms in calling upon their own ancestors? The problem is made more difficult by the fact that some non-European cultures, among those being branches of African and Oriental religions, have very strong traditions of ancestor worship of their own. If one believes in the ghosts of one's ancestors, one might tend to think that they would prefer to be called upon by the names and in the ways that they know, just as they once called upon their own forebears - perhaps even that they might be confused and/or angered to be hailed in alien terms. It can, however, be argued that the terms and rites are less important than the bonds of blood and the act of remembering: few of us, after all, would cast all our kin who have died within the christian church from our line, and those beliefs are farther from our own than the beliefs of (for instance) many African tribes. Indeed, the rites which many other ethnic religions, such as the Yoruba, use to honour and speak with their forebears, are very similar in nature and structure - often even down to such details as the symbolism of colour - to our own. In this matter, individual intuition is the only possible guide: we can say no more than that each person must honour her/his own ancestors in the way that he/she finds personally most fitting.

At this point, it appears that a person's own bloodline must be thought of as a meaningful guide to the path of her/his soul. However, although our forebears set much store by the inherited might of the clan, they also had several rituals by which that might could be passed to those who were not related by blood. The first of these was the ritual of name-giving, by which a newborn child was taken into the family line and had its human soul bestowed upon it. Without this naming and ritual acceptance, no matter what its bloodline was, the child had no soul: it was like a troll or an outlaw. In Scandinavian folklore, cast-out babies made particularly horrible ghosts, who would haunt until someone gave them a name, thereby allowing the child the chance of later rebirth in that person's family line. (1) An unrelated child could also be accepted into the family line and thereby given full rights and might, as in the case of Sigurðr the Völsung who, born after the death of his father, is given his name and clan-right by the king Hjálprekr, who is not related to him in any way.

The ritual of blood-brotherhood also binds those who carry it out into each other's clan, giving each full access to the might and rights of the other: an oath-sibling becomes a sibling in truth. The close relationship between Óðinn and Loki is one example of this; another appears in *Völsunga saga*, where Grímhildr says to Sigurðr, "King Gjúki shall be your father, and I your mother, your brothers Gunnarr and Högni and all who swear the oaths."

Lastly is the rite of claiming ancestry which appears in the Eddic poem *Hyndluljóð*. In this poem, the young hero Óttarr, Freyja's love, has been challenged to prove his nobility of descent against another hero, Angantyr. Freyja transforms him into a boar and rides with him to the cave of the giantess Hyndla, whom Freyja then forces to recite a list of ancestors for him. This genealogy is not particularly consistent with other heroic genealogies, but begins with a list of historical Scandinavian persons, moving back to figures of semi-historical legend (Gunnarr) and pure legend (Sigurðr), and finally

bringing in the god/esses and giants back to Ymir (in the section which is excerpted separately in Hollander's translation as *Völuspá hin skamma*). At the end of the recitation, Freyja has Hyndla bring Óttarr a cup of "memory-ale" so that he will be able to remember all the names he has learned. The rite shown here is one by which the subject ritually ties himself into the might of the heroes of history and legend, and ultimately claims his kinship with the god/esses: the issue is not one of bodily descent, but of a unification of the individual's soul with the current of holy might which is the life-blood of the Germanic heritage. This rite may be carried out by anyone, regardless of his/her actual clan-lineage; and the one who carries it out must then be recognised as partaking in the might of the holy clans of the North.

Having shown that an earthly blood-line reaching back to those who first worshipped the god/esses of our folk is not needful for the practise of Ásatrú today, the question then arises: is ancestry alone enough to make one true of soul? The evidence of *Völsunga saga* and *Hervarar saga* suggests that it is not. In the latter, Angantyr's daughter Hervör is raised by her mother's kin after her father's death, but to gain the might of his line and the sword Tyrfingr which embodies the soul of the clan, she must go to the grave where Angantyr and his brothers rest and confront the frightful figure of the dead man with her claim, forcing him to acknowledge her. Signy's children by Siggeirr, although they carry precisely as much of the Völsung genetic material as does Sigurðr, fail the tests of hardiness and bravery which Signy and Sigmundur put them through: despite their ancestry, they are not true Völsungs. His father being dead, Sigurðr must initiate himself into his Völsung heritage: first by gaining the shards of his father's sword from his mother and having it reforged, then by avenging his father, with the final test of his might coming when he slays the dragon Fáfnir.

It is, further, needful to note that all of us have had the soul-line which reached back to our first Ásatrú forebears broken at some point. The sagas show clearly that the christian rite of baptism was thought to cut its subject not only off from the god/esses, but from the ancestral kin-fetch and the personal fetch as well. The function of the baptismal rite was, and is, to bring the person undergoing it into the spiritual line of Christ and the family of the christian church. Whether we ourselves have suffered this ritual or not, it is certain that our ancestors did, and therefore that the oneness of soul of our clans has been broken. Therefore, it is needful even for those who can trace their ancestry back to the time when our Heathen troth still flourished to ritually take up the might of those early kin and lay claim to the worship of our forebears' god/esses just as those who do not share in the bloodline of their clans must. For new-born children, this rite takes place with the name-giving and sprinkling of water (see Birth-Rites); for adults newly come to the Troth, it is whatever rite of welcome a Kindred, Hearth, Garth, or Hof uses, or, for one who has no Troth-kin close enough, the Rite of Troth-Claiming given in this book.

Lastly, we learn of the meaning of inheritance from a deed wrought by Egill Skalla-Grímsson, one of the wisest runesters of the Viking Age. When Egill felt himself about to die, he took the English silver he had saved and went to a secret place. He was unwilling to pass it on to his children, whom he thought unworthy; instead he hid it in the water, a mighty inheritance waiting for whoever was strong, lucky, or wise enough to find it. Just so, the inheritance of our god/esses and our true ways has lain hidden in the waters of Wyrð's well for many years - waiting not for those who were simply born to it, but whoever is able and willing to find and take it!

For those who think fair colouration to be a great thew of the folk, there is an old and lasting Icelandic proverb: "Oft er flagð undir fögru skinni, og dyggð undir dökkum hárum" - often a troll-woman is under fair skin, and virtue under dark hair (Magnus Einarsson, Icelandic-Canadian Memory Lore, p. 283).

(1) The action is not recommended. While the children set out to die in the christian era were often healthy and strong babies whose only fault was being born out of wedlock, those set out in the heathen period were the crippled or weak (who were abandoned because their community did not have the extra resources needed to support them) - that is to say, bearers of characteristics which one would not choose to pass on to one's descendants.

Book-Hoard

(As some of the texts here are quoted only for purposes of comparison and refutation, I have chosen to separate this book-hoard from the main one at the end of Our Troth in order to avoid any confusion. Authors with patronymics are listed alphabetically by first name as per Icelandic convention)

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- von Dauster, Wilfrid. "How Can You Believe That Junk? An Essay for the Modern Pagan". *Mountain Thunder* 4, pp. 20-22.
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- Gamlinginn. "Race and Religion". *Mountain Thunder* 8, 1993, pp. 9-10.

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- Jones, Gwynn. *A History of the Vikings*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: University Press, 1984).
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- Slauson, Irv (ed.). *The Religion of Odin* (Red Wing: Asatru Free Church Committee, 1978)
- Snorri Sturluson; Anthony Faulkes (tr.). *Edda* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1987).
- Turville-Petre, G. (ed.) *Hervarar saga ok Hei_reks*, 2nd ed. (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1976). This saga may be found in translation by Christopher Tolkien as *The Saga of King Hei_rek the Wise*.

Section 4

Troth Law:

The Worship and Rites of the Troth

Chapter XXX

Hearths and Garths

The Troth Hearth

The Hearth is the Troth's Kindred-unit - a small group of folk who gather to worship, study, and keep heathen fellowship together. Whether the Hearth-folk are kin in blood or only in spirit and love, the title shows their relationship: they are gathered around the hearth, the heart of the home, together.

Step I: Birth

A Troth Hearth must have at least two adult members of the Troth. It is not necessary for any of the Hearth members to hold a title within either the Troth or the Hearth itself. Most Hearths, however, choose to have a leader. Some possible titles for such a position, which do not infringe on recognised Troth offices, are: Fro/Frowe (implying a peaceful land-ruler); Drighten/Drightine (a band with a specific goal, linked to a single leader by bonds of loyalty); or Kin-Leader. The choice of leadership and the level of authority which the Hearth's leader can exercise is something which only the Hearth can determine for itself. The Troth does not appoint local leaders at this level, nor will it support one person's claim over another's. If two people are incapable of working together, the Troth recommends that they found separate Hearths, which will be considered equally legitimate so long as neither engages in unsuitable behavior such as public attacks on the other. This principle applies all the way up to the level of the Troth Hof. *Troth recognition of any group does not constitute a designation of exclusive legitimacy in its area.*

Large and highly organized Hearths may wish to create offices along the lines of Shope (secretary) and Steward (treasurer). These appointments, again, are strictly local choices. Unless the Hearth is highly active and dealing with large amounts of money, or has incorporated itself independently as a tax-free religious organization, they are probably unnecessary at this level.

Step 2: Naming

Any group with two or more adult members of the Troth may apply for Hearth status by sending its chosen name, a list of members, a brief description of its organization and activities, and the address of a P.O. box to be recorded in the Troth rolls; the Hearth name, address, and the name of your group's "contact person" (who must be a Troth member, and should be the leader of the group) will then be listed in *Idunna*, and the Rede will vote on chartering the group after 60 days following publication. Chartered groups will receive certificates and have their group name and contact addresses listed in *Idunna*.

The possession of a P.O. box is mandatory: for the safety of all Troth folk, our publications will not print home addresses. Remember, there are always a few strange people on the edges of every path, and some of them, unfortunately, can be dangerous. When registering the P.O. Box, remember that mail sent to a name other than that in which the box is held will be returned by the post office, and choose the name by which your group wants to be known.

Many true folk choose to take new names when beginning their work with the god/esses of the North - either for spiritual reasons (wishing a name which springs from our ancestral culture) or for the practical reason of concealing their identities. The Troth neither encourages nor discourages this practise.

Step 3: Deeds

The chief duty of a Troth Hearth is to perform the blessings of the year and to hallow the passages of life (birth,

coming--of-age, death) for its members. At the very least, a Hearth must keep the feasts of Yule, Ostara, and Winternights. The full schedule of holy days provides for a greater or lesser blessing approximately once a month, according to the following schedule:

- January - Þorrablót or Feast of Thonar
- February - Disting
- Late March/early April - Ostara
- April 30 - May Eve
- June 20 - Midsummer's Eve
- August 1 - Loaf-Fest or Freyfaxi
- late September/early October - Winternights
- November, third Thursday - Wayland Smith's Day (modern)
- December 20 through January 1 - Yule

Some heathens of the modern era have also introduced the custom of gathering for rites on the full moon and/or for special feasts to honour heroic wo/men of the earlier days, held upon the ninth day of each month.

Prior to each feast, it is best to have at least a full day when the Hearth gathers together to discuss the meaning of the feast and, if the rite requires everyone's participation, to rehearse it. A good means for bringing the group together is to prepare for feasts with communal crafts - painting eggs for Ostara, making tomtegubbers (corn dollies) at the autumnal equinox and Winternights, tree ornaments for Yule, and so forth.

Since no official qualification is required for Hearth leadership, there is no specific teaching requirement. However, the legal classification of the Hearth is that of a church Study Group, and therefore it is strongly suggested that the group to meet at least once a week for study of some sort - Depending on the group, this may range from simply reading and discussing the basic myths to discussions of the most esoteric matters. Members who have special skills or special lore should be strongly encouraged to share their capabilities with the rest of the group. Especially those who brew mead.

All groups from the level of Hearth upward should have at least a few basic texts. The list may be found at the back of this book, in "Book-Hoard".

Step 4: Growth

Hearths usually begin as gatherings of a few family members or friends. For the reasons discussed above, the Troth does not suggest that you advertise directly for members when you feel that the time has come to expand. A better method is to begin a study group or set of classes for interested folk on neutral ground, such as your local library or metaphysical bookstore. If there is a Unitarian church in your neighborhood, you may be able to arrange for use of their facilities; should you have access to some sort of neutral ground on a regular basis, you can also put out flyers inviting interested folk to come to open rituals and/or to contact you via your P.O. box.

Once you have gotten to know new people well, you can think about inviting them home. The Troth does not require any screening procedures or time of trial, so the novice can join the Troth itself right away. However, most groups wait for a period of three to six months between a candidate's request for admittance and full recognition of that person as a Hearth/Garth member. An individual Hearth, Garth, or Hof may choose to shut a person out of its own fellowship *so long as this is not done for reasons of ethnic background, gender, or sexual preference*. Groups found to be excluding candidates for any of these reasons will have their official status revoked and the member/s responsible will be expelled from the Troth.

When new members are accepted into a Hearth, it is usual to perform a ritual of adoption by which that person states her/his will to take up the ways of his/her forebears and ties the bond of fellowship with the other kin of that Hearth. Such a rite is given in this book; other forms may be found in Kveldulf Gundarsson's *Teutonic Religion* and Edred Thorsson's *A Book of Troth*.

5. Miscellaneous

Although Troth writings most often use Anglo-Saxon or West Germanic god/ess names (Anglo-Saxon Woden or Old High German Wodan rather than Old Norse Óðinn/Anglicized Odin, for example), this is only a trend, not a mandate. The individual Hearth or Garth is free to emphasize any area or period of the Germanic world, or no specific focus. For aesthetic and ritual purposes, consistency in name-forms is nice (you might, for instance, want to call on "Woden and Thunar" rather than "Woden and Thor"), though, where recorded forms do not exist in your chosen time/place, non-philologists may simply adopt a name or simplified form from elsewhere without offense (thus a toast might be made to "Woden and Freya").

Often a Hearth or Garth chooses a particular symbol to bind the awareness of its members together and to represent that group to the outside world. The battle-flag was known to all branches of the Germanic people, and often individual flags such as the Jarl Sigurðr's Raven banner were thought to be especially magical or holy; Tacitus also reports how the Germanic tribes took certain totems and emblems from their hallowed groves to bear into battle. The easiest ways to make a

banner are to sew cloth cut-outs onto a background piece or simply to paint the emblems onto cloth with acrylic; more dedicated folk may undertake the time-consuming process of embroidering a banner. When choosing fabrics, keep in mind that such an item, as well as being rolled up and hauled from place to place on occasion, is likely to be splattered with ale and mead once in a while, and try to pick something washable and durable.

Some kindreds also like to have uniformly coloured tunics or some sort of insignia of rank within the group. The Troth as a whole does not recognise any emblems of rank, nor is there any evidence that (outside of certain tokens of rulership such as the Sutton Hoo sceptre) the Germanic people used any such thing. However, the Troth does not discourage the use of specific clothing or insignia by individual groups, and some have found that these things help to structure a kindred and bind it together. The only difficulty they have caused thus far is that one well-coordinated and -organized group with matching tunics coloured by rank has been inaccurately and unfairly described by outsiders (and even a few insiders who should have known better) as "Nazis" - an impression which, of course, we want to avoid at all costs.

The easiest way to handle feasts is to hold them as potlucks, BYOB. The co-ordinating host/ess should make sure that appetizers, main dish, bread, and dessert are all provided for, and that no member comes in with empty hands. Alternatively, the cost of food can be calculated beforehand and a set entrance fee paid; this works best with larger groups (over 12-15). In the old days, the local leader was responsible for supplying the feast out of his own stores. This even works today, if you have a rich local leader who doesn't mind feeding everyone else. DO NOT let one person supply all the food in hopes that s/he will be paid back by donations after the feast. It seldom happens thus.

The Troth Garth

Step 1: Birth

The Troth Garth must have at least three adult members of the Troth, and be led by an Elder, Elder-in-Training, or fully certified Godwo/man. For Troth purposes, this title is the one that should be registered. If there is more than one person qualified in your Garth, you must decide among yourselves which should be registered as the leader (or whether you wish to maintain multiple leadership). In this respect, the same principles of Troth non-interference apply as in the case of Hearth leadership.

As Garths are usually larger and more highly organized, as well as more active, than Hearths, you are likely to require the basic Shope and Steward offices, though specific titles are up to the individual group.

Note: Recognition of a group as a Garth or Hof does not give it any control or authority over independent Hearths in its area. A Troth group which wishes to remain separate from other Troth groups, be they Hearths, Garths, or Hofes, has the full right to do so.

Step 2: Naming

The Garth's leader must send its chosen name, list of members, general description of organization and activities, P.O. Box, and a personal statement of her/his own leadership role and goals in to be recorded in the Troth rolls; as with a Hearth, the name and contact address will be listed in *Idunna*, the Rede will vote on the group's status after 60 days following publication, and a chartered Garth will receive an official certificate. If the Garth is led by an Elder-in-training, s/he should send a copy to the Warder of the Lore or the Elder supervising his/her training programme as well.

Step 3: Deeds

In addition to keeping the feasts in the same general manner as a Hearth, a Garth is responsible for holding classes for the members on a regular (at least monthly, preferably weekly) basis. These classes must include basic teachings about the religion and culture of the Germanic peoples; other aspects, such as runes, archaic languages, and crafts, are optional, but recommended if possible. A Garth leader should also be in the process of accumulating a good book-ward and keep an annotated bibliography.

For the purpose of inspiring other groups, Garths are encouraged to make regular, though brief, reports on their activities to be printed in *Idunna*.

Particularly large and active Garths should begin to consider the building or purchase of a permanent structure given solely to Troth religious activities. Under a Hearth leader, Godwo/man, or Elder-in-Training, such a structure is called a Holy Stead; when supervised by a fully certified Elder, the title of Hof may be applied for.

If you do not have the facilities for a Holy Stead, the best way to create a ritual atmosphere in your living room (or where-ever you practise) is to have decorations which can be hung up or placed about at feast-times. The use of banners as a

specific group-symbol has already been mentioned; a fine ritual atmosphere can also be created by the use of larger banners as "tapestries" covering the walls. Goðautgafn Publishers (Dunhagi 18, P.O. Box 631, 121-Reykjavík, Iceland, ph. # 621083) also produces beautiful, if rather smallish (15" x 20"), posters of some of the god/esses (Óðinn, Þórr, Freyja, Íðunn, Loki, and Ægir), which make first-rate ritual decorations. If the blót-drink is sprinkled freely, these posters should be laminated to protect them. Posters of holy animals such as horses, wolves, eagles, swine, and so forth can also be used. Planks of plywood can also be carved or painted to provide temporary panelling. God-images are excellent to have; these may be as simple as a post with a head roughly carved at the top or a large branch with mild trimming made to give it a generally human shape, or they may be full-scale works of sculpture if you can manage it. Although much of the ornamental carving of our forebears was highly elaborate and detailed, their figure-carving was ordinarily very stylized and sometimes quite crude - even an unpractised woodcarver should be able to produce a reasonable effect with an X-Acto knife. Statues of holy animals may also be used to represent the god/esses. Wisely used, recordings of natural sounds can enhance a ritual or even a study gathering. Some good ones are produced by The Nature Company (P.O. Box 188, Florence, KY 41022; call 1-800-227-1114 for information about store locations near you or to order, all available in CD or cassette): I recommend Mountain Stream, Distant Thunder, and Gentle Ocean. For wolf howls and other vocalizations without any human commentary, the best recording is Wolf Talk, Northword Press, Inc., Minocqua, Wisconsin 54548, 1-800-336-5666 (CD and cassette, carried by Nature Company stores).

The library of a Garth should, in the course of time, include a few basic primary texts in the original languages, plus necessary supplementary works such as dictionaries. A selection of books which you should be looking out for is listed in the Book-Hoard at the back of this work. Some more advanced secondary sources are also suggested there.

Step 4: Growth

Garths are encouraged to keep a higher profile than Hearths, though obviously the same cautions about inviting strangers to your home and so forth apply. It is highly recommended that Garths open relations with groups from other traditions - looking up your area's Unitarian Church is often a good way to get started. If at all possible, you should find a location where you can hold rites which are open to the public. Parks and rentable halls are often a good choice, although you must be careful to find out about all local regulations concerning consumption of alcohol and/or carrying of weapons if you intend to perform rites anywhere outside your own home. If you are able to contact your area's Society for Creative Anachronism officers, they will probably know the best places to hold events where you will be allowed to drink and carry mediæval weapons. Do remember that the SCA - although they sometimes dress and act very much as we do and overlap with us in many ways (such as the practise of traditional crafts, the study of history, and early-period fighting), although their events are often good places to buy weapons and various types of ritual gear - has no official religious affiliations, and SCA folk who are Heathen while in Viking Age personas may well be Southern Baptists at home. This also goes for people who work at or attend Renaissance Faires: many are pagans of various sorts, but not all by any means, and there is no guarantee that a Þórr's Hammer at such an event shows the wearer to be a heathen in "real life".

In many areas, seeking out either police or security protection for rituals in public places is a very good idea. Not only does this protect you from harassment by locals, but it also prevents official investigation from breaking up a rite in the middle (it's happened before, folk - just ask about "An Axe in the Park"!) and ensures that your group stays firmly on the right side of the law, as the Troth requires. Being on good terms with the "Cult Crimes" people in your area is also a fine idea on general principles and may save you much trouble later.

When paying official visits to any group associated with The Establishment, it is highly recommended that you dress in a neat and quiet manner. A small Hammer, Sun-Wheel, or Valknútr, as pendant or collar-pin, is sufficient to establish your religious orientation. If you look like a Reverend, you are more likely to be treated like one.

The main problems you are likely to run into with The Establishment are (1) being mistaken for a Satanist and (2) being mistaken for a Nazi. Neither of these will come as any surprise to anyone who has attempted to educate non-heathens about heathenry, but they do get old after a while. The important thing to remember is to keep calm, assuming that the person in question is not trying to insult you (even if s/he manifestly is!), and patiently and reasonably correct the errors, with as many legitimate historical references as you can bring in. No matter how tempting it is, *do not* overtly criticize christianity to non-heathens to whom you are attempting to explain our ways. Stick to basic clarifications of what we are and are not. Our purpose is to reconstruct the traditional religion of Northern Europe as part of the recovery of our cultural heritage. The Þórr's Hammer is not a reversed cross, but the sign of the good god who protects us against all things evil and destructive. Although the swastika was a holy sign among the Northern folk - as among many other peoples, including the Indians and Orientals - for thousands of years before the Nazis took it as their emblem, and we still consider it to be such, we refrain from using it in public as a sign of respect to all those people who are unfamiliar with its original history and would be distressed to see it, and also because we do not want to attract neo-Nazis or other types of racists and fascists to our religion. Pentagrams, reversed or otherwise, are not a part of our tradition. We do not normally go about wearing black; when we have special ritual clothing, it is generally reconstructed traditional garb (usually from the Viking Age), and is usually either white or brightly coloured. We do not practise black magic. We believe in respect and love for the natural world, our ancestors, and all human beings who are brave, loyal, and true. We support and honour all peoples who wish to

revive or maintain their cultural heritage. We do not accept the Judeo-Christian Bible as absolute truth, though we do not criticize those who have chosen to accept it as an expression of their own spiritual ideals. However, we consider christianity to be inappropriate for the Northern European cultural context; we worship neither its god nor its devil. In turn, we do not try to force our religion or our ways on anyone else. We do not permit any sort of discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, or sexual preference, nor do we condone any group which does. We have no political agenda and never become involved in political issues as a group, except when the general issue of freedom of religion is called into question. We do not practise animal sacrifice for its own sake, although Troth members who own rural properties with their own meat animals bless the pigs and cows which they slaughter for their own food or to provide for large feasts.

These statements, presented calmly and clearly, should disarm anyone with a shred of reason. The most important thing, however, is to come across as knowledgeable, sanely, and respectably as you can. Eventually (within the next year or two) the Troth will also have informational leaflets which you will be able to give out to help you in educating the doubtful and explaining who we are and what we are about.

Of course, there will always be those who think that simply stating their belief that the Bible is Absolute Truth, and supporting this belief with quotes from same, is sufficient to prove the truth of what they say. The most sensible response is that you do not share that belief, nor do you consider the Bible to be intrinsically more true than any other spiritual pathway promoting itself as the Ultimate Truth, and nothing will be gained by two people simply repeating beliefs at each other. Arguing with someone who thinks that repetition of a work's self-definition as truth equals proof of its truth is essentially no different from arguing with a drunk, and will be no more fruitful.

Chapter XXXI

The Troth Hof

In the speech of the new-born Elder Troth, a Troth Hof is a building given solely to Troth worship and teachings, overseen by a full-fledged Troth Elder. The Troth Hof is owned either by the Troth directly or by a charter group of the Troth. The donation of such a building or the money to build one calls for work with the I.R.S. as well as the Troth itself. A personal dwelling which has simply been given over to religious work is not sufficient: a Hof must be a free structure (like a christian church), ideally able to hold at least 50 folk at one time, hopefully with overnight facilities as well. Recognition of a Hof hangs on the completion of all the necessary paperwork to assign the title to the Troth or its charter group; the Rede requests photos of the outside and inside of the building and a declaration of intent by the responsible Elder. When the High Rede has approved the project and the title has been assigned, the Hof-Elder shall hold a rite hallowing the property as a Troth Hof; this rite shall be shared by as many Troth folk as are able to.

A Hof must have the officers legally required of a tax-exempt religious organization, and keep financial records and records of activities accordingly. Specific titles, as always, are a matter of individual choice.

Hofs are responsible for their own support, which will probably hang on (tax-deductible) donations from the members.

One of the chief works of the Hof is teaching the ways of the Troth; thus a Hof must be led by a qualified Elder with a full grounding in the sundry sources of lore our forebears have left us and the works of the modern scholars who have struggled (with various degrees of inspiration) to make clear and reconstruct the culture and religion of our folk. The Hof's Elder is responsible not only for teaching the lore, but for setting it into practice in ways which are both true to the workings and knowledge of our forebears and workable in our own age.

Not suffering from the vulnerability of a personal dwelling, and being responsible for the teaching and guidance of all folk within its area, a Hof should advertise its presence, location, times of classes and rituals, and so forth, as clearly as possible. Especially in the first years, this advertisement should cover a great deal of territory, as Hofs are likely to be sparsely scattered for some time yet and most true folk are willing to travel a good distance to get to a rite (in addition to the obvious caution about drinking and driving, the probable length of travel time for some is another reason why a Hof should have overnight facilities).

Wisdom, of course, recommends the installation of security systems, fire alarms, and whatever other protections against vandalism or destruction the officers of the Hof deem fitting. While the days of the Crusades are over, there are always a few menaces to society who will seize on any excuse to burn or bash something.

The use of the term "Hof" for a building which functions in much the same way as a temple in most major religions is slightly anachronistic. Although the word is widespread, it first takes on the meaning of "holy stead" in Old Icelandic. Here the holy character was probably secondary to the original meaning of "farmstead"; "hof" came to mean "a large farmstead, where folk gathered to feast on the holy days" - a practise which, of course, strengthened the authority of the large farmholder in question and the centralization of the region. Most accurately, then, the term "hof" would be used for the gathering place in the most common of Troth practises: the gathering of the folk in the house of their local leader on feast-days.

Instead, the Troth has chosen to continue the development of meaning of the Icelandic term "hof". This choice is grounded on the path of growth of the Troth itself. If we are to take our fit place as a great religion, it is needful for us to grow beyond the backyard gatherings. We must have properly authorized central places where we can gather, from which we can distribute information, and which can stand as signs of the Troth's being and might in the community as a whole. This is not to put down the home-gatherings, which were the basic unit of troth in the elder days and are likely to remain so among us for a long time. However, there is also strong precedent for the official "church" in the Elder Troth. The great temple at Old Uppsala is the best-known religious structure of our forebears; another building found in England is also thought to have been a large-scale temple of the Anglo-Saxons. Since no specific term for such buildings has survived, we have chosen to raise "hof" to the large-scale dignity. The term "harrow" is kept for smaller gatherings: it refers literally to the holy stock or stone where the blessings are poured, which may be kept in a backyard, a garage, or, as was done in earlier times, set up in the woods or fields.

There is, of course, no compelling reason not to rent or purchase pre-built spaces for Troth worship. The best hof, after all, is the hof that you have available. In times to come, however, most hofs shall, hopefully, be built by Troth members and associated groups. While it might be said that this article on hof design is looking rather far into what might become, it must also be said that what we do not first shape in the sight of our wills shall never come to be.

The main uses of the hof must be kept firmly in mind when planning its building. Firstly, of course, it is a place of worship, where every detail must work to bring the true folk within closer to the god/esses of our folk. To that end, tradition and aesthetics must be yoked together to produce a structure which, even when it is not an actual reconstruction of an earlier building (or rather, of a theory about an earlier building), nevertheless gives the clear sense of a hof in which any of our ancestors would feel themselves at home - as indeed they must, for it is they upon whom we often call in our rites, and they

who live again in our souls. It is to be awaited that the Elder who means to lead the hof shall have familiarized him/herself thoroughly with the principles of Germanic art and such principles of Germanic architecture as remain to us.

Except inasmuch as we know about Germanic architecture in general, we know relatively little about the architecture of Germanic holy places, for two main reasons. Firstly, our ancestors built in wood, except in Iceland, where they used loose stones chinked with turf. The best archaeology can do with this is to reconstruct the floor-plan: if some of the later stave-churches, for instance, had not been preserved intact, the unique beauty of the stave-church roofs would have been lost forever. The second reason for the loss is due to the christian practise of building churches where Heathen holy places have been. Many of these churches are still in use and thus unavailable for excavation. The christian church at Old Uppsala, for instance, is thought by some to have been built on the site of the previous temple; restoration in 1927 did show signs of a long rectangular building beneath the present foundations, but the excavation was not thorough enough to establish whether the site was that of a Heathen temple.

Given our lack of knowledge about specifically religious Heathen architecture, the next tendency has been to look at the early christian churches in the north for evidence of native tradition. All stone-built churches can be safely ignored in this respect. We know that the practise of building in stone spread with the Romans and later with christianity: the Anglo-Saxon kings who had forsaken their ancestors's troth brought stonemasons over from the Continent. In Scandinavia, although the land is by no means lacking in stone, the tradition of woodcrafting was firmly established, and wooden places of worship continued to be the norm for a long time after the Scandinavians had been forced into christianity, even though the more efficient elements of southern architecture were gradually incorporated into their building. As christian Norberg-Schulz points out in his Foreword to *Norwegian Wood*, in the North, "wood is not just one material among others, but a kind of environmental fact. Norway belongs to a Nordic "wood culture", in contrast to the 'stone cultures' of Mediterranean countries. In the North we have since time immemorial grown up surrounded by wooden walls, we have as children played on wooden floors, and we have known the exciting mystery of the forest." (p. 7) The enduring strength of this tradition is shown in *Laxdaela saga* ch. 74, where Þórkell Eyjólfsson, who has abundant stone available to him in Iceland, goes to the trouble of importing a huge shipload of timber (and offending St. Óláfr in the process, as he refuses to cut it any smaller than the timber of the king's own church) from Norway for the purpose of building a church in his home country. Although the immediate context is christian, the traditional churches of the south, which Þórkell could more easily have taken for a model, were built of stone.

It can thus be seen that wood is the most fitting and traditional material for a Troth hof. Wood is also best by simple virtue of its being: our forebears first hailed the gods and goddesses in the living groves, surrounded by the holy trees. A wood-built hof keeps this awareness alive, as the might of the trees from which it is shaped still lives within it. It must also not be forgotten that we ourselves are kin to the trees; as we were first filled with might and life by Wodan and his two brothers, so the breath of our words and the might of the god/esses ringing through the hof fills its wood with a life which is like to our own. As spoken of further in the chapter on crafts, wood is also the chief craft-material of the Germanic folk.

Having said this, it must be added that wood has some disadvantages, chief among them being its flammability and relatively short-lived character. Of the roughly 900 stave-churches built in Norway during the Middle Ages, only 30 have survived to the present day - a staggeringly high number, compared to the general survival rate of wooden buildings from the period, and probably attributable to a combination of climactic factors and the relatively limited amount of fighting taking place on Norwegian soil. Hof-builders who live in areas with violent or strongly anti-Heathen tendencies, or who expect to use open flames in or around the hof on a regular basis, may thus choose to build in stone, perhaps using wooden pillars and/or panelling inside the hof to preserve the traditional and spiritual character of our forebears' work. The other advantage of stone as a building material is its acoustical properties, which are greatly superior to those of wood.

Eyrbyggja saga, ch. 4 describes a Heathen hof in great detail. It must be remembered that the saga was probably written some two to three hundred years after the conversion of Iceland; serious doubts have thus been cast on its accuracy. However, this and Adam of Bremen's description of the great hof at Uppsala are the only guidelines we have to Heathen places of worship. Further, the saga is the product of a culture with a strong oral tradition which, due to the peaceful nature of the Icelandic conversion and Iceland's relative isolation, was never disrupted and probably remained relatively uncontaminated by foreign influences. If, at the worst, the saga's hof-description were a product of antiquarian imagination, it was at least written by someone who was far closer to the original than we, steeped in the traditions of his ancestors, and generally better qualified to theorize about Heathen temple furnishings than anyone alive today. Thus, if the saga's description cannot be taken as a totally reliable source for academic research, it at least stands as a better guideline for the reconstructed Troth than any we can currently generate.

(Þórólfur Mostur-Skeggi) let a hof be raised there, and that was a great house: the door was on one of the side-walls by the far end; before it inside stood the high-seat pillars, there were nails in them; these were called god-nails; all inside was a frith-stead. Within the hof was a house in that likeness, which now is the choir in churches, and a pedestal stood in the middle of the floor like an altar, and there lay an unbroken ring, twenty ounces, and all oaths should be sworn on it; the hofgoði should have that ring on his arm at all gatherings. A hlaut-bowl should also stand on the altar, and in it a hlaut-twig like an aspergillum, and the blood, which was

called hlaut (lot or blessing?), should be sprinkled out of the bowl. That was blood of the kind shed when beasts were slain as offerings to the gods. The gods were arranged around the altar in this room.

The "afhús" or chancel (the structure compared to a "choir") is the element least likely to be historically accurate, for reasons discussed later; it is possible that in this instance the saga author was "Heathenizing" the type of church with which he was familiar. However, the Hofstaðir excavation near Mývatn unearthed a long building divided into two compartments in just this manner, a hall with benches and a smaller room. There has been much discussion over whether this "Hofstaðir" was actually a holy stead; the question has not been resolved yet. Turville-Petre comments that "its great size shows that it was used for public gatherings, although it might have been used for profane as well as religious purposes" (*Myth and Religion of the North*, p. 243).

A similar hof-description appears in *Kjalnesinga saga* (ch. 2). Here it is described how Þórr was most glorified (*tignaðr*), and stood in the middle with the other gods on both sides (rather like Adam of Bremen's description of the Uppsala hof). Before Þórr was a harrow with much fine craftwork, covered above with iron: there should be a fire which was never quenched, and they called that the hallowed fire (*vígðan eldr*). On this harrow should also stand a great bowl of copper, into which the blood was poured. The blood should be sprinkled over humans or cattle; and when men made blessings, they should also pour it from above into that fen which was outside by the door, which was called "Blótkelda" (Blessing Well or Spring).

The basic ground-plan for an historically accurate hof would be the long-house. The long wooden building, supported with a double row of earthed posts inside and possibly, like the Anglo-Saxon palace at Yeavinger, buttresses outside, is the structure most generally typical of the North and North-West Germanic people as a whole. The advantage of this type of hof is probably the ease with which it can be built; some folk may also feel that the older design brings them nearer to their ancestral ghosts. The disadvantages are its plainness and "primitive" appearance (though decorative woodcarving can greatly better the looks of the whole) and its lack of durability: the later stave church design, where the wall planks and corner posts rested on horizontal sills or, as with Gol Church, on stones, cuts down on the likeliness of rot in the wood. Thatch was probably the most common roofing for this type of building, but also presents a terrible fire-hazard; shingles are preferable.

It has frequently been suggested that the architecture of the stave-church is based on that of the Heathen hof; romantic pictures of the great hof at Uppsala, for instance, often show a stave-church as the main structure. As the oldest stave-church dates from 1100, and the building techniques show signs of southern influence (for example, saltire crosses, bracing planks or "pincers", and the scissor-beam roof construction), this assertion must be dealt with carefully. It is certain that the stave-church is unique to Scandinavia, and the flower of native woodworking and architectural achievement - seafaring folk may dispute the former in favour of the Viking ship; it must then be pointed out that the ship and the stave-church share many techniques of construction, though (despite the best effort of tourist guides to convince their victims otherwise) stave-churches were never made out of recycled ships! It is also reasonable to point out the practicality of the roof-design for larger buildings in the north: the short sharp slopes tend to shed the snow, preventing the destructive buildup of weight. "High-timbered" is also a common epithet of a fine hall, and might reasonably refer either to the very high pointed roof or to the vertical placing of the wall-planks, although the elaborate "pagoda" development of the stave-church roof was dependent on certain southern technical innovations of the post-Heathen period. The stave-church is, then, likely to show the most highly developed form of an architecture which was already solidly grounded in Scandinavia. Although their design cannot be called wholly Heathen, the foreign influence upon these churches seems to be more a matter of practical improvements which allowed the native sense of beauty and architectural tradition to be raised to its highest peak than of changes carried out for spiritual reasons. Therefore, even though a stave-built hof cannot be said to reconstruct Heathen holy architecture, the solidity of the design's grounding in Scandinavian culture and artistic tradition still makes it acceptable for an hof-design today. Such an hof would be both awesome and beautiful, and would-be hof-builders are strongly urged to consider the design. On a practical level, the stave-built stead is likely to take the longest time to set up. It will also be difficult to heat, as the high roof will tend to draw heat from below; this may make feasting in a stave-hof difficult for some in the winter half of the year, as well as encouraging shorter rituals. This may have been less a problem in the time of the design's origin, as the Little Ice Age had yet to set in: most of the Middle Ages were warmer than our own time. No surviving stave-church has any means of heating; you set firepits into a wooden floor at your own risk! More modern means may, of course, be considered as available.

If a stave-design is used, it should be noted that the chancel/apse section (the rounded chamber at the far end where the christians keep their altars) is the most characteristically christian aspect, and in many stave-churches actually appears to have been clumsily tacked onto the central portion; Holan points out that, "even the typical chancel was never an integral part of most stave-churches...In addition, the rounded form of an apse was unnatural given the required wooden foundation beam". It has no place in a Heathen hall. The galley and walkways are likewise secondary, appearing only in the later churches, but serve practical rather than spiritual functions, and therefore may be deemed worthwhile anyway; thus, the final plan for a stave church might appear as a square, or perhaps rectangular structure, held up by posts, with a covered walkway around it.

The size of the hof is, of course, to be determined by means and availability of land. Beyond that, the relevant criterion is expectation of attendance. If, as it ought to be, the hof is used as a feasting hall, the builder must remember that it will need to be significantly larger than a standard church or auditorium to accommodate the same number of people. Allowances must also be made for the space between the freestanding pillars and the walls: the effective space is that within the pillars. As an example: Gol Church, one of the smaller stave kirks (roughly 23 x 16 feet within the pillars), seats 36 middle-sized Lutherans sitting very still in small folding chairs; it might accommodate 20 Heathens at narrow tables. In terms of effective space, the largest of the stave churches is Kaupanger (40 x 20). It should be added that the meagre size of these buildings had much to do with their eventual abandonment, and therefore the construction of larger hofs would probably be good. Long tables with benches running along both sides are the most traditional; it may be thought desirable for the hof's Elder to have a shorter table set crosswise at the head of the hall, at which the Elder and other persons of special worth sit. It is best for the tables and benches to be brought in after the rite for the feast, rather than installed permanently; the tables may then be taken out after feasting when the symbol begins, as was the custom of the Franks during the Migration Age.

Once the building has been constructed or purchased, much work must be put into the furnishings. This is most needful when circumstances have forced the obtaining of a hof in an alien pattern or made out of non-traditional materials. In such a case, the use of tapestries and large woodcarvings or paintings can cover a great many ills and take the awareness of the folk away from any of the building's less than ideal characteristics.

The most important aspect of Germanic holy furnishings, and the one which appears most consistently in the literary and historical sources, is the presence of god/dess-images. These were generally made out of wood, and might have accessories of other types: z.B., the gold- and silver-adornment of the image of Þórr in Trondheim and the silver ring on the arm of the image of Þórgerðr Holgabruðr, both described by Snorri in *Heimskringla*. The reference in the prose of Helgakviða Hundingsbana II to Óðinn lending Dagr his spear may also describe an image which held a real spear that could be lifted from his hand for holy uses. We shall also remember the three great gold collars from the Migration Age (see chapter), which may well have been wrought for statues. Beyond this, the images were marked by their primary characteristics: Þórr carried his hammer; Óðinn was geared for battle; Freyr was known by his large phallus. Carving god-figures, or having such carved, need not beggar the hof-builders: such wooden images as have survived are minimally carved, with realism taking a distant second place to the wood's own shape. Anyone who is minimally competent with a set of chisels ought to be able to create acceptable god-images within the Germanic tradition.

The pillars of a hof are the life of the hof; even in later times, a stave church's hallowing lasted as long as the four corner-pillars stood. Choosing these pillars, whether they are a weight-bearing part of the architecture or set up symbolically in a pre-built hof, is an action calling for the closest work with the god/esses. *Landnamabók* (S123, H95) describes how Hallsteinn the son of Þórólfr Mosturskeggi "made a blessing for this purpose, that Þórr send him high-seat pillars", after which a tree large enough for the pillars was washed up on his land. The images of the god/esses might also have been carved into the hof-pillars, as described in *Eyrbyggja saga* ch. IV: "Þórólfr (Mosturskeggi) cast overboard his high-seat pillars, which had stood in the hof; Þórr was carved on one of them - the purpose of the action being to call Þórr's aid in choosing his stead. De Vries also comments that the Old Norse word *stafr* (post/pillar/staff) must have had the meaning of "idol" very early, citing the Lithuanian *stabas*, "idol", which is a loan-word from the Germanic, and notes that the word is often used in kennings for men (*Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, I, pp. 374-75). Heads, human and otherwise, often appear at the top of stave-church pillars, and these have sometimes been thought to represent Heathen gods, particularly in the case of the one from Hegge Kirke, Valdres, which has one eye closed and its tongue hanging out. However, this particular figure dates from at least two hundred years after the bloody and culturally disruptive Norwegian conversion; the use of grotesque heads at the top of supporting pillars is well-attested in the southern stone models for many of the stave-church elements, and so it is not generally thought that these represent a genuine Heathen survival. It should be added that the Hegge head is of an extremely comical aspect, and appears rather to be winking as it makes a face than lacking an eye. It is likelier that the Heathen pillars (if *Eyrbyggja saga* is accurate here) were carved farther down the post where they could be seen in relatively dim lighting.

Other ornamentation is, of course, up to the individual, but cannot be too highly encouraged. In addition to the aesthetic impact, which gives much help to the awakening of the soul upon nearing and coming into the hof, well-done woodcarving can in itself be a means of bringing might forth into the Middle-Garth: knotwork, animal interlace, and scenes from holy tales all have their craft. The dragon-heads on the stave churches are fine examples of appropriate decoration. It is fairly unlikely that those particular heads were knowingly meant to frighten away unwanted beings, but they came from a tradition in which that was the original purpose of such ornamentation. Horse-heads may also be used for the same purpose, as may antlers, which still decorate Norwegian mountain-huts to this day, though their purpose has been largely forgotten. The antlers of elk (moose, to Americans) are particularly fitting in this regard, as they may be used to call forth the warding and hallowing might of the rune *elhaz*, which is strongly tied to the hallowed stead. If animal heads are used, it is best to speak with the land-wights of the stead to find out what will or will not cause offense; lacking a spae-person or trained vitki, this may be done by carrying out a blót and asking the wights to speak through the fall of lots. Although the dragon-prows on ships were known to cause offense to land-wights, the Oseberg burial included several smaller animal-head carvings which may have been carried about on posts during ritual processions, and thus are unlikely to have caused distress. Scenes

from heroic tales or our history are also appropriate: the best-known of Heathen stories, the tale of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani, was carved even on the doors of the Hylestad stave-church. The great hof at Uppsala, according to Adam of Bremen, was "totally adorned with gold", and the marginal notes of the same text mention a golden chain, which Sune Lindqvist (*Fornvännen* XVIII, 1949, 206 ff.) suggests may have been gilded woodcarving seen from a distance.

That tapestries with ritual meanings were used by our forebears is shown by the webs of the Oseberg find, which show what appears to be a ritual procession, in which the horn-helmed figure with his sword and spears or wands (who may be Óðinn himself or an Óðinn-warrior) appears at least twice. If it is needful to hide the hof's walls (if, for instance, they are built out of cinder-blocks or something tacky like that), tapestries are a good choice. The making of them serves as a good project for bringing the folk together as well, embroidery being a skill that everyone can practise. If this is for some reason not possible, good effects can be achieved by the use of acrylic paint on cloth. The only ill effect fabric hangings may have is to muffle the hof's resonance if too many are used.

Electric lighting should be kept to a minimum during rituals and meditational periods; if it must be used, such lighting should be diffused rather than direct. A certain degree of dimness strengthens the sight of the soul; it also strengthens the sense of oneness with our forebears. Clarity is found in the Sun's light, in the hallowed fields and groves; what we have indoors is what the architect Reima Pietila calls the dream of Nordic folk: a "cave of wood", and should therefore be neither bright as day nor dark as the forest at night: a sense of early dawn or late twilight ought to be sought, so that "the posts or staves rise like the trees of the forest towards the dark ceiling, and humans...are transported to a superior world." (*Norwegian Wood*, p. 8) The hof is too dark when a newspaper cannot be read inside; it is too bright when fine print can be read.

If possible, a Troth hof ought to have several facilities beyond its chief role as a place of worship. First among these is its function as a centre for teaching and the distribution of information. However, a Troth hof should not confine itself to teaching about the religion of our folk, but classes of various sorts (traditional crafts, music, dance, and other skills) should also be offered. The Troth hof shall, of course, need a fairly good library and access to Inter-Library Loan, as research is expected to take place under its blessing and with the guidance of its Elder.

Secondly, a hof ought, if possible, to have a sauna which can be used for meditation and purification prior to ritual and whenever else it is needed or wished for (see "Sauna").

As feasting takes place within the hof proper, large-scale cooking facilities are also important, not to mention the arrangement of legal permissions concerning alcoholic beverages. Ideally, a hof should be able to brew its own mead and ale, which requires licensing of the facility. If the brew is any good, "microbrewery" sales might even help to support the hof! If the brew is not sold, but given away by the Elder or other private person, state laws concerning home brewing may apply: in Texas, for instance, the head of a household may brew up to 200 gallons of beer or wine a year for household use. If alcohol is sold at feasts and the hof is built in a "dry" area, it may be necessary for the hof to register as a private club in which the members pay a nominal yearly fee (along the lines of \$1.00, receipt redeemable for a complimentary drink...) for the privilege of drinking there. The Troth does, of course, strongly encourage its members to investigate and obey all local laws.

Go forth and build!

Contributors

- KveldúlfR Hagan Gundarsson, from *The Troth Hof, Idunna V*, i, #18, Rhedmonth 1993, pp. 3-7, -- with special thanks to Dr. Willard A.E. Larson for making me aware of the reference to the hof in *Kjalnesinga saga*.

Chapter XXXII

Elders and Godwo/men

The goal of this programme is to give the wo/men who will be the leaders and teachers among the true folk a full background in the history, religion, and tradition of our ancestors. This deep understanding is needed to keep the folk of the Troth true to the ways of our elder kin and to make the Troth a living way of being in the world today.

In the course of time, we mean to set up a teaching-stead with a large book-hoard and a full range of teachers and materials - with sufficient success, even to become officially recognised as a body capable of granting degrees in Germanic studies. In the meantime, we shall still give the best teaching of which we are able, on a level comparable to that of a university.

Elder Training Programme

The Elder Training Programme consists of needful studies, which all who have chosen this way must undertake in some form, and chosen studies, with which you may work according to your interests and skills. As they appear here, the chosen studies are guidelines, not requirements, and may be changed freely.

All Elders must have credit for all the needful studies and for at least nine of the chosen studies. The needful studies are listed in the order in which they would ideally be taught to someone with no background. This order can, and probably will, be rearranged to suit your individual need, as you and the Elder with whom you do most of your work shall decide. In very exceptional cases when someone has shown great leadership and teaching abilities or done great deeds for the Troth, it is possible for him/her to be recognised as an Elder without having yet fulfilled all the needful studies, though she/he will still bear the responsibility for bringing her/himself up to standard. All Elders should be able to teach the basic course as set out here, as well as having their own areas of specialization.

For the academic studies, University courses shall be counted as corresponding credits. Previous independent work shall be credited if you can show written material (articles in a newsletter, private work, or whatever), or if, by personal speech or letters, you can show your Elder that you know the material well enough to be credited for it. Otherwise, you will be asked to write a paper (at least 8 pages, as much longer as you like) for each credit. The paper will be deemed Unready (given back with suggestions for rewriting), Fulfilled (one copy given back, one kept in the book-hoard of the Troth), or Useful (one copy kept in the book-hoard, one given back with the strong rede that you either submit it for publication in *Idunna* or, if it is very long, allow it to be given out as a Troth publication). In this way, the fruits of your work will do the whole Troth good.

The working studies will be deemed according to their needs and merits. For credit in the areas of skills and crafts, you must either perform or show your works at one of the greater Troth blessings for the delight of the folk. If you are not able to make it to a feast yourself, you may send items, photographs of your work, or taped performances for display.

You can either choose to follow the general programme as it is laid out here, or to work on a project which will include elements from most of the needful studies. If you wish to do such a project, or if you wish to carry out your work in relationship to a specific aspect of our tradition, the Elder who is best qualified to deal with supervising your subject will be asked to oversee your training. You may have another plan of your own altogether: so long as it seems to give you the needful breadth of learning, we will accept it and do our best to help you fulfill it. The Troth does not wish to make intellectual or spiritual clones: there are many ways within our tradition, all of which are needful for us to become a whole folk. You, as an Elder, will be expected to have your own views, your own goals, and your own way of furthering the troth of our ancestors.

The books listed below are not requirements, but suggestions. If you have others which fulfill the same purposes, or are more appropriate to your studies, then use those by all means. Most of these texts also appear on the recommended Hearth/Garth reading lists with full bibliography; that data is, thus, only supplied here for those which are not on the general lists. Books especially recommended are marked with a star.

Needful Studies

- I. Academic Studies
 - A. Mythological Studies
 - A. Norse Mythology
 - B. Common Germanic and Early Mythology

- B. Historical Studies
 - A. Early Germanic History (before 300 C.E.)
 - B. Migration Age History (300-793 C.E.)
 - C. Viking Age History (793-1100 C.E.)
 - D. Teutonic Revival History (1100 C.E. - today)
- C. Cultural Studies
 - A. Teutonic Culture
 - B. Indo-European Culture and Religion
 - C. General Survey of World Cultural History
 - D. Heroic Legends
 - E. Major Sagas
 - F. Folklore
 - G. Modern Conceptions and Misconceptions of the Teutonic Path
- D. Theoretical Studies
 - A. Methodologies and Critical Theory
 - B. Theological and Philosophical Principles
 - C. Basic Principles of Ritual, Mythology, and Religion
 - D. An Historical and Philosophical Evaluation of christianity

II. Working Studies:

These studies must be demonstrated practically. If distance and schedule make it impossible for the Warder of the Lore or an Elder to see what you are doing, the requirements can be proven as follows.

A. Blessing Work:

Write up a full description of a blessing done by yourself for your Garth and/or others (the planned ritual, its progression, how, if necessary, you dealt with changes in the plan). If possible, get a few of the folk who were there to write brief descriptions of the proceedings.

B. Hearth/Garth Organization:

Send a description of your Hearth/Garth's organization (officers and/or active performers in ritual) and of its functions, study meetings, and rituals. This description should be signed by a majority of the group's members.

C. Education Work Outside the Troth:

This can cover a wide spectrum. Qualificatory activities include, but are not limited to: writing a book or producing a magazine/newsletter which is distributed widely outside the Troth (at least 200 copies or subscriptions sold to non-members); at least three talks given in a non-Troth venue (the Unitarian Church, Pagan Student Alliance, or similar organizations), verified by a letter from the host; hosting a major event open to the community (such as the recent Freya Aswynn tour); and classes in Teutonic religion or magic held for non-Troth members. If you have done other work which you think qualifies in this area, present it to the Warder or Elder supervising you for discussion.

Chosen Studies

I. Academic Studies

A. Linguistic Studies:

at least for a reading knowledge, listed in rough order of priority:

A. Modern German:

(not absolutely needful, but not having at least a reading knowledge of it is a crippling lack in Germanic studies). Nearly all universities and community colleges have facilities for night classes and so forth in German. If yours does not, call the German department and ask them to recommend a private tutor.

B. Old Norse

C. Old English

D. Modern Scandinavian Dialects

E. Germanic Philology

B. Communications Studies:

- A. Rhetoric
- B. Public Relations
- C. Adult Education
- D. Children's Education
- C. Fellow Folks' Studies:
 - A. Celtic Myth and Religion
 - B. Celtic History and Culture
 - C. Finnish Studies
 - D. Lappish Studies
 - E. Steppes Folks' Studies
- II. Working Studies
 - A. Religious Workings:
 - A. Household
 - B. Site Construction
 - B. Traditional Skills:
 - A. Performance Arts
 - B. Word-Skills
 - C. Warrior-Skills
 - D. Traditional Dance
 - E. Traditional Games
 - C. Traditional Crafts:
 - A. Brewing
 - B. Woodworking
 - C. Spinning/Weaving
 - D. Traditional Design & Ornamentation
 - E. Metalworking
 - F. and anything else that seems to fit here
- III. Magical Studies
 - A. Runic Divination
 - B. Runic Working
 - C. Charm Spells and Folk Magic
 - D. Shamanic Theory
 - E. Seiðr Working
 - F. Spae-Working

Elder Training: Application Guidelines

The first set of questions must be answered in full. The second set of questions deals with materials which will have nothing to do with your acceptance into the programme, but may be helpful to the Elder with whom you work. These latter questions are of secondary importance, as well as being occasionally quite personal, and therefore may be answered or not as you choose. If you are writing out your answers by hand, please print, as I am very bad at reading other people's handwriting.

Send your completed letter of application to the Warder of the Lore, c/o the Troth.

- I.
 - A. Why do you wish to become an Elder?
 - B. What is your experience within Germanic heathendom?
 - C. How long have you been a member of the Troth?
 - D. What educational or other background do you have which applies to the general course of study outlined above? A description of your linguistic skills is especially important in helping us choose texts for your study.
 - E. Describe any special relationship you have to the god/esses or principles of the Troth.
 - F. Describe your plans for your Eldership.
 - G. What sort of resources do you have with regards to locating recommended texts (University library, local library, private collections, or other sources)?
- II.
 - A. Are you committed to a long-term relationship?
 - If so, what is the spiritual orientation of your Significant Other?

- B. How supportive of your Troth work can you expect your environment in general to be?
- C. Give a short description of your religious background and/or significant spiritual events in your life.
- D. Outline your educational and/or work history, and briefly describe your plans for the next five years or so.
- E. Anything else you think is relevant.

Godwo/man Training Programme

The purpose of the Godwo/man, or "Lay Clergy" training programme is to train and sanction a stable base of responsible individuals who are interested in working within our community in a ministerial capacity. Godwo/men are the ones who lead at the most local level, who hold the blessings for their folk, co-ordinate study groups, and do basic counseling and "ministering". Their role might be compared to that of career sergeants in the military: they are practical, concerned with dealing with the situations at hand and taking care of their own people, without spending a great deal of time on research or long-term strategy.

Godwo/men must be able to show a basic knowledge of the primary sources (the Eddas and sagas) and some familiarity with the most important secondary literature (Turville-Petre, H.R. Ellis-Davidson) - in other words, to have mastered most of the texts on the Hearth recommended reading list and the most needful and accessible of those on the Garth list. A Godwo/man should be able to give a solid introduction to the Northern religion and co-ordinate a study group. A Godwo/man must be able to work a blessing or other ritual competently and, at need, to show others how to do so as well. S/he should be able to express the root beliefs of the Troth clearly, though is not expected to engage in intense public debates on religion (unless s/he has a clear talent in that direction). Most important, however, is that s/he be a stable, mature person who is capable of caring for other true folk, willing to listen to their problems in times of crisis and at horrible hours of the night and help to the best of his/her ability, and able to perform basic counselling and refer those who need more help to the appropriate specialists. Since from time to time serious crises do occur among our folk (as in every community), it is thought very important that Godwo/men develop a comprehensive referral system focusing on qualified professional individuals within mainstream society. Such a referral system should include the names of doctors, lawyers, and counsellors, etc., who are sympathetic to the often unique needs of those in the community of the true.

Godwo/men are qualified to perform all the blessings of the Troth, including weddings and burials, and to lead Garths. They are expected to hold the greater blessings of the year, along with such other rites as seem needful, and to co-ordinate and encourage both study and practice within their own Garths.

Criteria

1. A Godwo/man must be over twenty-one, and really should have at least a high school degree or the equivalent thereof, although this is not absolutely needful.
2. A Godwo/man must be a member in good standing of the Troth.
3. The period of training/evaluation for a Godwo/man shall last at least a year. The purpose of this is not only to make sure of the candidate's command of the basic lore and ritual capability, but to observe his/her general stability and ability to work with the folk.
4. A Godwo/man must show an acceptable ground-level standard of Germanic lore, religion, runology (need not be a runic magician, but should be able to write and read runes and have a basic idea of their magical meanings), cosmology, history, and knowledge of the seasonal blessings.
5. Ideally, a Godwo/man candidate will be sponsored and/or trained by an Elder, though this is not needful. The Warder of the Lore shall do his best to put Godwo/man trainees into contact with Elders who may be able to train or guide them.

Role of Warder of the Lore in the Godwo/man Training Programme

1. The Warder of the Lore (or his designate) may exclude or expel individuals from the Godwo/man training programme if their behaviour is not in accord with the values and goals of the Troth.
2. The Warder of the Lore (or his designate) has final word on all disagreements arising from the Godwo/man training programme.
3. The Warder of the Lore is free to add to or expand upon the programme as it stands.
4. The Warder of the Lore must abide by the minimal criteria listed above.

Godwo/man's Conduct and Deeds

1. The Godwo/man must agree to act in the best interests of the Troth at all times.
2. The Godwo/man must present him/herself in such a manner as to bring respect and honour to the Troth and the

religion of the North.

3. The Godwo/man must hold the greater blessings of the year.
4. The Godwo/man must keep the local Steward aware of all his/her personal or group activities which pertain to the Troth.

Application

Applications should be sent to the Warder of the Lore c/o the Troth. Please type or print, as the Warder of the Lore is very bad at reading other people's handwriting.

1. Full legal name
2. Troth or magical name by which you would like to be known, if you have such.
3. Date of birth.
4. A brief description of why you want to enter the Godwo/man programme.
5. A short description of how and why you wish to serve the Gods and the Folk.
6. A general overview of your background in lore and practice.

Godwo/men can be trained and certified as capable by any Elder. Upon certification at this level, the Godwo/man is then recommended to the High Rede, which, unless there is serious reason to doubt his/her qualifications or psychological state, will promptly charter her/him as an official Godwo/man of the Troth.

Contributors

The original Elder Training Programme was developed by Edred Thorsson, first Warden of the Lore. The current one is based on the original, somewhat revised by Edred's successor KveldúlfR Gundarsson.

The Godwo/man Training Programme was largely developed by Magnus Þórfinnson, Hawkmoon, and KveldúlfR, with helpful comments from Freya Aswynn.

Chapter XXXIII

Under the Law: Rights, Choices, and Dangers

Three things must be made clear at the outset of this discussion. First, to the extent it treats specifics, it is concerned with the law of the United States, with which its author has some familiarity. The Troth has members in a number of other countries, including quite a few in Canada. Although there are similarities, particularly among the laws of English-speaking countries, there are enough differences so that the reader outside the U.S. should not place too much reliance on what is written here in dealing with practical exigencies. Second, few statements concerning the law have contained more truth than the line from the film, *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome*, "You take your chances with the law." There are a number of rights, substantive and procedural, that belong to us in theory and on paper. In practise, some of these are difficult or impossible to exercise, and others of them cost a great deal to exercise, in money and in other ways. Everything depends upon the circumstances. And finally, in dealing with the legal system, there is no substitute for a good lawyer. Sometimes the cost of one is prohibitive, but if it is not, and there is any question in your mind as to the need for "professional help", permit me this word of advice: in most cases, you will not get nearly as far with a brave smile and an honest heart as you will with a brave smile, an honest heart, and a competent attorney.

Organization and Tax Status

The two matters of the organizational structure of local groups and tax-exempt status are often confused. Though they are somewhat related - tax-exempt status often depends upon provisions within the organizational documents - they are, in fact, quite separate, and arranging one in a certain way does not necessarily guarantee results with respect to the other. To deal with organizations first, a group is, by definition, either a corporation or an "unincorporated association." A corporation is a creature of statutory law, and to form one, one must follow exactly the requirements of the statutes governing corporations. These statutes are different in each state. An unincorporated organization is every group that is not a corporation. The law in some states also recognises the "common law church", which in many ways functions as a corporation. This concept works much better with entities already acknowledged by the System as churches, such as the Roman Catholic Church, since recognition as a common law church may depend upon a number of factors that one would not guess without reading case-law on the subject. Do not rely upon your status as an unincorporated "church" without some research on your state's law concerning the subject.

In most states, the principal legal benefit of incorporation lies in the limitation of liability to the assets of the corporation. If your local unincorporated Garth is sued for, say, back rent or someone's broken foot suffered in an unfortunate accident at last Walpurgisnacht's naked fire jump, at least the board of directors, and possibly the entire membership could end up paying out of their own individual pockets. If the Garth were incorporated, only the Garth treasury and the assets of those specifically incurring liability - someone who contractually obligated him/herself individually, or the individual who may have negligently constructed the fire pit too wide - are at risk. Some, but by no means all, states may condition tax exemptions upon incorporation, although other factors, discussed below, limit the state's power to do so. Most, if not all, states distinguish between non-profit and for-profit corporations, and we are talking here about the former, but being a non-profit corporation does not necessarily free a group from its obligations to pay taxes on its income and real property. Some states also limit the rights of unincorporated associations to enter into contracts, own real property (i.e., land), or appear in court under their own names, requiring individual officers or directors individually to perform these functions. Often, unincorporated associations encounter more difficulty in opening bank accounts, as well.

Another, and perhaps more important, benefit of incorporation is the appearance and sense of legitimacy that arises when Runester Garth becomes Runester Garth, Inc. The step of incorporation tells the world - because your Articles of Incorporation will become public record and anyone will be able to look them up - that your group exists as an entity in and of itself, and intends to continue as such. It forces your group to work out its exact organizational structure and, most important, the allocation of responsibility within the group. Incorporation is often a step that infuses a group with a new sense of the seriousness and commitment inherent in what the group is undertaking. It can also help lead to the realization that the group's interests are important and worthy of consideration independent and apart from the interests of the individuals making up the group. This realization is important if the group is to achieve growth and stability in the long term.

Incorporation can be, however, complicated, time consuming, and expensive. Organizational documents must be drafted in accordance with state law, they must be filed with the appropriate agency, periodic reports and updates must often be made, and the documents must sometimes be published in the newspaper or posted somewhere. If the state's requirements are not followed, your corporate status may be void without your knowing it. In addition, if your state imposes continuing requirements, such as periodic directors' meetings with minutes kept, you must adhere to them or risk losing your corporate status. Thus, the decision to incorporate should be made neither blithely nor blindly; your group should have

a clear idea what it is and where it wants to go before formalizing its legal status.

U.S. tax law permits a variety of organizational tax exemptions. The ability of a religious group to escape taxation does not, however, depend on the internal revenue code, but rather, the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." The power to tax is also the power to control or even destroy; therefore, the government cannot be given full taxing power over bona fide religious groups and churches, to the extent their activities remain within the scope of the free exercise of religion. The consequence of this state of affairs is that, theoretically, any bona fide religious group is automatically tax exempt, and donations to it are tax deductible. In practise, this is modified by the tax code, which in general provides that, if the Internal Revenue Service says that you owe them taxes, then you owe them taxes unless and until the highest court they choose to drag you through, often the U.S. Supreme Court, says that you do not owe them taxes.

Insofar as tax exemptions for religious groups are concerned, there are two possible courses of action: (1) engage in solely religious activities, and rely on your First Amendment right freely to exercise your religion to keep the I.R.S. off your back, or (2) obtain what is called a "letter ruling" from the I.R.S., stating that you are, indeed, a tax-exempt religious organization. The obvious advantage of a letter ruling is that, as long as your group retains the same organizational structure and does not engage in prohibited activities, such as political lobbying, the organization can rely on its exempt status, and contributors to it can deduct contributions to it from their taxable income, without worrying about whether it is "really" tax-exempt or not. Under some circumstances, a church or religious organization can even engage in some quasi-commercial activities, such as operating a book store, without losing its exempt status, although properly setting up such operations without endangering a group's tax exemption can be tricky, and consulting a good tax accountant or attorney is highly recommended. A tax-exempt religious organization, such as the Troth, can also charter affiliate groups which can then enjoy the parent organization's tax status, although to obtain a letter ruling recognising such affiliates entails a separate procedure, more complicated and costly than simply obtaining a ruling for a single organization.

A group need not be incorporated to apply for federal tax-exempt status, or rather, a letter ruling recognising such status. A state may require that groups seeking exemption from state taxes incorporate, but applying such a requirement to churches would be an unconstitutional infringement on the First Amendment. It may be possible in some states, on the other hand, to obtain an exemption by incorporating as a non-profit corporation, without receiving a letter ruling, and hence the right to rely on a federal exemption without hassles, from the I.R.S. In practise, however, it is safer to both incorporate and obtain a letter ruling. Incorporation makes it easier to convince the I.R.S. that a group is properly organized and does not engage in non-exempt activities, because the group's organizational structure is a matter of public record and legal enforceability. Groups interested in obtaining a letter ruling should contact their local I.R.S. office for detailed instructions. The primary requirements, however, are that the group exist primarily for religious purposes, and that no funds, even in the event the group dissolves, may be used to profit individuals, other than as reasonable wages.

Protection Under the Law

The law, including the "supreme law of the land", the U.S. Constitution and its amendments, contains a number of protections for the sincere practitioner of any religion, including Ásatrú. Often, however, one must assert oneself against the apparent indifference, if not outright hostility, of "the System" to benefit from these protections. It also helps to know that more than one option is generally available to achieve a desired result, and a creative flexibility is often more useful than a berserker rage.

The most basic of these legal protections is the right to go about one's lawful business without being subjected to criminal activity. In situations involving actual or potential confrontations with others, Heathens, like anyone else, may complain if someone does something illegal to injure them in any way. This can include aggressive attempts by others to interfere with your religious activities. Besides arson and murder one, illegal activity encompasses remaining on your private (either owned or rented) property after being asked to leave, disorderly conduct, threatening or intimidating, telephone harassment, assault (which does not necessarily require that one be physically touched, much less punched in the nose), and a host of other relatively petty offences. In most cases, the one and only step that will set the wheels of justice in motion is to call the police. Telling someone that you could call the police, or threatening to call the police, will usually accomplish very little, and may be positively dangerous. If you are covered (see the following paragraph), and someone is breaking the law to your annoyance, then you have the right to the protection of the Polizei, regardless of whether you were just walking down the street or whether you were in the middle of a Thor's blót.

Do remember, on the other hand, that the police are not your buddies. Most police achieve promotion and/or are looked on with favour by their supervisors by, among other things, arresting people. They do not overlook this fact of their professional lives merely because you, rather than someone else, called them. Do not, for example, call the police if you are drinking mead in a public park without the necessary papers, or if your ceremonial spear does not happen to be fully legal in your state. Also remember that if you were disorderly or obnoxious to the point where someone finally took a swipe at you, you may also have violated a stray statute or two, and police can and do arrest or cite both sides to a disagreement. In such cases, if you are involved in a potential confrontation, a strategic retreat is usually the best course of action, since, if you do not summon the gendarmes, someone else might. On the other hand, if you are covered and do make the call, the correct

answer to the question, "Do you want to press charges?" or "Will you be willing to testify in court?" is *always* "Yes!" You can always work something out later, but you will often only have one good chance to get the System to work for you, and that is the first time the situation is brought to its attention.

If you decide that circumstances do not warrant conjuring the thin blue line, there are other possibilities open to you through the civil (as opposed to criminal) wing of the judicial system. Many states have procedures whereby injunctions against harassing behavior can be obtained. An injunction is an order of the court that one or more specified people are prohibited from doing one or more specified things. Disobeying an injunction can lead either to criminal charges or to a finding of contempt of court, which can include jail time. Your state probably has lower-level courts, such as municipal or justice of the peace courts, where this kind of action can be brought without large filing fees, long waits, and complex procedures requiring a lawyer. In addition, if someone has caused you to be out money, say, by damaging your property or causing you to lose your job through slanderous (i.e., untrue and malicious) remarks to your employer, or if someone wrongfully upsets you to the point where your health is affected, you may, and probably do, have a "cause of action", meaning you can sue the bastards. Here again, if your damages are not overly large but you want to make sure the point is made, lower courts often allow you to derive a certain amount of satisfaction on a cost-effective basis.

It sometimes happens, however, that local authorities are not inclined to perform their jobs as they are supposed to when the victim of improper behavior is a member of an unpopular minority, such as, for example, Heathens. You should not, of course, assume that this will be the case *before* you make a good-faith attempt to enlist their aid, since not fully exhausting your direct remedies will undercut any complaint you might later wish to raise about your treatment at the hands of the locals. Nonetheless, if you have been wronged in the practice of your religion, you have two potent weapons under U.S. civil rights law. First, if two or more people conspire to deprive you of your rights because of your religion (or, for that matter, because of your race or sex), or if only one person does so "under color of law" (i.e., in some official, government capacity, including everyone from the local policeman to the governor), they are in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and you can file a complaint. Generally, the places to complain are the nearest U.S. Attorney's Office and/or the nearest F.B.I. office. Usually, a visit from the F.B.I. causes a person to think twice about screwing with your constitutional rights. Second, the same conditions that allow you to file a complaint with the F.B.I. also allow you to file a civil lawsuit for damages, including punitive damages, in federal court. Federal judges are appointed for life, and they do not need to concern themselves with the political agendas of pressure groups, such as the Christian right. The federal courts are an important reason why blacks today do not have to drink at separate water fountains and sit in the backs of buses, and they can also be the reason why your Hearth does not have to be held hostage by the local fundie sheriff, or you do not have to put up with employment discrimination because of your religion. If the situation is outrageous enough, the American Civil Liberties Union may even foot the bill for you. Many states also have equivalents of federal civil rights laws, and using them may be less expensive. In the event of discrimination or harassment in connection with your employment, you may also have remedies available through complaining to the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) or the state equivalent. Such complaints often involve a long wait, but have the advantage of costing you virtually nothing.

All of the above remedies involve confronting the source of your difficulties head on, and this is usually what the legal system requires. In one area, however, this approach is not universally a good idea, and that area is child custody. As many Heathen and other Pagan parents have discovered, the law places a great, probably an inordinate, amount of arbitrary authority over people's children in the hands of not-overly-educated and sometimes outright bigoted child welfare workers. While you do have a recognised fundamental right to raise your own children, the government also has the right to protect your children from what it regards as your potentially harmful practices, including the practice of your religion. When you realize that some parents have, under the authority of their religions, withheld medical care from their seriously ill children, or instructed their children to handle poisonous snakes, you can understand why this is so. On the other hand, this authority can be, and frequently has been, abused by pious folk hopped up on the pathetic disinformation turned out in enormous quantity by the "satanic ritual abuse" industry, in which the modern equivalent of snake oil salesmen travel the country lecturing police departments, child protective agencies, and whomever else will listen to them on the deadly danger of various practices and symbols, such as the swastika and the Thor's hammer ("an upside-down cross"). In a more prosaic setting, it sometimes occurs that a Pagan parent will lose custody of his or her child in a divorce action, based largely on the dramatic effect of courtroom revelations of his or her secret "cult" practices, or, more often, the threat of such tactics from the more mainstream spouse's lawyer.

In most situations involving a Heathen parent, his or her child, and the System, it will not be enough bravely to stand on one's constitutional rights in a confrontational manner. It is absolutely essential in any such dealing with the authorities to remain calm, in control, and rational, and to keep your long-term desire to raise your own child in the forefront of your mind, rather than allow emotional impulses to give possible enemies the excuse they need to take your child away from you. Any outbursts, threats, violence, or bizarre behavior will probably make its way into a report or court document, and will *never* be forgotten in any subsequent proceeding. In such cases, it is helpful to remember Óðinn the Wanderer, who takes whatever shape is necessary to accomplish his purpose. Become absolutely as reasonable, and even main-stream, as you possibly can. Do not confront police, case-workers, social workers, psychologists, commissioners, judges, or even opposing attorneys, but rather, concentrate on making the best case possible for leaving your child with you.

Frequently, there will be a stage of the proceedings at which you will have your shot at vindication, but you must wait for it and you must *earn* it.

Often enough, the law is a battlefield in somewhat different guise and with somewhat less drastic consequences. Although this prospect may seem unfair and intimidating, it is nonetheless the product of our own heritage. Ancient Germanic law was like that, and the tradition has continued without break in the Anglo-Saxon countries. Our faith, more than most, prepares us to face legal struggles and to recognise them for what they are. Our legal system, more than most, recognises the value of the strong and free individual in society, and tends, ultimately, toward the protection of that individual. Ásatrú, and each Ásatrúar, can benefit enormously through the informed and judicious use of that legal system, but to obtain those benefits, we must act with the courage and wisdom that our gods have taught us.

Written by:

- William Bainbridge, Elder, Wordsmith of the Troth

Section 5

Living True: How the Troth Is Built

Chapter XXXIV

Ways of Worship

*Veiztu hvé rista skal, veiztu hvé ráða skal?
Veiztu, hvé fá skal, veiztu hvé freista skal?*

*Veiztu, hvé biðja skal, veiztu, hvé blóta skal?
Veiztu, hvé senda skal, veiztu, hvé sóa skal?*

Among the best-known stanzas from the *Hávamál* is the one quoted above, which summarizes the skills required for runecraft and religion. The first two verses, in which the High One refers to inscribing, reading, colouring, and interpreting the runes, are often quoted. The second pair of lines are less familiar, but the verbs used contain the essence of Germanic religious practice. The first one, *biðja*, bears a family relationship to the English "bid" and is usually translated as "ask". According to Grimm (*Teutonic Mythology*), the term has the implication of supplication. The second, *blóta*, refers to the sacrifice in which the blood was used to bless the people and the meat eaten after it had been dedicated to the gods. The third, *senda*, can be translated as "send", with the implication that it involves getting the message to the gods, while the fourth, *sóa*, means to make an offering that is in some sense "squandered", perhaps one which is destroyed or left to the elements rather than being shared. Together they summarize the principal ways in which the people of the North worshipped their gods.

The word "worship" comes from the Old English "weorðscipe", meaning to honour or give worth to something. Worshipping the gods can involve honouring them with prayer and praise, and pleasing them with worthy offerings. To worship the Northern gods today, we must go beyond the meanings other religions have given those words to their origins, and reinterpret them in a way that will be in harmony with ancient practice as well as meeting modern needs. If we wish to enjoy the presence and the friendship of the gods, we must know how to give them what they want from us and how to ask them for what we need.

Prayer

Prayer refers to the words and acts involved in communicating with the gods. The available information seems to suggest that the ancient Germanic peoples addressed their gods in a variety of ways. Surviving examples include the prayer of Sigdrifa, skaldic prayers to Þórr, prayers incorporated in Anglo-Saxon spells, and the Rus merchant's prayer as reported by Ibn Fadlan (quoted in Tryckare, p. 138).

Perhaps the most beautiful are the words with which the newly awakened valkyrie Sigdrifa (Brunhild) greets Sigurd.

Hail to thee Day, hail, ye Day's sons;
Hail Night and daughter of Night,
with blithe eyes look on both of us,
and grant to those sitting here victory!

Hail Æsir, hail Ásynjur!
Hail Earth that givest to all!
Goodly spells and speech bespeak we from you,

and healing hands in this life!

Sigrdrífumál 2-3

The prayer consists of salutations and requests. Hailing the powers identifies them, attracts their attention, and honours them. In this prayer, Sigdrifa calls upon powers of Nature - Day, Night, Earth - and the gods and goddesses as a group. Her requests are for favour and success in general, and in particular for skill in magic and communication.

Prayers to Þórr by such skalds as Vetrliði Sumarliðason and Þórbjörn díarskáld are preserved mostly in fragments quoted by Snorri in the *Skáldskaparmál* for the sake of the information they contain. A typical example (tr. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion*, p. 85) goes -

You smashed the limbs of Leikn,
you bashed Þrivaldi;
you knocked down Starkaðr;
you trod Gjalp dead under foot.

John Lindow compares these lines to others from Indo-European tradition, in which prayer "...included exactly the two components of praise of the deity, not infrequently in the second person, followed by a request to the deity" ("Addressing Thor", p. 132). He further speculates that the remainder of the prayer (not quoted by Snorri), "...called on Þórr to slay the missionaries Þangbrandr and Guðleifr and implicitly assigned them to the category of giants in the mythological system..." (p. 133).

A modern example is -

Redbeard, firebeard, bringer of lightning,
Lifegiving stormlord are you, lover of feasting,
Father of freedom, fighter most doughty,
Donar, defender, dearly we need thee,
Hear us, hero, hasten to help us,
Gifts thy great goats gallop to bring.

A formula for such a prayer could be stated as:

Hail (best-known name), (descriptive epithet),
Child of (parent), lover of (spouse),
You who dwell in (name of hall),
You who (summarize several relevant deeds)
With your (characteristic tool or weapon)
Come swiftly to aid me
As I (summarize problem being addressed).

A similar structure is found in some of the spells included in G. Storms' *Anglo-Saxon Magic*. Deities can be invoked through chanted incremental repetitions of their names, references to attributes and epithets, and sympathetically, by reference to relevant episodes from their mythology. This latter might be called the "epic formula", in which the summary of the deity's success in a similar situation is followed by an affirmation that things will happen as they did then. Perhaps the most famous pagan example is the Old High German Second Merseberg Charm (see "Balder" for translation). Here is an example of a christian Icelandic spell, repaganized in parentheses -

May bleeding be stanchd for those who bleed;
blood flowed down from God's cross.
(*blood flowed down from the worldtree*).
The Almighty (*Alfather*) endures fear,
from wounds tried sorely.

Stand in glory, even as in gore, that the Son of God (*High One*) may hear of it. The spirit and bleeding veins - s/he finds bliss who is released from this.

May bleeding be stanchd -

bleed neither without nor within.
With these words St. John the Apostle
stanching the blood on the lips of our Lord
(*Odin stanching the blood when he was gashed by the spear*).

A stone called Surtur stands in the temple. There lie nine vipers. They shall neither wake nor sleep before this blood is stanching. Let this blood be stanching in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost (In the name of Odin), etc. (Kvideland & Sehmsdorf, *Folk Belief*, 28.6)

The formula for this kind of prayer/spell might be expressed thusly -

- Summary of myth, as for instance the binding of the wolf Fenrir by the gods
- Statement of the action taken in terms which can apply to both the problem in the myth and the current difficulty, as for instance the forces of conflict and destruction, in form of an affirmation e.g. "The fetter is fast, and Fenrir bound!"

There is also evidence for prayer in the form of a simple request. When the Rus merchant brought his offerings to the god-posts he said -

Oh my lord, I have come a long way with so many slave-girls and so many sable furs (and then he mentions all the goods he has with him). Now I come to you with these offerings...I want you to send me a merchant who has lots of dinars and dirhems and will buy on my terms without being difficult.

The traditional position for prayer has been the subject of some discussion in the neo-Norse community. Most Ásatrúar favour an upright stance with arms lifted in salutation (the "Elhaz" stöðr), feeling that this position is most in keeping with characteristic Viking independence. Although this is a view with which I (Diana Paxson) find myself in sympathy, most of the evidence seems to suggest that at least at times the actual practice was otherwise.

In his chapter on Worship (vol. I: III) Grimm analyzes the etymologies of several relevant terms, beginning with their earliest known Gothic forms. Among them are *inveita*, which seems to be an act of adoration involving some kind of inclination of the body, although it is not clear whether this meant bowing the head or bending the knee. He cites a number of references in support of this idea, including one in the Saga of St. Olaf in which men *fell til iarðar fyrir likneski* (fell to earth before the likeness) of Þórr (*Fornm. sög.* 2, 108). The Langobards were said to have bowed their knees before a goat's head. The Rus traders observed by ibn Fadlan on the lower Dnieper prostrated themselves to the god posts they had set up by the riverside. A variation of this may have been the uncovering of the head to show honour (in contrast with the Roman and Jewish practice of covering the head when engaged in religious activity), preserved in the modern rule of etiquette which requires men to remove their hats in church (it should be noted that in the mediæval Church, as among the ancient Goths, only the chief priests worshipped with heads covered [Grimm, I:32]).

Even the Old Norwegian Rune Poem is suggestive - *SÓL er landa ljóme; lúti ek helgum dóme* (Sun is the light of the lands; I bow to the holy doom). The verb here, "lúta" means "to lout down", to bow, as when Thomas the Rhymer met the Queen of Faerie and "louted down upon one knee". One form of prayer may have involved standing with upraised arms in the form of the *Elhaz* rune, but apparently at times the Germanic peoples also bowed down in adoration, especially, it would appear, in honouring the sun.

A line in the *Sólarljóð* (41) which states "henni ek laut hínzta sinni, alda-heimi í" - "I louted to her (the Sun) for the last time in life's world", meaning that it was the last day of the speaker's life, is even more indicative. "Bowing to the holy doom", therefore, is not necessarily an expression either of Norse fatalism or christian influence, but could be a reference to a daily ritual of alignment with the forces that govern the fate of all beings as represented by the daily journey of the sun (a rite for which is given in this book under "Small Rites" - KHG).

Bowing to the east to hail the rising sun is mentioned in the *Landnámabók* I:9. The references from Norse literature cited above refer to the practice of saluting the rising sun, and several Anglo-Saxon charms direct the user to face sunward, or move deosil. Grimm, on the other hand, cites numerous references in favour of facing North for worship, a view supported by the mediæval christian prejudice against that direction.

Offerings

Vápnom oc váðom skolo vinir gleðiaz,
þat er á síalfom sýnst;
viðrgefendr oc endrgefendr erost lengst vinir,
ef þat bíðr at verða vel.

Vin sínom scal maðr vinr vera,
oc gialda giöf við giöf..."

- *Hávamál* 41-2

"Betra er óbeðit, enn sé ofblótið,
ey sér til gildis giöf;
betra er ósent, enn sé ofsóit."

- *Hávamál* 145

Prayer and praise, whether uttered standing or bowed down, were only part of Heathen worship. The giving of gifts has always been one of the strongest bonds between humans and the god/esses. In his *Germania*, Tacitus wrote of the mass sacrifices made by the Germanic tribes in thanks for battle-victories, a description held up by archaeological discoveries such as the Hjortspring and Illerup finds; much later, the Old Norse term for someone who was close to the god/esses was "blótmaðr mikill", "a great sacrifice-person", and the sacrifices at Old Uppsala were known even in christian lands. Many of the most valuable and enlightening treasures of the Germanic archaeological records, such as the Gundestrup cauldron, the Trondelev sun-wagon, and the lur-horns of the Bronze Age, were preserved by being sunk into peat bogs as sacrificial gifts for the god/esses...as were the slain corpses of Tollund Man and many others. The harvest-sacrifices - the last apple on the tree for Freyja, the last sheaf in the field for Wodan - lived on in the ways of the folk long after the tales of the god/esses had been forgotten. So what does this mean for those who seek to turn back to the ways of our forebears? Are we, in fact bound, to slay animals as gifts to our god/esses in the old ways?

The first point that must be thought on is the fact that our earlier kinfolk did make gifts to the god/esses in this way, and thought of it as one of the chief parts of troth. Whatever we do, we cannot condemn the sacrifice of living beings out of hand as "immoral" without harming our understanding of our elder troth. Our forebears did these things for good reason, in answer to the needs of their world; they were neither fools nor bloodthirsty wasters of life.

At the same time, we cannot deny that the world has changed in the last thousand years. By and large, it is the understanding of the Troth that our task is not to create an historical reconstruction of the religion precisely as it was practised in Iceland in 999 C.E. - or England at the time of the Saxon invasion - or Germania in the time of Hermann the Cheruscan. Rather, we seek to bring the elder troth forward - to shape it as it should have grown through these past thousand years of sleep. To understand how this may be done while keeping our ways true to those of our earlier kin, we must consider the context of each of their deeds and the need which gave birth to them; and thus with the question of sacrifice.

Animals were by no means the only offerings. The archaeological record shows that the sacrifice of fine goods was practised in Scandinavia from the Stone Age through the Viking Age. Necklaces of amber too large for humans to wear; golden vessels; fine bronzework; ships and weapons; long braids of hair: whatever was dearest to our forebears, they shared it with the god/esses, sinking their treasures into hallowed waters. Grains, fruits, and flowers might be sacrificed (especially the first fruits of the harvest), alcoholic drink was poured out in libation, hair cut from the forelock. Even a vow could be considered an offering. This manner of gift-giving should raise no fears in even the faintest of hearts: as the god/esses share their might and good with us, so we give back tokens of our own riches and victories. Folk customs, too, have kept this great root of troth alive. With a few exceptions, such as the Yule-tide boar still celebrated in Scandinavian marzipan images and in the English "Boar's Head Carol", the old blood-sacrifices were suppressed under christianity. However, the less offensive offerings of leafy branches, garlands of flowers, and sheaves of grain continued to be made, and the drinking of memory ale, the *minni-öl*, or *sumbel*, survives to this day in the custom of drinking toasts at banquets. Even when offerings to the old gods were forbidden, folk continued to put out alcohol, milk, or broth for the house-spirits. One sees a survival of this custom in the milk and cookies that are set out for Santa Claus.

As well as sinking gifts to the god/esses, our forebears also hung them on trees or burned them. One practice which has become more common among true folk today is the burning of small model Viking ships at Ostara or Midsummer; these ships often bear messages for the god/esses written in runes on small strips of paper. The custom of decorating the Yule tree is likely to hark back to the elder days when sacrifices were hung up in this way. All of these can easily be done now, though if a gift is to be burned, of course, you have to make sure that the fire is suitable for burning it safely.

Less comfortable to most folk of today is our forebears' practice of sacrificing living things. The most common form of this was the killing of cattle at Winternights - the ordinary slaughtering season. The blood was sprinkled on the harrow and over the folk; but the meat was eaten. While the rite of sacrifice fulfilled two spiritual goals - the strengthening of the bonds between god/esses and humans and the hallowing of the beast which had given its life to feed the folk - the reason for the killing was practical. The available fodder could only feed so many beasts; the cattle were often so weak at winter's end that they had to be carried out to the pastures. Surplus animals had no chance of survival, and would have eaten the food that the others needed to stay alive; therefore, they had to be killed for meat in the fall. The Yule boar, likewise,

replaced the stores of food which were eaten at the Yule feast. Sacrifices were also made at celebratory feasts, to mark great occasions, such as weddings, funerals, or king-makings, to gain the favour of the gods for planned undertakings, or to placate them in times of disaster. Most of these cases involved large gatherings where the folk had to be fed and, therefore, animals slain to feed them.

More rarely, an animal would be given to a god or goddess for a specific purpose, as in *Víga-Glúms saga* where Þórkell, asking Freyr for revenge on Víga-Glúmr, "went...to Freyr's hof and led an old ox there...and the ox was so moved (by Þórkell's prayer to Freyr) that he bellowed and fell down dead, and it seemed to Þórkell that it had gone well, and he was now higher of hugr, for it seemed to him that his prayer had been received". It is not clear that Þórkell had meant to slay the ox: it might have been given as a temple beast, similar to the many other cattle treated with particular reverence in Norse literature and to the horse Freyfaxi, whom Hrafnkell Freysgoði shared equally with Freyr, "vin sínum" (his friend), and concerning whom he "swore this oath, that he should be the bane of any man, who should ride him against his will". The inviolability of creatures dwelling in holy places is also mentioned in connection with Fosite's holy island (see below) and the mountain Helgafell (*Eyrbyggja saga*, ch.IV). Grønbech mentions that "the blot-beast (the living, but hallowed creature - KHG) is man's way of raising himself up beyond his limitations. To blote is to increase qualities to the extraordinary, nay to the divine"; and from this spring the many stories in the later sagas about men who trusted in sacred cows and such: the hallowed animal was filled with the might of the gods (II, pp. 201-5). This form of gift-giving may be the easiest in modern times (I can easily see a host of Ása-cats dedicated to Freyja and treated with fitting reverence and love, for example).

When an animal was sacrificed, its head, heart, and hide would be hung up as an offering, its blood poured over the *hørg* and sprinkled on the people and the shrine, and its meat boiled and eaten in the communal feast. Blood-bowls and sprinklers were part of the furniture of a hof. Only healthy, perfect animals must be offered, garlanded with flowers and aromatic herbs. The boar was especially sacred to the Vanir; horses seem to have been the most valued sacrifice, and it is possible that their meat was eaten only on sacred occasions. White or black bulls, rams, and he-goats were also preferred, especially those which had never been used for labour. It is my (Diana Paxson's) speculation that the hare was sacred to Eostara and eaten only at her festival. Participation in such feasts was both the privilege and condition of membership in the tribe or the community.

In these times, few of us live on farms or have to kill our own meat, and thus the general emphasis on animal sacrifice can be understood to have shrunk accordingly. The spiritual needs, however, remain: the giving of the holy gift and the honouring of the animals who die to feed us throughout the year. Those who do not raise or slaughter food animals can answer this need by the making of bread-loaves in the shape of cattle, horses, or swine, and "slaughtering" them during the rites. However, it should never be forgotten that the bread beast represents real lives, which all who eat meat are ultimately responsible for ending; and its slaughter represents the dedication of those lives and the strength the eaters gain from them to the god/esses.

As the Troth grows, it may in the course of time prove to be financially practical for those hofs or garths which put on large feasts in rural area to learn how to butcher their own meat (being careful, of course, to fulfill whatever requirements of training and licensing are set out by local law); and should this come to pass, the hallowing of those beasts' lives will be both needful and good.

The question of human sacrifice is a much thornier one. Killing without government sanction is unquestionably illegal; in addition to which, the least whiff of a religion's possible willingness to commit human sacrifice is more likely than anything to cause a hysterical public reaction against it. At the same time, we cannot deny the deeds of our ancestors because some aspects of their troth are not generally acceptable today. We must, then, look at why and when they practised human sacrifice, and whether any of these circumstances could ever apply today.

Human sacrifice among the Germanic peoples was relatively rare, and usually took place in clearly defined situations, which fall into four categories: war, law, holy kingship, and death-rites.

The best-documented, and apparently most common of these, was sacrifice connected with battle. This kind of sacrifice was further divided into (1) the hallowing of the slain to Óðinn before the battle, and (2) the sacrifice of prisoners in thanks for victory, as described in Tacitus. The first of these presents no problem: there is no reason why a soldier today should not, as King Harald did, "promise all the souls he ejected from their bodies...to Óðinn." Such a hallowing, carried out before the battle, should turn the warrior's awareness to the awesome and terrible nature of the killing s/he expects to carry out, and call forth Wodan's aid in it. The sacrifice of prisoners, like the Winternights slaughter, was probably originally practical, not bloodthirsty: men taken in battle were too dangerous to keep as slaves and could not be turned loose; therefore, our forebears dedicated their foes to Wodan before the fight, knowing that they would have to kill them all in any case. Again, what we see here is a hallowing of a necessary slaying, rather than slaying for a holy reason.

The death penalty, and thus sacrifice for reasons of law, were relatively rare, though the former was by no means unknown among the Germanic folks. The paying of weregild or various degrees of outlawry were the normal punishments for lawbreaking. In cases of murder, the dead person's kin might take revenge, and sometimes revenge-killing was carried out as a sacrifice, as revenge was considered a holy act (vg. Stephen Flowers' "Sigurðr: Rebirth and Initiation") - though it should be noted that most of the examples here come from legendary hero-tales. Alcuin's *Vita Willibrordi* describes how Willibrord broke the holiness of Fosite's island by baptizing people in the hallowed spring and slaying animals who were

protected by the god's frith; the punishment for this was determined by lots, and one of Willibrord's followers duly killed. However, Ström (*Sacral Origins of the Germanic Death-Penalty*), citing this and other cases where the violation of holy places or objects was punished by death, is careful to note that the death penalty for sacrilege, so far as our materials show, neither bore a sacral character, nor constituted a sacrifice to the wrathful divinity. *Kristni saga* says that "heiðingar blóta hinum verstum mönnum", Heathens sacrifice the worst men, and parallel references in *Landnámabók* and *Eyrbyggja saga* speak of criminals being given to Þórr by breaking on a rock. Ström rejects the historical accuracy of these descriptions, but accepts the existence of a general understanding that, when community sacrifices were required, the first victims chosen were criminals, or in the absence of criminals, slaves. Such community sacrifices, however, were wholly a function of the existence of a social system in which legal authority and sacral authority were most often vested in the same person, and very often thought of as one and the same. No religious groups today, of course, have any power over juridical process; thus for the Troth to hold such sacrifices of its own volition is impossible. However, two possibilities exist for sacralizing of the death penalty. In cases where true folk believe that justice is being done by the execution of a criminal, it would be fitting to hold a blót to Tiw, Skaði, and Váli at the time of the condemned wo/man's death. Also, if a true wo/man should be condemned to death, that person might choose to ask for a Troth Elder as chaplain and to be ritually hallowed as a gift to the god/esses before execution.

The third type of Germanic human sacrifice, the killing of the holy king, is of course dependent on the institution of the holy kingship. This institution had various forms, the best documented of which are the Froði-kingship (a king tied to his land, a defender in war rather than an aggressor, best known for peace, fruitfulness, and good administration) and the Wodan-kingship, an extension of the role of *drighthen* (leader of the warband), where the god's blessings are firstly shown in battle-victory and secondarily in fruitfulness for the conquered lands. Both forms of kingship often end with the king himself as a human sacrifice, either given to the god by his folk, as with Domaldi of *Ynglinga saga*, or taken directly by the god, like Saxo's Harald War-Tooth and Vikarr of *Gautreks saga*. It is highly doubtful, however, that we will ever again live in a world where a single man is seen as personally responsible for bringing fruitfulness to the land and success to the folk who follow him; and thus it is highly doubtful that we will ever again see a holy king sacrificed.

The fourth kind of Germanic human sacrifice, that associated with burial rites, was often voluntary. A wife or concubine might choose to be slain at the death of her man. This appears in several of the heroic legends - Brynhildr killing herself when Sigurðr is dead, Signy returning to the house where her husband Siggeir is burning - but is also attested by ibn Fadlan's famous description of a ship-burial among the Rus on the Volga. There are no records of a wife or concubine being slain against her will at her husband's death, nor of any social stigma attaching to a woman who outlived her husband; in fact, widows had the most advantageous legal and financial position of any women. This free choice does not seem to have applied to slaves; there are a number of records of thralls being killed to accompany their masters to the graves, and this is supported by archaeological evidence, such as Viking Age double graves from Denmark in which one of the bodies had hands and feet bound and head hewn off. It is also thought that one of the two women in the Oseberg ship burial was the maidservant of the other, killed to accompany her mistress (though opinions vary as to which was which). Obviously, since the institution of slavery is long gone, the latter type of burial-sacrifice will never be practised again; the former, having been, as far as we can tell, a matter of personal choice, falls rather into the category of suicide than of sacrifice.

Worshipping the Gods Today

Naturally enough, what little evidence we have for ancient religious practice tends to focus on public and community rather than individual worship. Today, we are in need of models for both group workings and individual spirituality. Indeed, considering how many of those who follow the Northern Way are forced by circumstance to practice as solitaries, a discussion of solo spiritual work is both useful and necessary. Even those who participate regularly in group worship will find their experience enriched and their skills improved by regular work alone.

Especially at first, it is useful to create a physical focus for worship in the form of images, altars, and shrines. Setting up an altar is easy enough, indeed it seems to be an instinctive response, and people are sometimes surprised to realize that this is what they have done. For the ancients, the pillars of the high seat and the hearth were sacred within the home. Outdoors, they built altars of heaped stones, established sacred groves, or built "halls" for the gods. Today, a rock can be placed beside the hearth or stove to make a home for the house-spirit, and a cairn or a single stone placed in the garden for offerings.

However, the best aid in developing contact with the gods is a personal altar. This need not be elaborate - a clear spot in the bedroom secure from interference by small children or animals is a good place to begin (warning: as you work with more deities, altars may proliferate, until your bedroom begins to look like a hof). If the altar is dedicated to a single deity, cover it with a cloth of the colour that seems most appropriate (for instance, dark blue for Odin, red for Týr, or an earth tone for one of the Vanir). Otherwise, a piece of white or natural coloured linen will do very well (warning: you *will* spill drink, candlewax, and other things on it in the course of time, so choose something that can easily be washed - KHG). Images of the gods can be photocopied from books or magazines, or you can make a miniature god-post by carving a face on a stick and setting it in a pot of sand. For the more artistic, reproductions of ancient figurines can be modeled from Sculpey or clay. These images can be changed as you work with different deities. A votive candle in a glass container is the

safest way to illuminate your image. You may also set up a small bowl or plate and cup (shot glasses or saki cups are convenient) for offerings. Burning herbs is traditional for purification, though not as an offering, but incense can be very helpful in creating the right mood.

Such an altar honours the gods, but it is more than decoration. Each day set aside a time when you will have privacy. Light the candle, perhaps pour a little mead into the offering bowl. Sit comfortably and contemplate the altar. You may spend this time simply in thinking about the deity, considering the meaning of his or her myths and their relevance to your life. Or you may compose formal prayers on the models given above. Memorizing a brief invocation is a good way to shift gears as you begin. To deepen the experience, chant the name/s of the deity, or intone an appropriate rune.

Close your eyes and build up a mental picture of the god. When you can hold the image easily, repeat your prayer, and wait for reply. You may find it helpful to precede this activity by a systematic relaxation of muscle groups, or by slowing and counting your breaths. If you are experienced in pathworking or shamanic journeying, imagine a door leading from your room through a passage to the Midgard that lies within. Using the arrangement of the nine worlds on Yggdrasil as a map, seek the one where your deity is most likely to be found and build up an image of his or her home or temple. Ask to enter, call on the god, and hold your conversation there. An ancient practice was to lie down and wrap oneself in a cloak of hide for such journeying and communication.

With regular practice, you will find it easier to sense the presence of the deity, and eventually you may find that not only is your god always waiting when you journey inward, but that awareness of his/her presence comes to you when you are in a state of "ordinary" consciousness, so that worship becomes companionship. I believe that in the old days those who were known as "friends" of specific gods experienced the relationship in this way. Such an awareness may at times become quite powerful, to the point where it is necessary to explain to the god that you need to be able to work without distraction, and limit the interaction to appropriate times. Do not, for instance, contemplate your god while operating a moving vehicle (unless of course he is a better driver than you are). Carrying on conversations with the god in your head is not pathological so long as you do not do it aloud in public or when you are supposed to be doing other things.

The gods will also tell you what they desire in the way of altar ornaments and offerings. Again, you may find it necessary to explain that times have changed, and items such as gold armrings and fresh horsemeat may be hard to come by. It is reasonable to ask a god who wants something to cooperate by helping you to find/pay for it. In many ways, if an active relationship is to endure, common sense and courtesy are required on both sides.

However authentic we would wish to be, unless one lives on a farm and has mastered the skills involved in humanely butchering an animal (see discussion above), blood sacrifice is not an opportunity for the contemporary Heathen. However, in addition to the *sumbel*, offerings can be made in a number of ways. When one is holding a feast (or any family celebration) a portion should be set out for the house-spirit (who lives in a stone by the stove or hearth) and/or gods, first in a plate or an offering bowl and then on a *hørg* of heaped stones or hung on a tree in the yard. In my household we hang appropriately shaped gingerbread cookies on the Yule tree.

For a more elaborate ritual, go to a wilderness picnic area to make your offering. Try for a time and place where you can be reasonably private (such as a mid-week evening). If you ward the place well enough you are unlikely to be disturbed. Build a *hørg* of heaped stones, place offerings of meat, etc. upon it and pour red wine (such as the Hungarian "Bull's Blood") over it as you make your prayers. If barbecue facilities are available, take a pot and make a stew with barley, onions, and garlic or other herbs, and hearts of whatever animals are available. It is advisable to cut up all the ingredients and partly cook the barley ahead of time. Seethe the stew with beer or wine, and as it bubbles, stir it, chanting runes and spells. When it is done, some can be offered on the *hørg* and the rest shared. The experience can be amazingly powerful.

Food which is set out in this way invariably disappears, especially if you have pets. This is consistent with Heathen tradition. We are told by ibn Fadlan that when the dogs came out at night and ate the meat, the merchant would say, "Assuredly my Lord is pleased with me and has eaten my offerings". Even in Ásgard, Geri and Freki ate the food given to Odin.

Although there are days (such as Wednesday for Odin) and times (such as Yule or Ostara), when worship is particularly appropriate, honouring the gods is not an activity which should be restricted to one day of the week, or to those times when the community meets for feasting or festivals. Each day, and each activity, can be dedicated to an appropriate deity. Those who work with their gods on a regular basis will find a relationship developing with which they can enrich their lives. The Norse gods are not myths. They are living presences who are eager to interact with us, and will eagerly respond to almost any invitation.

Contributors

- KveldúlfR Hagan Gundarsson, "Sacrifice in the Troth" (unpublished previously).
- Diana L. Paxson, "Worshipping the Gods". *Idunna*, vol 5, #3, Issue 20, Holymonth 1993 C.E., pp. 4-8).

Chapter XXXV

Writing and Working Rites

Writing Rites

Poetry fulfilled many functions among our spiritual forebears. It told of heroic deeds, kept our laws, was used in charms, and no doubt formed a part of religious rites. We can tell as much from the Anglo-Saxon "Æcerbot" (Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, pp. 173 ff.), which fulfills the function of poetry as much as it does that of a charm. Good-sounding verse within a ritual not only makes for a rite that is pleasing to the ear, but one that actually packs power. Our spiritual forebears thought poetry was magical, and that the better the poetry was, the more power it contained. However, before you begin writing verses for a rite, you should ask the following questions: is this right for a High Blessing, and if so, which one? The poetic symbolism for Yule will differ from that for Midsummer. Is this rite to be for all the Ases and Wanens, or for a specific god? A blessing for Ing must be worded differently than one for Frigga or Thor. Is this rite for yourself or a kindred? Personal rites can afford to be more personal, more exclusionary. These questions and others have to be answered as you formulate what you wish to do with a rite. Once you know what you wish to accomplish, you are ready to compose the rite. It is best when composing blessings for you to use the outline in *A Book of Troth* or one of those given here. Fundamentally the outlines are the same, except for the insertion of a bede (prayer) following the call. The outline is as follows:

1. Hallowing
2. Reading
3. Rede
4. Call (Halsing)
5. Bede
6. Loading
7. Drinking
8. Blessing
9. Giving (Yield)
10. Leaving

A slightly different form is given by Gamlinginn's "Nine-Point Blót Plan", thus:

1. The Gathering
The participants gather and arrange themselves.
2. The Warding
The area is warded (made spiritually safe).
3. The Meaning
An explanation of the purpose of the ceremony is given.
4. The Signaling
A signal is sent to those the ceremony is to honour.
5. The Hallowing
The mead (or other beverage) is made holy.
6. The Blessing
The participants and the altar are sprinkled with mead (or other beverage)
7. The Sharing
Each participant gets a small quantity of mead (or other beverage). Each swallows a bit and pours the rest into the blótbolli (blessing bowl).
8. The Earthing
The mead in the blótbolli is poured onto the ground.
9. The Closing
The area is desanctified, and the ceremony is ended.

The verses for each step of a blessing must be handled differently, but first one must know how to compose poetic verse in general. Most Trothers feel traditional alliterative verse (verse using words whose initial consonants are the same) written in Germanic metres is best for rites. The problem with this is that most people are daunted by the difficulty of composing alliterative verse in the old Germanic metres. They shouldn't be. When most of us think of alliterative poetry, we think of *Beowulf*, the Elder Edda, or skaldic poetry. This brings to mind how scholars state that such works must have been

difficult to compose (though, as seen in *Orkneyinga saga* among other sources, there were folk who could make very good skaldic poetry off the tops of their heads, and it is the most difficult form - KHG). First off, the men that first sang *Beowulf*, the Eddic poems, and so forth were the Lord Byrons and T.S. Eliots of their time. Naturally, we cannot hope to duplicate their efforts in the old tongue, much less in the hybrid child of Anglo-Saxon and Latin (that's to say, English). Second, alliterative verse varied in quality. The Anglo-Saxon charms are not at all as well-done as the Anglo-Saxon Rune Poem, which is not as well-done as *Beowulf*. So when writing verse for blessings or other rites, you should try as best you can to catch the flavour of Germanic poetry, while realizing that you can't duplicate the ancient masterpieces (the Warder of the Lore, who has seen it done - and not even by a Heathen, but by a christian scholar of Germanic heroic literature - begs to differ with this. It is my opinion that alliterative verse which rivals that of our elder kinfolk *can* be written in Saxon English - KHG).

The main feature that distinguishes elder Germanic poetry from modern poetry is the use of alliteration or stave rhyme rather than end rhyme. In alliterative poetry that stress or emphasis usually falls on words that alliterate (begin with the same consonant). This is done via the poetic metre or rhythm. Metre measures the number of stressed and unstressed syllables of a line of poetry, as well as when and where they appear. The most basic metre to alliterative Germanic poetry is Old Lore Metre. It is best known from *Beowulf*, but was once the standard metre for all alliterative poems in the Germanic tongues. Old Lore Metre has two half-lines linked by words that alliterate in each half-line. Each half-line consists of at least two stressed syllables and a variable number of unstressed syllables. The last stressed syllable of the last half-line may *not* alliterate, in Old Lore Metre or any other.

Old Lore Metre is the easiest of the old metres to use in modern English (as well as in the elder tongues), and sounds quite dramatic when spoken. An example in modern English is a translation of the first line of the rune-verse Daeg (Dagaz) of the Anglo-Saxon Rune Poem. Stressed syllables are marked by bold type, while the alliterating consonants are underlined.

Day is the drighten's herald dear to man.

As can be seen above, this metre is easy to work with, and can produce verses with a variety of rhythms (Ruth P.M. Lehmann's translation of *Beowulf*, which was done with the intention of following the metre of the original as closely as possible, offers an excellent example for those interested in writing their own poetry. See "Hearth Reading List" under "Book-Hoard" - KHG). Other metres, such as the Eddic *ljóðaháttir* ("song-metre"), are harder to work with. *Ljóðaháttir* alternates between two half-lines and one full line, with stanzas of four half-lines and two full lines. The half-lines are like those of Old Lore metre, while the full lines must have three stresses, of which two alliterate. "*Hávamál*", for the most part, is written in *ljóðaháttir*, thus:

A **ring**-oath **I** know / **Óðinn** has **sworn**,
how shall his **troth** be **trusted**?
He **swindled** **Suttungr** / took **symbol** from him,
and **Gunnlöð** was **left** to **greet** ('weep').

Similar to *ljóðaháttir* was *galdralag* (enchantment-order), which works in much the same way as *ljóðaháttir*, except that it repeats one of the full lines (sometimes with minor variations) at the end of a stanza. There are also skaldic metres used by the Norse (either a late development or, as the archaic vocabulary suggests, possibly survivals of a Heathen ritual tradition which was lost in English and Continental poetry - KHG), but these are quite difficult to use (for information, see the "*Skáldskaparmál*" and "*Hattatal*" section of the Prose Edda).

A modern alliterative metre is what I call alliterative free verse. This metre is used by many Trothers, and is characterized by full lines containing two to three words that alliterate, but otherwise follow no set pattern. It is extremely easy to use due to its free form.

What metre one uses is important as the metre determines the rhythm and feel of the verses. A rhythm that is slow and halting will give a different feeling from one that flows smoothly. This can be seen by comparing Byron's "She Walks in Beauty Like the Night" to Poe's "Annabelle Lee". Even if you did not understand English, you could tell which poet was in love and which was mourning the loss of someone he loved.

It also helps to build the right imagery in ritual verse. Imagery and symbolism are as much a part of poetry as metre, and can help a rite achieve its purpose. In English, as in the other Germanic languages, the bulk of imagery rests not on adjectives and adverbs, but on nouns and verbs. For example, consider the following sentences:

The rain pounded on the sidewalk.

It rained hard on the sidewalk.

Which sentence produces the image of a sidewalk during a cloudburst? The first sentence does, as the second lacks the power worthy of a cloudburst, or even a hard rain. In the same way, "The knight swooned at his Lady's touch," contains stronger imagery than "The knight felt light-headed at his Lady's touch". Also a part of imagery are such literary devices as simile, where one compares two things that have little in common with the word "like" ("sparkles like sun-beams from her eyes"); metaphor, a phrase that creates an identity between two different things ("all the world's a stage"); and puns, plays on words that sound or are spelled alike (mostly used for jokes now, but some great poets have used puns in deadly earnest - as for instance when Lady Macbeth, planning to frame Duncan's guards with the blood from the murdered king's wounds, says, "If he do bleed, I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal, for it shall seem their guilt"). While such literary devices are best used sparingly, they can come in handy when building up imagery.

One device of our spiritual forebears was the practise of using *heiti*, or by-names of the gods. Many of these survived in Old Norse, and it is also believed that a few may have survived even in Anglo-Saxon (albeit adapted to Christian use). These can be collected from the Eddas and even a few Anglo-Saxon poems. A few examples in modern English are: Witty Drighten, Grima ("Masked One"), and Sige-Father ("Victory-Father") for Woden; High Thunderer or Goat-God for Thor; the World's God for Frey; and Cat-Goddess for Freya. One can even create new *heiti*, such as the "Wise Queen" for Frigga. Similar to *heiti* are kennings, which are symbolic names for objects or people, used to create imagery, to avoid naming the subject directly, or to maintain alliteration. A kenning for the sea, for example, is the "wet way", while a king might be called "giver of gold". An Anglo-Saxon phrase from the Nine Herbs Charm which is sometimes thought to be a kenning for runes is "glory twigs". Many translations of the old poetry contain kennings in modern English, or you may wish to create your own (for ex.: "wand of words" for ink-pen). Both kennings and *heiti* can be used to avoid excessive repetition of names, to call on different aspects of the deities you wish to invoke, or to build a unified and possibly quite elaborate set of images for your rite.

Many also believe that our spiritual forebears differentiated between the speech of gods and the speech of men. Support for this is found in *Alvíssmál*, in which words for different objects are given in the tongues of various dwellers in the Nine Worlds (gods, etins, alfs, humans, the folk of Hel-Home, and so forth). Much as we say a word is "poetic", our forebears might well have said that it was used by the gods. Today this is reflected by the use of words that are of Germanic descent (see also "Saxon English" in the Word-Hoard - KHG) in Troth ritual verse. There are several good reasons for this. For one, words with Old Norse or Anglo-Saxon roots pack more auditory power: to quote E.B. White, "Anglo-Saxon is a livelier tongue than Latin". Second, the first words learned by children are of Germanic descent, and these same words form the 100 most-used words in the language - so they are the most familiar words to native speakers of English. Finally, words with Germanic etymologies come from our world-view, and therefore express our beliefs best. Unfortunately, many good Saxon and Norse words have fallen out of use completely, or don't readily come to mind. Fortunately, many, many such words are preserved in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The OED with its mammoth volumes has preserved native words for honour (ar), altar (weved), victory (sige), and hundreds if not thousands of others. Many translations of the old lore also use words of Germanic descent (cf. the famous, or infamous, "Hollanderese" of the best-known translation of the Poetic Edda! - KHG), as do Tolkien's works. Many Trothers keep lists of archaic words for use in poetry, and this is probably a good idea. After all, if the gods have a poetic language, who's to say that they don't find Latin crude and vulgar?

Once you have a good idea of how to compose Germanic poetry, you can tackle writing a blessing. Each part of a blessing has a different aim, and so each part of a blessing must have verses specially tailored to it. The aim of hallowing, for instance, is to mark off holy space, ward that space, and give the blessing a suitable starting point. Therefore, the verses of a hallowing rite require the invocation of protective powers (such as Thor's hammer) or warding wights (various gods and spirits as appropriate), while the actions of a hallowing rite require going to the cardinal points of the compass, making a protective circle, or saining (tracing) warding signs (the Hammer, runes, and so forth). Naturally, the verses of a hallowing rite must be in sympathy with the actions of the rite. You would not invoke Mjöllnir without saining the Hammer-Sign, for example. Likewise, when drawing a circle, you may wish to use such phrases as "let this circle ward us as Asgard wards the gods". Since part of a hallowing rite's function is to ward the holy site, it may need to be repetitive if going to the cardinal points (like Thorsson's Hammer Rite from *FUTHARK*, for example), or have verses that are "flowing" if drawing a circle. However, often the best hallowing rites are simple, like the Hammer Rite (note: hallowing rites that tend towards the lengthy, such as a full runic circle - especially if the folk there are not magicians or intense mystics - risk losing the interest of the celebrants and thus lowering, rather than raising, the energy level - KHG).

The reading section of a blessing should be chosen from a part of the old lore (the Eddas, sagas, etc.) that is consistent with the blessing's aims (again, try not to choose passages that are too lengthy. Full Eddic poems are too *long* for most people to sit through, especially if the reader has difficulty pronouncing Old Norse names - KHG). And the rede should be composed to tie the reading into the blessing, as well as to state the reason(s) for and aim(s) of the rite (for ex.: "We are gathered together for Midsummer"). The rede can easily be the most poetic part of the blessing, as part of its aim is to ensure that those gathered are in a ritual mindset.

The next part of a blessing, the call or halsing, should sound like an invocation, for that is what it truly is. Each deity being fained should be called by name, a *heiti*, and a known deed or attribute from mythology: (as: "Thunor, Goat-God, he that slew Þrymr") and a simple phrase like "we call thee" or "be with us here". The opening lines of the call can be

a general hailing of the gods, as: "Gods of our forebears, fare here from afar". Overall, the call should be simple, majestic, and to the point.

The bede or prayer should be extemporized, though it should consist of heiti or other formulaic elements in its recitation (traditional poetry could be spontaneously composed swiftly and well precisely because a poet knew a great many such formulas which could be plugged into the appropriate place - KHG). In the bede, thanks may be given to the gods, requests made, praise given. Above all else, it should come from the heart, and be spontaneous.

The next part of a blessing - the loading - can, like the rede, afford to be a poetic *tour de force* with its ultimate aim being the "loading" of might into the gift being given. The verses of the loading should serve to funnel hamingja into the gift, while stating what the gift represents (for ex: "the might and main of those gathered here"). Naturally, the verses of the loading should have a quality of power about them, and therefore should use any and all poetic devices (heiti, kennings, mythic references) available towards achieving that feel of power being loaded into the gift.

The drinking or housel, on the other hand, should be silent: no words need be said. As for the act of blessing itself, it can be a simple, "the blessings and bliss of the gods be on you," as each person is sprinkled. The next part of the blessing rite, the giving or yield, may be simple or complex depending on personal taste. Often, however, a simple "we give this gift to thee" will do. The leaving, too, depends on personal choice. A formula like, "This work is wrought, now let us leave in frith and free right. Let the blessings of the Ases, Wanæs, and wights of this world be upon us" works well, though you may choose to have a simpler or more complex one.

Once you have composed the verbal parts of a blessing, other elements may be added such as a procession prior to the blessing complete with drumming (though I prefer silence), seating, and so forth. The decor of the grove or hall should be geared towards the season of the blessing and the gods being fained. Lighting should also be taken into consideration (especially if the rite is going to be read, rather than memorized). Natural lighting (sun, moon, stars) works well, as do candles, torches, and bonfires. Electric light, if toned down with a dimmer switch, can also add to a rite. The godhi or gydhja and their helpers should also plan what actions will be performed during the blessing. The elhaz position (feet together, hands raised upward and slightly spread - standard Ásatrú "prayer-stance") should be assumed by the reader during the rede, call, and loading (if earth-mights are being called on, the root-elhaz position - feet shoulder-width apart, hands by side - or full tree-stance, feet spread and hands raised as for elhaz, may be preferred - KHG). The Hammer-sign should be sained over the gift during the drinking (regardless of the god/esses being called on, as the Hammer is the general sign of hallowing - KHG). Some groups have their members assume the sowilo-stance (see *FUTHARK*) whenever the speaker assumes the elhaz position. These and movements about the hall, such as during the drinking, must be taken into consideration. Failure to do so can result in the performers of the blessing bumping into each other and creating other disruptive mishaps.

Techniques similar to the ones given here may be used in composing lesser rites such as tree-gifts, land-wight yields, and daily rites. Sumble, on the other hand, must be treated differently due to its set order of elements, and is spoken of elsewhere.

Working Rites

In order to work a rite and work it well, you must understand how the rite works and what it means to accomplish. There is no need even to undertake a rite if its aim is not known. Fortunately, most religious rites in the Troth work on an exchange of main between gods and men, and this is also their usual aim. However, it is also necessary that you have the proper mindset and be able to project that mindset during a rite for it to be effective. There are four tools that you can use to accomplish this: 1) self-control; 2) visualization/perception; 3) vocalization; 4) personal movements.

When talking about magical rites, control of one's emotions and will are often brought up, but alas, with religious rites this is not the case. Yet self-control is as necessary for religious workings as for magical ones. You must approach the gods, forebears, wights, dwarves, elves, dises, and so forth with certain attitudes. To seem distracted, detached, or otherwise preoccupied when approaching hallowed wights is as rude as to do so when visiting mortal friends. Therefore you should feel real love and affection or have a sense of awe when yielding to the gods or doing similar rites. Likewise, you should focus all your mental energy on the rite at hand, whether it be a Great Blessing or a simple prayer. It is important that this "focusing" not be mistaken for concentration. Concentration implies a narrowing of awareness to do intellectual activity. Rather this "focusing" is an outpouring of spiritual power (in the form of affection) towards the gods. This should be reflected in all aspects of a rite to the gods, esp. blessings, and requires that you stay clear of unbelief, wandering thoughts, and emotional disturbances.

Part of self-control, and needful to proper mindset, is the use of visualization, or rather perception. Many works on Troth magic and religious practices emphasize visualization as necessary to working rites. The problem with this is that visualization implies imagining something that is not there. This can lead to self-delusion and empty rites. Rather, what one seeks is perception of what is there. We know our gods, main, and other wights exist, so why not try to see them when they are present. This requires we develop second sight or the sixth sense, but it makes more sense than pretending something's there when, indeed, it is not (note: in magic, visualization actually focuses the worker's might to *create* the reality of whatever is imaged, which depends chiefly on the worker's will. This is not the desired result in religion, where the

consenting presence and friendship of existing Beings is the goal of the working - KHG). Developing such a heightened form of awareness is not easy and requires that you not rely so much on your physical senses. Perhaps the best you can do is try to be aware of spiritual activity, and watch for signs of its manifestation (shadows, changes in light level, cold and warm spots, and so forth). Once you learn to spot such activity, your field of perception will gradually increase with time and practice.

Vocalization forms the core of many rites, and also shapes the route the rite will take. Many good pieces have been written on the singing of galdors, and the importance of singing should not be underestimated, but another type of vocalization (one which those with poor singing voices may use), has been ignored. Poetic performance of ritual verse may be as important as singing those verses. Many scholars believe that our spiritual forebears may have "performed" their heroic poems much like the art of poetic reading (also called oral interpretation, or dramatic reading. The scholar and performer of poetry Dwight Conquergood holds the view that heroic lays were related to heroic boasting, and has said, "It is reasonable to claim their performances were vigorous and highly theatrical". He points to several phrases and words that emphasize a scop'd performance in an *Exeter Book* riddle and *Beowulf* (for ex.: the speaker cries out *hlude*, "loudly"; he may also *styrman*, "storm, shout, or rage"). If the scop was a dramatic performer, and not just a singer of songs, then one can assume that ritual verse may have been handled similarly. Theories about the use of emotional arousal or play-acting in the rites of some societies may also point to the idea that ritual verse may be performed instead of sung. Some scholars have noted that shamans often assume the appropriate emotions and mindset for their rites (hate for curses, love for fertility charms, and so forth), and manifest these emotions in their voices and actions or mock actions. This opens an important avenue in ritual vocalization for those that cannot sing, and gives them a form as effective as singing, if not more so. By vocalizing the verse of a rite as if it were Shakespeare, the true beauty of a rite may come out. This means, of course, taking advantage of the natural rhythm of verse, rises and falls in volume, dramatic pauses, and whatever else may show the gods our sense of awe and affection for them. It also means using breath control, memorization (memorized rituals are much more effective, dramatically and spiritually, than those that are read - KHG), and training one's voice. A study of poetic performance can help one use such vocalization to its fullest potential.

Tied to vocalization are the physical actions of the performer of the rite. Usually in blessings, these movements are limited to saining the Hammer-sign, assuming the elhaz stance, and sprinkling the participants. These movements should be executed smoothly and gracefully, unless the rite calls for vigorous action. The elhaz stance is best assumed quickly for dramatic effect. Other movements may be added to a rite as needed to enhance its effectiveness. In blessings, the blessing bowl may be raised to the sky before giving it to the gods. Participants may assume the sowilo stance with the slight modification of holding the arms flat, palms against each other, with upper arms resting on the chest. It is vital, however, that every movement be consistent with the rite and the lore.

There are many other aspects of working rites, and most of these are best learned from experience. Rites shouldn't be overly long, nor should they be done too fast. A lot of pageantry often takes away from the true meaning of the rite, while a lack of pageantry often leaves something to be desired. Most important, though, is that rites be performed with love and respect for the gods. Any time such love and respect is lost, rites will seem poorly done.

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Chapter XXXVI

Ritual, Religion, and Theatre

Ritual, religion, and theatre are three functions which have been intertwined since the beginning of human society. Ritual is a form of magic in that it helps focus the imagination, and imagination is the very nuts and bolts of magical work. Ritual is also linked to religion because it gives the opportunity to express in a solid, physical way the numinous joy and spiritual power one feels at times, especially during important life events or at certain seasons of the year. As for theatre, the performing arts originated in ritual and have always been deeply tied to religion, either as an important and respected part of a culture's spiritual life or as a disturbing and forbidden threat to a society's moral fabric. Both views, however, recognise the primal quality and power of this most volatile art.

Aside from its uses as a tool in religion ritual, there is a magical quality in the actual process of acting and performance that is very similar to many magical and spiritual workings. Theatre can let us experience the forms of the imagination here in the present in a way that artwork or written literature can't. David Cole likens the world of the play to the primitive concept of the "time of origins", the "dream-time", and compares acting both to shamanism and the experience of spiritual possession. The actor makes a journey into the worlds of the imagination, an inner journey into her own psyche to find those aspects which correspond to the people and actions of the play. Then there comes a point in the acting process when a reversal takes place, and the images the actor has journeyed so far to find come rushing back upon her, using her body to become present to the audience. The actor experiences a state of double consciousness, in which she is fully the character she has discovered, but at the same time is also herself, watching the performance as a removed spectator.

This state of double being, of acting and watching oneself act, is strangely similar to the feeling one sometimes gets in deep meditation, when the realization occurs that one's thoughts are being observed by another, deeper Self. When an actor is truly committed, he is totally in the present, acting and feeling a truthful flow of emotions and impulses on a moment-to-moment basis and expressing them freely. The only way to reach those peak moments is to fully and deeply experience each small action leading up to the climax, which then unfolds of its own accord, sometimes touching depths of one's unconscious to cause both fear and joy.

Theatre, like ritual, involves direct, personal contact with the audience; in fact, without the audience, the act of creation in the theatre is incomplete. The reaction of the audience is a part of the creative act, for the audience also contributes energy to the performance and helps shape it into its final form. Similarly, the goal of ritual is to stir and shape the thoughts and emotions of the participants to achieve a desired goal, either celebratory or magical. Thus, a ritual practitioner must first be able to control and shape her own emotions and imagination, and then to similarly inspire and guide the responses of others. Even in a solitary ritual, one is joined by an "audience" comprised of the Gods, Goddesses, and other entities one has summoned.

In modern Ásatrú, much emphasis has been placed on historical and archæological research, in an effort to recreate our traditions as accurately as possible. While this is commendable and necessary, it is equally important to be able to use this information as skillfully and effectively as possible. Training in acting will help you translate our past traditions into living, meaningful rituals for the present. Training, technique, and practice will also relieve your body and mind of mundane worries like how to speak and where to move next and what to do with your hands, and free you to fully experience the numinous sensations of a spiritual event.

A teacher of mine once said that if an actor accomplished nothing more than to be seen and heard, he was already ahead of 90% of the rest of his profession, and the same could probably be said of most ritual workers. Since one of the goals of a ritual is to stir the thoughts and emotions of all the participants, those people obviously must be able to observe all that happens if they are to be so stimulated. Unless you are doing a solo ritual, you will need to make some effort to speak loudly and clearly enough to be heard by the others. Even small rituals require some attention to this, not only because modern speech habits tend not to emphasize good diction, but also because ritual speech is different from our everyday speech and therefore harder for people to comprehend. The larger the number of people in the ritual, the more technique is required to project the full intensity of the experience to everyone.

Any basic book or course on speech will teach you the fundamentals you need to know. One key point is to remember to breathe from the diaphragm, a muscle located in the region of the floating ribs. People sometimes advise you to "stick your stomach out" when you breathe, but this doesn't accurately describe the movement of the diaphragm. I find it better to concentrate more on the lower ribs expanding out all the way around the ribcage to the back and to keep the buttocks tight. The ribs then remain slightly expanded while the diaphragm muscles press in and up as the air is released during song or speech. This is a very athletic process when done correctly, and you can easily pull a rib muscle unless you practise breathing exercises regularly and "warm up" just before a ritual begins. Diaphragmatic breathing not only supports your voice with more air than shallow chest breathing, it has the added benefit of removing tension from the neck and jaw, tension which could otherwise strain your vocal cords and make your voice thin and tight.

By using supported breathing, one can increase volume without trying to "force" louder sounds out from the throat, which is potentially harmful to the voice and cannot be sustained (as you have no doubt discovered yelling at football games

or rock concerts). Besides the physical aspect of voice control, however, there are mental tricks that improve your voice for no apparent logical reason. For example, one exercise is to imagine you are projecting your voice to different places as you speak: to a person right in front of you, to a space ten feet away, to the very back of a large hall. Oddly enough, just visualizing your audience being farther away can increase the volume of your voice. Another exercise is to visualize yourself "speaking" from different parts of your body - your head, your torso, your pelvic area, etc. You will find that the quality of your voice changes subtly. By the same token, visualizing yourself speaking and breathing from your diaphragm lets you reach down into your center for that voice, and that voice will be a fuller and freer one.

The concept of being seen in a ritual involves both how you move and where and when you move. People watching a ritual need to see what is most important to see at any given time. On the most basic level, it is usually good for the audience to be able to see the person who is speaking or who should be the focus of the action. Again, the more people you have in a ritual, the more technique is required. Even in a ritual of only two or three, you need to know who moves when, and where, and if anyone needs to get out of their way when they do move. Some feel that "choreographing" a ritual removes its spontaneity and thus some of its spiritual integrity, but there is not much spirituality in having people milling about and running into each other.

Besides knowing the basic blueprint of movement, each performer needs to have mastery over the quality of her movement - it should be controlled, graceful, pleasing to look at, and appropriate for the role that person has taken on. First of all, the body should be kept in good condition - good diet, enough sleep, and regular exercise. In addition, activities that improve posture, grace, rhythm, and limberness can be useful in training the body for ritual and theatre. Some examples include dancing, gymnastics, fencing, yoga, and many martial arts.

As with vocal practice, the goal in training the body is to eliminate unwanted muscular tension, which not only mars the image presented to the onlookers, but inhibits the free flow of emotions and energy during the ritual. An actor or ritual performer should be able to get his body to do what he wishes it to do, and *not* to do anything without his conscious intent. Basic relaxation exercises before a ritual will help. One of the most common and useful practices is to begin with the face and head and work down to the feet, consciously tensing and relaxing each separate part of the body. Other limbering exercises, such as yoga, tai chi, or even the warm-up exercises used before jogging or other athletic pursuits, are also useful. Whatever other work you do, remember that your voice and body need to be warmed up a bit before embarking on something as demanding as a ritual, so try to do at least a little breathing and vocalization and some limbering exercises before beginning a performance.

In addition to physical technique, there are mental disciplines necessary for acting which help you learn to think and concentrate in a special way. Many of these practices are also useful in ritual and magic. Most modern techniques of acting, and there are many of them, have some relationship to the technique of Stanislavsky, whether their inventors admit it or not. Konstantin Stanislavsky was a Russian who co-founded the Moscow Art Theatre in 1898 and developed what came to be known as "the Method" in reaction to the clichés and overacting typical of the theatre of his time. His goal was nothing less than giving the actor conscious control of her inspiration and creativity.

The key to this method is the use of physical actions. You cannot control your feelings, but you can control your actions. If you fully and sincerely put your attention on each individual action you perform in a play or a ritual, the emotions, true and real emotions, will happen. You may have noticed that if you shout and stomp and wave your arms around, you can actually make yourself feel angry. Similarly, you can make yourself feel happy if you laugh, dance, or hug people, and sad if you mope around brooding.

Action in the context of acting includes not only superficial movement, but also the emotional conflict in the play, the goals, and intentions of the characters. Each sentence and movement is done for a reason, people in plays never just "talk". They all *want* things, want them intensely, are willing to go to great lengths to get them. If a boy says "good morning" to his girl, he may be blaming her, seducing her, interrogating her, apologizing to her, or some other strong "action"; he is never just making conversation.

Every action in a play is reciprocated - one person acts, the other people react to what he has done and then act themselves. Each small movement or line has a small action or intention; the sum of these becomes the intention for a section, then a scene, then an act, until eventually there evolves a goal that covers the whole play. When one person's goals are blocked by another person's goals, conflict arises, and the action is shaped by the various attempts to "win". These objectives build to a climax, which eventually resolves itself in either union or further division, or else it is interrupted by some outside event (Francis Hodge, *Play Directing: Analysis, Communication, and Style*, p.36).

In addition to having clear intentions and pursuing them with full commitment, you must also be aware of the other people onstage. You must make sure that they really hear you and that you hear them, that you truly communicate with one another. Try to avoid mechanically repeating your lines and actions according to some prearranged plan you developed in rehearsal; rather, take in what your fellow performers give to you and let it affect you and your subsequent actions. For example, if your character very much wanted to pick up a jewel and take it away, and another character pulled a gun on you, you wouldn't just doggedly go ahead with your original intention (well, you could, but the play would be quickly over). In real life, most people would take the gun into account and change their tactics, perhaps try to trick or wheedle the other person into letting them have what they wanted.

To give an example that could be part of a mythical drama, in the story of the mead-theft, Odin's overall goal is to bring back the magic mead of poetry to Asgard. On his way, he tricks the serfs into killing themselves with the intention of ingratiating himself to the giant Baugi, he pressures Baugi to beg the mead from his brother Suttung, he then coerces Baugi into helping him break into the mountain where the mead is kept, and he seduces the giantess Gunnlod so she'll let him have the mead. All these small objectives are fueled by the overall goal of getting the mead. Perhaps Odin falls a little bit in love with Gunnlod, but he leaves her anyway to get the mead - that's an inner conflict between his desire for her and his desire for the mead. Note how much more interesting that scenario is than if Odin doesn't give a rap about Gunnlod. The richer and more complex you make your goals, the more conflict, and hence the more emotion and energy you'll have. And always make your goals the most important they can be. You don't just sort of want that mead, you desire it more than anything else in the world.

This may all sound too analytical and complicated, but if you can figure out exactly what your character is doing, what she wants at every point in the play, if you pursue these intentions strongly and fully, and if you also let yourself be truly receptive to the actions of all the other characters and let these affect how you pursue your goals, you will not worry about whether you look silly or how to hold your hands or if you will sound angry enough during your next big speech - you will begin to think and feel like this other person you're playing and something real will happen onstage.

All this takes a tremendous amount of concentration. You need to concentrate on the objects and people onstage without being distracted. You must use your imagination to see and hear things as your character would. You must constantly be thinking what your character would be thinking, reacting as he would react to each word and event, redefining your goals at each step, for the entire time you're onstage, whether you're speaking or not. This makes visualizing a red triangle on a white background seem simple. But this is the same quality of attention required by ritual - that you should fully concentrate on each small act, recognise its significance, and react to what others say and do for the entirety of the rite.

This concentration of attention does not mean that you lose yourself in your character and forget that the audience is there. On the contrary, the audience is an important part of the play, and the energy they feed back to you further fuels your performance. Acting involves a curious form of split consciousness in which you are not only thinking and reacting as your character would, but are also constantly watching yourself on stage and being aware of the response of the audience, using it to monitor the effectiveness of your performance and modify it if necessary.

Each character, then, is the sum of her actions, and her essence should be gradually revealed during the play. When trying to analyze a character in a play or myth, you should try to discover what she wants most, how strongly she acts in attaining that desire, and how honest and moral she is in pursuing it. You should know how she feels about everything and everybody in the play. You can look for clues in how the author describes the character, what other people in the play say about the character, what the character says about herself, and especially, the character's own actions (Hodge, *Play Directing*, p. 44). You need to draw on your own feelings and experiences to play a part, but you must try not to make all characters a copy of yourself. Rather, you should strive for a combination of the character's personality and your own.

In creating and revealing a character, you might try using other people you've known or seen as images; often it's very effective to combine traits from several people in one character. It is also useful to imagine your character in different situations which do not occur in the play - what would he order at a restaurant, how would he react to a threat or a seduction, how would he relate to other specific characters? You need to know everything about your character's past, present, and future, whether presented in the action of the play or not.

Another exercise is to use animal imagery to create a character. Observe the real animal, in nature or in the zoo, and then try to mimic its movements and sounds. Eventually you will tone down this realistic imitation and "humanize" the animal qualities into a few physical or vocal traits that give your character the overall quality of the original animal. It is particularly interesting to try this with the various animals associated with different Gods and Goddesses - for example, Odin as a wolf or Freyja as a cat.

If you're not doing a ritual drama or embodying God-forms in your rite, you may feel you don't need to do any characterization. But in almost any ritual, you are not being your normal, everyday self; rather, you take on a ritual persona, allowing yourself to become your best and true self, full of confidence and power. For certain types of ritual, you may even wish to take on a specialized magical persona, embodying certain traits which you wish to emphasize for a particular working (Gundarsson, Kveldulf. *Teutonic Magic*, pp. 181-82). For either type of persona, the same techniques you use to create a character in a play can help you clarify and strengthen the self you want to be in ritual.

If you want to learn to act, or rather to act better, the easiest way is to take an acting class or two. Most community colleges, universities, and many theatres offer acting classes for beginners or for the general public. I suggest a class rather than school or community theatre productions because, although the latter offer a good way to gain experience once you learn some technique, the directors are often more focused on getting their shows off the ground than on your personal development as an actor. Try more than one class or director, as there are many useful acting techniques and it helps to know a variety of them, each one being useful in different situations.

Above all, stay away from people who seem to be trying to control or manipulate you or play games with your head. Because acting deals with opening yourself up emotionally, actors can be very vulnerable, especially when first learning and experimenting. Although acting can involve exploring different aspects of your personality and using

emotional experiences from your past, no one has the right to invade your privacy or use your emotions against you, or to verbally abuse you in an alleged attempt to get you to achieve a certain result. For example, a teacher could justifiably ask you to think of an event in your past that made you sad or angry, but she doesn't have the right to make you tell her what it was. Acting can be therapeutic, but it is not therapy. Look for classes that offer good physical training and acting exercises embodying the basics already discussed - and, above all, classes where the actors emerge feeling happier and more powerful than when they started. You can also explore classes in speech, voice, dancing, or other physical arts.

In addition, there are many exercises you can practice on your own. Many of them may seem like the kind of games you played as a child, and this is true - games of make-believe are the foundations of acting; they don't call them "plays" for nothing. If you can recall the kind of freedom, commitment, imagination, and creativity you used as a child playing, you will have come a long way to becoming a good actor. So here are some suggestions for acting games; you can make up your own when you get the hang of it. Most of these exercises are derived from Stanislavsky's work; more examples can be found in Sonia Moore (*The Stanislavski System: The Professional Training of an Actor* - digested from the teachings of Konstantin S. Stanislavski).

1. Explore physical actions. Sit, stand, walk as if a certain situation existed.
 - a. Clear off a table in order to make people feel sorry for you.
 - b. Clear off a table while surreptitiously searching for a valuable object which might be there.
 - c. Sit in order to show off your body to a desired partner.
 - d. Sit so as not to attract attention to yourself.
2. What would I do if I were...?
 - a. You are a student; you've awakened after pulling an all-nighter, and can't find the paper you finished before going to bed.
 - b. You are Thor, and have awakened to find your Hammer is gone.
 - c. You are Sif, and have awakened to find your hair has been cut off.
3. Let the outer physical circumstances affect your actions:
 - a. Pack to go off to a festival.
 - b. Pack after spending the day at the beach.
 - c. Pack expensive costumes to send back to the rental shop.
4. Imagination:
 - a. Eat a chicken leg as if you were Thor; then as if you were Freyja; then as if you were Loki.
 - b. In your mind, imagine going from the store to your home; imagine being at home putting away your groceries; gradually you should move from being the observer to being the "you" doing the actions.
 - c. Think of a God or Goddess; try to see what their hall looks like - size, materials, decor, what he or she serves to eat there, what he or she does for fun, who comes to visit, etc.
 - d. Imagine you are a character in one of the myths; see yourself going through all the actions of the story in the greatest possible detail.
5. Concentration and Attention:
 - a. Place your attention within a small circle around you, on yourself and immediate objects; then within a medium circle, including several people and groups of furniture or objects; finally within a large circle, encompassing everything within your hearing or field of vision (if your attention wanders, return it to one single object to regain your concentration).
 - b. Examine a nearby object carefully; then look away, and tell what you remember.
 - c. Listen to the sounds around you, then describe what you heard.
 - d. Look at a collection of objects or a landscape for a specified time, then go away and describe them (Note: The last three exercises are variations of "Kim's game", which appears in Rudyard Kipling's novel *Kim*; many magical systems use similar exercises).
6. Belief:
 - a. Treat a liquid as if it were clear spring water; salty ice rime; sweet mead; hot tea.
 - b. Holding a sword, approach your bitterest foe; your son, to whom you're giving it; a retainer, who is going to swear an oath on it; a vicious wolf.
7. Say the following lines with a partner:

A: Hi.
B: Hi.

A: Been here long?
B: Long enough.

A: I was wondering.
B: Oh?

A: Are you staying?

B: I don't know.

A: I think you should.

B: I'll think about it.

As you say the lines, imagine yourselves in different situations, which will change the way you say them:

- a. "A" is trying to seduce "B".
- b. "A" is a parent and "B" is a teenager who's come home very late.
- c. "B" is blackmailing "A".
- d. "A" is a teacher and "B" is a problem student.

The same sort of exercises can be done with any non-specific conversation. You can also try saying the lines of a play, saga, or myth as if different situations existed.

8. Sense and Emotional Memory:

- a. Sense memory is the practice of recreating in your imagination, as fully and accurately as possible, things you have experienced with your senses.

Imagine you are at the beach: see the sun on the water, hear the waves and the gulls, smell the salt air, feel the sun on your back and the sand underneath you.

- b. Emotional memory is based on the peculiar fact that if you use sense memory to relive some highly emotional experience, you will re-experience the emotions you felt then. A very imaginative person can even make himself feel emotions by reliving an imaginary incident he never actually experienced (sound weird? ever cry over a movie or a book? it does work).

Pick an emotional experience from your past (but not one so traumatic and deeply buried that you'll require a therapist to get you through it). Start fairly early in the experience, before the important events take place. Try to visualize all the sights, sounds, smells, etc., as vividly as possible as you proceed through the actions in your mind. By the time you get to the climax, you should be feeling some of the same emotions you felt in the past. If you don't, don't be concerned; just try another incident. Again, the goal here is not to force yourself to deal with forgotten past experiences; it's to find those experiences which you can use to stimulate your emotional responses. Any event that does that, even if it's small and stupid (my personal favourite for grief is the time I broke my very favourite water-gun) is valid. In fact, it's better to use smaller events, because you can control the emotional responses more easily and not get lost in your own angst.

Theatre

Besides using acting techniques to improve your personal performance of rituals and magic, you can also use drama effectively in group rituals. Ritual drama can greatly enhance seasonal festivals, initiation rites, rites of passage, and other important or festive occasions. It can be used to enliven study group sessions and large festival gatherings. Such dramas can be based on myths, sagas, and folktales; they can be either adaptations or actual excerpts from old texts. You can also create your own dramas, based on seasonal activities or important life-events such as birth, marriage, or death. Many traditional seasonal festivals probably included drama, most notably Easter and Yule. Your dramas can be performed as part of the actual ritual, or afterwards during a sumble or feast.

You can also perform non-ritual drama which is thematically appropriate to a particular event or which represents northern European culture, or just because it's a play you all like. Any drama has a certain ritual quality, and theatre helps lend a festive atmosphere to a gathering. Shakespeare is a good example of secular drama which might enhance a festival.

Whether doing a ritual or a secular drama, you need to do a certain amount of preparation. You should all read through the piece and discuss theme and meaning. The piece should be cast based on the skill of the performers, their appropriateness for their parts, and their reliability (that is, will they learn their lines, show up for rehearsal, etc.). You should not cast a person solely because he is a high-ranking member of your tradition or the gythja's latest lover. It's probably a good idea to have one person act as "director" for any given drama, in order to have some sort of unity and coherent vision, and so that someone can make a decision in case of stalemate. The function of director can be passed around to all interested and capable members of the group, both to allow you to enjoy many different styles and ideas and to keep anyone from getting delusions of grandeur.

Other things to discuss in the beginning are the outer trappings - any type of scenery, costumes, props, music, etc. You need to decide on what kind of look you want, or are capable of producing; decide what things you need; and assign

people to procure or make these things well in advance. After the preliminaries are over, you need at least *some* rehearsal. Many ritualists, and even some actors, feel too much rehearsal will blunt their creative spontaneity, but this is only true if you rehearse by rote rather than by recreating your character's life each time you go onstage. What rehearsal *will* do is eliminate the "spontaneity" of people wandering aimlessly around, looking at each other in panic because they're hoping that someone remembers what comes next, or dropping character entirely while they look heavenwards hoping to find their next line. Real spontaneity comes from everyone knowing what they're saying and doing so fully that they can be free to really feel and express the emotions and energy that are created by the performance.

Most theatrical productions rehearse at least four weeks, five days a week. You might not be willing to put in that much time to do a small ritual drama, but you should try to have at least a half-dozen or so rehearsals, and at least one "dress rehearsal" where everyone knows all their lines and uses all the costumes and props. This is to prevent you from discovering in performance that you have nowhere to put your sword after you're done with it, or that your lovely cape keeps tripping your leading lady.

Rituals are sensory experiences and can be enhanced with appropriate costumes, decorations, symbolic objects, music and sound effects, smells, and tastes. Colours have traditional or symbolic values in most cultures, and have been shown to alter moods. All the choices you make on externals will have an effect on the overall impact of your ritual. Songs and dances are also effective in appropriate rites. When doing large ritual dramas, it is often beneficial to include the non-active participants as a "crowd of extras". For example, if you were doing the story of the theft of Idun, all the onlookers could become the Gods and Goddesses of Asgard watching Loki fleeing the giant Thjassi and cheering him on. It's even more important to involve the audience in a ritual than in a theatrical performance, since in ritual everyone there is a participant of sorts.

Theatre is a unique and powerful art. The true practice of it sharpens the mind and the will, taps deep emotional resources, and explores the imagination. Theatre incorporates almost all of the other arts. It is unique in that it allows the audience to take part in the creation process. It preserves the playful spirit of childhood. It can make people both think and feel. Because of its power to make people experience other worlds and their own depths, it has been both exalted and forbidden throughout the ages. But no matter how often it has been suppressed, it has survived, because its magic fills a deep need in the human soul.

Annotated Bibliography

Fundamentals:

- Barken, Sarah. *The Alexander Technique: the Revolutionary Way to Use Your Body for Total Energy* (New York: Bantam, 1978). This movement technique, which was all the rage in the 1970s, emphasizes posture, and its goal is moving the body with optimum balance and coordination so that minimum effort is used. This little book is very simple, giving a few very basic movements which one practices until one does them with perfect posture and with perfect ease.
- Berry, Cicely. *Voice and the Actor*, 1st American ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1974). This very basic book on vocal training is a good example of the sorts of things one should be working on to strengthen and train the voice for ritual or theatrical performance. It includes exercises which one can work through on one's own, as well as practice texts and illustrations, and emphasizes freeing the person's natural voice rather than trying to create an artificial "artistic" voice.

History

- Barber, C.L. *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and its Relation to Social Custom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959). This work explores the origins of theatre in ancient holiday festivals, particularly emphasizing English folk customs and how they were reflected in Shakespeare. It is important to realize how these folk symbols, which are reflections of even older Heathen ones, continued to appear in masque and theatre after the North was christianized, and still remain a part of theatre even today. It's also good to remember that before Cromwell and the Puritans "stuffed" it up, England had a reputation in Europe of being "merrie".
- Brockett, Oscar G. *History of the Theatre* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1968). This is an example of a basic history of the theatre, such as one might read in a college theatre appreciation course. It shows how theatre and religion have been closely linked since the beginning of human cultural development, and also demonstrates the different styles of theatre that have appeared in various times since then.
- Philpotts, Bertha S. *The Elder Edda and Ancient Scandinavian Drama* (Cambridge: the University Press, 1920). Any true Heathen studying theatre should read one of the few works that directly explores theatre in the culture of

the pre-Christian Norse, as this one does. Philpotts explores the possible use of the Eddic poems as ritual dramas, and her examples, whether or not historically true, provide good ideas to anyone interested in using drama in Norse rituals.

- Shakespeare, William. Read anything by him, because they're very good plays, they're very good poetry, and because they have bits of Heathen folklore running all through them. And don't let any stuffy English classes you may have had put you off; the only trick to Shakespeare is understanding what some of the archaic words mean, and a good footnoted text, like the Penguin collected works, will give you all you need (it's *much* easier than scholarly German!). And if you're *really* devoted, pick up a copy of Eric Partridge's *Shakespeare's Bawdy* (New York: Dutton, 1969) and be able to understand all of Shakespeare's dirty jokes.
- Southern, Richard. *The Seven Ages of the Theatre* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963). This is another work on theatre history which traces its connections to ancient rituals and dances. It paints the history of theatre as a series of broad stages of development, each with its own customs and ideals.

Acting

- Cole, David. *The Theatrical Event: A Mythos, a Vocabulary, a Perspective* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1975). This is a really exciting and unique work which explores the true functions of theatre and its kinship to ritual. Cole also draws comparisons between acting and both shamanism and possession behavior.
- Hodge, Francis. *Play Directing: Analysis, Communication, and Style* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971). Anyone who plans and carries out a ritual is a director, and should probably learn something about what that entails. This work deals first and foremost with how to analyze a dramatic work, but also deals with practical issues like designing scenery, costumes, and special effects. It also has a section on communicating with actors, the benefit of which will be apparent to anyone who has ever tried to work with other people to perform a ritual.
- Morris, Eric, *Acting from the Ultimate Consciousness: A Dynamic Exploration of the Actor's Inner Resources* (New York: Putnam, 1988). This is a sample of one of the more recent texts on acting. Morris' technique is based on Stanislavsky and mixed with psychotherapy, pragmatism, and magic. This particular work emphasizes what consciousness is and how to enhance it, and explores methods of reaching and communicating with the state where all creativity lies, which Morris calls the *ultimate unconscious*. More basic techniques are explored in Morris' other books, *No Acting Please*, *Being & Doing*, and *Irreverent Acting*.
- Shurtleff, Michael: *Audition: Everything an Actor Needs to Know to Get the Part* (New York: Bantam, 1980). Although on the surface this is a very practical book geared towards people interested in being professional actors, it also includes many basic acting techniques presented in a particularly clear and no-nonsense manner. It also gives a little taste of what the world of theatre is like.
- Stanislavsky, Konstantin (1863-1938). If you dabble in acting at all, you will hear this name mentioned, as he was one of the most influential people in modern acting. Despite the fact that bad actors have misunderstood and misused "the Method", these techniques are usually at the heart of almost every school of acting today. These are just a few books dealing with his philosophies and methods:
 - Boleslavsky, Richard. *Acting, The First Six Lessons* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1949). This work portrays the essence of acting through charming dialogues between a jaded director and an eager young actress.
 - Moore, Sonia. *The Stanislavsky System: the Professional Training of an Actor*. Digested from the teachings of Konstantin S. Stanislavsky (New York: Viking Press, 1965). This is a very good capsulization of Stanislavsky's teachings, presented in an organized, easy-to-read fashion. If you haven't heard of any of this stuff before, this is the place to begin.
 - Stanislavski, Constantin (it's the same guy, they just can't agree how to Anglicize his Russian name), tr. Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood. *An Actor Prepares* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1948). This is Stanislavsky's basic text on acting and the inner training of the imagination, including many exercises and practical suggestions, and written as a delightful story about a group of awkward actors encountering their first real acting class. Two other titles by Stanislavski by the same publisher are: *Building a Character*, and the last title in the planned trilogy, recreated from his notes by a Mrs. Hapgood, *Creating a Role*.
- Sullivan, Claudia N. *The Actor Alone: Exercises for Work in Progress* (Jefferson: McFarland, 1993). This book presents exercises for general creative growth, as well as for working on specific roles, and is particularly designed for the actor working alone.

Written by:

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Chapter XXXVI

Working Rites and Holding Feasts

As spoken of in the last two chapters, many things need to be thought of when planning and performing a rite: group size, stead, tools, and so forth. This chapter is meant to give a basic practical guide to most of the activities which are likely to be needful in Troth rites.

I. Getting Everyone There On Time

This sounds simple, but isn't. There is an unkind, but unfortunately true, joke going the rounds: "Why do witches do magic at midnight? That's when the eight o'clock ritual starts!" To Heathens, "Teutonic efficiency" often seems to be much more like that described by Tacitus than that thought to characterize Germanic people in the twentieth century...

The way to deal with this is to hold the rites when the rites are supposed to be held. Those who are not there at sunset (or whatever the appointed time is) will just have to miss out. A certain amount of leeway can be given to those whose work keeps them from getting there at sunset and can warn the leader of it beforehand; but those who are not there when they said they would be there should not be waited for too long (though, on the other hand, holding a ritual without a guest of honour who is having trouble finding the site from your directions is REALLY TACKY and certainly inhospitable!).

Readying for the rite should start at least half an hour beforehand. The harrow should be set, those who need to put on garb should get into garb, the speakers should check their scripts for the last time. At fifteen minutes before time, it is not a bad idea to ring a bell or blow a horn and shout "Last call for the loo!" or words to that effect - nothing spoils a ritual like a full bladder. Five minutes before the appointed time, the bell should be rung and horn blown again, and the folk should start getting into whatever the desired position is. This means that you can start when you are supposed to start. Sometimes this is not tremendously important, but sometimes, as when dealing with rites that are supposed to be done at sunset/midnight/dawn, it is. With a dawn rite, make sure that you wake everyone up no less than a half-hour before time so that they all have time to become at least marginally conscious before the ritual starts.

II. Harrow-Setting

This should be done before the rite starts. Make a list of everything you will need, then check the list to be sure it is all there. While religious rites (unlike magical rites) do not closely court major disaster if one element is left out, it is tacky, not to mention ruinous to the mood, to stop in the middle and say "Oh damnit, I forgot the matches! Helga, have you got your lighter on you?" or to have to make a run for the ice-chest, refrigerator, and/or bottle opener during the ritual.

A more elaborate rite may call for more tools than can easily be set on a small harrow. Ways to deal with this are: folk designated as holders-of-things, especially things like horns, spears, and other precarious items; a small table next to the harrow where items can be put until they are ready to use; or leaving larger and less delicate things (like baskets of fruit) on the ground by the harrow and hoping like Hel that no one kicks them over. Rehearsal of a ritual will make dealing with such things far, far easier.

III. Tools

The basic ritual tools of the Troth are the Hammer, the horn or cup, the sax (knife), the blessing-bowl, and the blessing-twig. A ritual Hammer can easily be made by painting a basic sledgehammer, risting runes or holy signs on the handle, or simply hallowing it. Blessing-bowls should be of traditional materials. If you are of the school that likes to leave a bowl standing all night with ale in it for the god/esses and wights to drink from, a ceramic or stone bowl is better than a wooden one. *Kjalnesinga saga* mentions a copper blessing-bowl. Blessing-twigs may be picked fresh for each ritual; what sort of twig you choose will depend on (1) the time and purpose of the rite, and the god/esses called on, and (2) what grows in your neighborhood.

The horn and the sax often seem to be the hardest items for people to get hold of. Generally, the best sources for such things are Renaissance Faires. It is not necessary that the sax be an actual replica of an historical blade; what is important is that it look and feel right and holy to you. Directions on making a drinking horn are given in "Mead-Making and Other Crafts".

If you live in a place where you cannot hold your rites outside, or easily walk out and pour the blessing-bowl's contents onto the earth (the first Steersman of the Troth used to fling his blessing-ale into the garden through his open window), you also need to have a large basin which you can fill with earth and set beside the harrow. The blessing is then

poured onto this earth, which can be put back where you got it at your leisure.

Candles are often used in Troth rites, both for ritual purposes and simple lighting. If the candles are to be taken outside at any point, they should be of the glass-enclosed sort which cannot easily be blown out by the wind; it is a very bad sign for a candle to be blown out at the wrong time. If there is any wind at all, it is almost impossible to keep an ordinary candle lit outdoors for the length of a rite.

IV. Horn-Filling; Drinking from a Horn

This is something that takes practice. If mead or wine are used, filling is no problem, but ale tends to put out a huge head when poured into a horn, making it necessary to wait for a while if you want to get anything but froth for the first few gulps. Ways to deal with this are (1) pour the ale in a thin, slow stream along the side of the horn, rather than just dumping it in. This will cut down on the froth. It should be done in a deliberate and intense way, as a ritual act in itself: the worker should feel the might of the draught slowly rising within the horn until it is just on the point of foaming over - a few drops may be allowed to spill. (2) Have the hall-idis fill the horn a little while before it is needed, topping it up when it has settled so that she can hand a full horn to the godwo/man. (3) Start by filling the horn all the way and letting the froth run over into the blessing-bowl. This is ritually good, because it shows that you have so much ale that it is foaming well over the horn to be shared by all god/esses and wights. Again, it takes much practice to make sure that the froth will go into the blessing bowl, rather than all over the floor and/or godwo/man.

Drinking from a horn is a skill that can only be learned by much practice. The keywords are slow and careful. Otherwise, you will get a sudden tidal wave sloshing over your face.

V. Sprinkling with a Blessing-Twig

This needs to be done with some care, especially in a group that goes in for fine ritual garb, whose folk may not appreciate having to clean off mead- or ale-spots. The worker should walk slowly around the circle with bowl and twig in hand, stopping directly in front of each person and lightly sprinkling their heads.

VI. Lighting Fires

This can be the most magical part of the rite. Fires come in two sorts, need-fire (kindled by friction - see discussion under "Waluburg's Night") and struck fire (flint and steel - see discussion under "Thonar"). Matches fall into the former class, lighters into the latter.

The First Law of ritual fire-lighting is this: Where you have a ritual fire, you must also have a ritual water-can. Accidents happen. Whether you invite him or not, Loki is always around when fires are lit. Also, never try to squirt lighter fluid, gasoline, or anything else intensely flammable onto a burning fire.

When dealing with a fire, Wisdom is the most important of all the thews. Remember, fire is potentially the most destructive of all the elements with which we usually deal in the course of the rite. If an outdoors fire is not fully extinguished by the time you leave, it can destroy an entire woodland. Handled carelessly, an indoors fire can burn down your home. Always consider the maximum damage that can be caused, then consider the minimum effort needed to cause it - such as the flying of a stray spark.

If you are lighting a fire inside, you need to be sure that you do it in a place where there is little risk of stray sparks catching curtains, rugs, and so forth on fire. Normally, candles are easiest to deal with for indoor work anyway. However, if your hall has a fireplace, you may wish to make kindling a hearth-fire part of the ritual.

Probably the best way to deal with a fire in your yard is to put it in an actual barbecue grill, which are made for the purpose of having fire in your yard.

In a natural/outdoors setting, matters become more complicated. When a central fire is to be used, you must look at the three-fold considerations:

1) What size/kind of fire will be needed to accomodate the people involved and purpose to be served (cooking? warmth on a snowy night? simple fellowship)?

2) How much area will be needed to contain all the necessary participants, the fire, and the safety margin?

3) What provisions are there for low-impact usage of the area?

Central fires or Eldir (ON eldr) are best built by experts, but in lieu of such woodfolk, the following guidelines are offered:

A) Dead wood burns because it has dried out, live wood has moisture in its pulp and does not burn well. Beyond the need to harm as little as possible in the forest, this is an excellent reason not to be chopping down everything in sight. Non-felled dead wood may be a danger to the local habitat and clearing it can be a service to the denizens of the wood (but check to see that it has not become home to some woodland creatures).

B) Prepare wood as follows:

For center Eldr, use large logs, arranged by size in groups of three. Notch each to fit the other two in triangular fashion. Notching means interlocking cut-outs fitted together (Logs will be progressively smaller as the pyramid ascends). Three long stout branches, to be used as frames, are notched on top to tepee one another and angled on the bottom to be spiked into the earth. Several cross-beams are added at every third level of wood to add kindling to that level - two per level, parallel, kindling laid straight across them. The best material for kindling is hay, dried grass, dried pine needles, dry bark, and twigs. Also good are open pine cones that have been feathered (take pocket knife and cut angularly towards the center. Stop before cutting through. Alternate along sides). Small dry sticks can also be feathered for kindling.

To arrange your ritual site, begin by clearing an area in a multiple of NINE - six feet of clear area around each three feet of fire space. Stake the centre of the site, and lead out three lengths (nine feet) of rope. Centre the bulk of the rope around the stake and attach the end of your length to it. Walk out until the nine-foot rope is taut, then walk deasil around the centre. You are acting like a protracting compass, creating a close to perfect circle. Trace this area. Then repeat at the two inner markers (6 and 3 feet respectively). You can mark the 6' point with four stakes, denoting the cardinal directions. Later you may highlight these with standing smudge pots (called *glóðker* - "glow-pots", ON) or tiki torches (*blys* - ON). Remove all flammables (leaves, sticks, paper u.s.w.) and rock off the fire ring with large stones to hearth the fire. At the base of the fire lay, notch together the three largest logs, and sprinkle kindling in the middle, starting with dried grass, leaves, and feathered pinecones. Then add feathered sticks and twigs. Build the pyramid on the frame of the three "tepeed" or tripod vertical beams, internotching wood in alternating fashion around the frame horizontally. Note: the tepee tripod is inside the structure. Occasionally add a pair of cross-beams for stability, and to sub-stage the kindling. To add flavour to the fire, mix oak and pine together with varying amounts of cherrywood. The inner ring of Eldr represents the hearth (heart of the home), the illuminating force within, and contact with the divine through nature.

The cleared area immediately outside the fire-circle, called *Miðhringr* (Middle-Ring), may be marked off with *glóðker*. Take four stout branches each at least three feet long by at least three inches circumference. You'll need 4 metallic containers (like a coffee can - the heavier the metal, the better), 4 wide-headed wood nails, a metal saw, and a nail driver. Cut the can so that it is only three inches high, then nail dead centre to the top of the wood at one end. After attaching the can to the end of the wood, carve a spiked tip at the opposite end and drive into the ground at one of the four compass cardinal directions. *Glóðker* can hold lit coals. For added excitement, fill the *glóðker* with denatured alcohol and a colouring agent: for the West, an earth-coloured or green flammable like boric acid; East, water, blue, potassium nitrate; South, fire, red, strontium nitrate; North, air, yellow, pure alcohol and a wick (or vary with your chosen elemental/directional attributions, if you wish to use colours for this purpose at all -KHG). Needless to say, if this is done, you must be especially sure that the bases are very firm and that you have full supplies for putting out the fires at once in case of accident. The use of *glóðker* is not recommended at rites where children are present, or during times when much drinking is going on.

For dealing with fires and outdoor work in general, we strongly recommend that every group get hold of a copy of the *Boy Scout Handbook*, which sets out the most clear, practical, and responsible guidelines you can have. If there is an experienced Scout in your kindred, all the better.

To make a proper need-fire according to the procedures described in the *Boy Scout Handbook* (p. 114), you will need a spindle (round at one end, tapered at the other), fireboard with holes gouged for the spindle, spreading into V-cuts for the embers to fall into, a stiff, arm-length branch with a leather thong for the bow, a block of wood or stone with a smooth depression that the round part of the spindle fits into and can spin easily in, and tinder (shredded bark, cotton). Put the tinder on the ground and the fireboard over it. Kneel on one knee with the other foot on the fireboard. Rest the round end of the spindle in the handblock (which is in the palm of your weak hand), the tapered end in one of the holes in the fireboard; wrap the bowstring around the spindle once and pull the bow strongly back and forth until heavy smoke is rising. Knock the ember into the tinder and blow it into flame, feeding it up with twigs and bits of kindling. The *Boy Scout Handbook* claims that fire has been made in 6.4 seconds, which is great if you can do it. Remember that, much practice is needed before you try to make a need-fire as part of a ritual; otherwise everyone may be standing there watching you sweat for half an hour.

Stores that have Scouting supplies may actually sell kits with a pre-made spindle, bow, and fireboard, though the ideal is to be able to make your own from natural materials. According to the *Handbook*, the best woods are "yucca, elm, red cedar, willow root, basswood, sycamore, cottonwood, poplar, soft maple, and white pine" (p. 114).

Sven Coman-Lugar also suggests a means of "cheating" - shave the tips of matches off and crumble them into the hole where the fire is to be kindled.

The *Boy Scout Handbook* also tells how to start fire with flint and steel. To do this, you need a piece of flint, a steel (see "Signs" for a drawing of a Viking Age fire-lighter, which can easily be made by anyone with minimal metal-working facilities. This is best - but an old file can also be used), punk, and tinder. Punk is made of lighter wicking (light the end, then snuff it out) or charred cloth; shredded dry bark is best for tinder. If using charred cloth, you must be sure that it is really charred - almost ready to fall into ash, but not quite. Put the cloth in a coffee can or on a base that will not burn and light it. Let it burn until the whole surface is black and embers can be seen around the edges. Put a metal lid on the can or something else (metal pot, ceramic cup) over the cloth to smother it. The best sort of cloth to use is tightly woven and of natural fibre; a bit of cotton washcloth or towel is ideal. The best pieces of flint are large enough to hold firmly between your thumb and first two fingers, but not too much bigger, with a lot of sharp edges. It is much harder to strike sparks from a

rounded edge than a jagged edge, and almost impossible to strike them from a flat surface. Striking will chip the flint and, after a few blows, will wear the edge down so that it is harder to use, so have a good supply of pieces ready.

Hold the flint and punk between your fingers; strike a glancing blow on the flint with the steel, which you aim so that the sparks will hit the punk. Place the smoldering punk in the tinder and blow it gently into flame. The punk and tinder can also be placed together on the ground and lit in the same manner (p. 115). The punk should catch easily with a good spark. If it does not, then probably you have not charred the cloth enough, or else have fried all the life out of it.

While this wouldn't do in the Scouts or in a European re-creation organization, for ritual purposes it is acceptable to have a match ready and light the match-head from the ember you have struck.

Again, it is important to practice lighting flint-and-steel fires several times beforehand, to make sure that you have both the knack of striking sparks and a supply of reliable punk.

VII. Site Responsibility

The fitting behaviour of guests in another's home has already been spoken of under "Guest-Friendliness" ("Troth and the Folk"). The same basic rules apply even more so to outdoor workings - for there we are guests in the home of the god/esses, the land-wights, and the Earth herself. It is our responsibility not only to leave a site as clean as we found it - but, if possible, to leave it in better condition. When one who is true goes walking in the woods, s/he should bring a bag to collect the trash those who do not love the land have tossed aside; when true folk gather for a holy feast outdoors, they should be all the more aware of their need to honour the Earth by caring for her. This means: collect all non-bio-degradables, whether you were the one who left them or not, and take them away with you (hopefully, you will take whatever can be recycled for recycling). Do not toss cigarette butts on the ground. Make sure that not only are fires out, but the ashes are raked into the earth so that the fire's site can no longer be seen (although, if it is a site often visited, you may choose to leave the stone ring there for other folk to use). Do not cut living wood if you can help it, and if you must, be sure to make fitting honour to the tree. Obey all park regulations, and take due note when warned of natural hazards (such as bears, in some places...). When you leave an outdoors ritual site, it should not only not look as though you had never been there, it should look, aside from necessary structures, as though no human had ever been there.

These deeds may seem like small things, but they are part of a deeply important ritual - the blessing which is made to the Earth and the land-wights when you come to a stead and when you leave (see "Rites of Need). The elder Troth is an earth-religion: without that love and honour for the world around us, there is no point to any of the other works we do.

VIII. Feast-Planning

This must be done well in advance. The host/ess must decide what s/he is willing to provide as far as food, drink, and such are concerned; then the group must decide how to make up any lacks.

With groups of less than forty, the most practical means of arranging a feast, as has been mentioned a couple of times before in this book, is potluck, B.Y.O.B. If everyone brings food and a six-pack or a couple of bottles, then there will likely be enough of everything for everyone. The only caution is that the host/ess or rite leader should call the folk and find out what everyone is planning to bring well in advance. This way you avoid ending up with loads of dessert and no main dish. Stew is a popular choice, being easy to cook for a large gathering and relatively cheap. Bread is always in demand, and whoever is responsible for co-ordinating the feast should make sure that several people bring loaves. Roasts are nice, but more pricey; and if serving a roast, you have to have a very clear idea of how many folk will actually be showing up.

For various reasons, planning the quantity of food for Heathen feasts is different than planning it for a dinner party. This is partly because of the length of most feasts - anything from a few hours to a full twenty-four - and partly because Heathens tend to eat and drink a lot on festive occasions. This is fully in keeping with the spirit of our forebears, but must be planned for; few things are more shameful than running out of food or drink at a holy feast. At normal parties, one plans for roughly half a bottle of wine and six to eight ounces of meat per person. The latter allowance should probably be doubled for a Heathen feast, the former - is dealt with by B.Y.O.B.

The Heathen community is also finding other ways of dealing with food and drink for larger events. Both mead and ale are usually brewed in five-gallon lots, and homebrew, aside from usually being better than commercial alcohol (not to mention more traditional and more fun), is a lot cheaper than store-bought. Lately, some groups that live in more rural areas have also taken to butchering their own animals and roasting them whole - again, much cheaper than buying the meat in the store, though only to be done by those who already know how to butcher an animal swiftly and humanely, and live in places where this activity is normal and permitted. One pig or sheep provides food for a lot of people.

Once you start getting above thirty-five people, however, potluck becomes more and more impractical for a ritual communal feast. This is the point at which it is time to start charging a small feast-fee in advance, as is now done in the Society for Creative Anachronism and at Ásatrú events such as the yearly Troth Ostara. With the financial side taken care of, Garth or Hof volunteers should be able to put on a large and reasonably good feast. The SCA has been doing this for many years, and may even be a good resource for practical advice and information about halls or sites that can be hired, although they must be approached with caution (see "Organizations and Resources"). If a feast-fee is charged, then either

alcohol cannot be served (must be B.Y.O.B.) or the co-ordinator must find out what the regulations concerning the service/sale of alcohol in the area are.

IX. Security

This becomes more important as groups become larger and more diverse. In days of old, violence at feasting was quite a common thing. We would like to avoid this, the more so since many of the true still come to feasts and rites armed with swords and other weapons, as befits free folk. While there has never yet been any violence at Troth rituals, other çsatrœ groups have experienced quite serious difficulties.

It is, thus, strongly recommended that there be at least one person in ten who is both willing to stay sober and watchful and capable of dealing sensibly and effectively with difficulties up to and including drunks with drawn swords. Caution is clearly the most important watch-word here, of course! More often, the problem is simply someone making him/herself obnoxious to the point where s/he needs to be firmly told to sit down and shut up or take her/his leave. Having designated Watch-Thanes to deal with such problems saves wear and tear on everyone.

It is unfortunate, but true, that there are people in the world who do not like Heathens and will go to some lengths to make that clear. The chapter "Under the Law: Rights, Choices, and Dangers" outlines the best ways of dealing with such people. However, other Pagans (especially when holding rites in isolated areas) have been put in a position where there was neither time nor opportunity to call the police to deal with the problem. Here, the best advice we can give is: Know Your Area. If you live near a large community of armed fundamentalists, or hold your rites in a park frequented by gangs of one sort or another, then you had best be prepared to set lookouts and protect yourself at need. The best option in such cases may even be hiring professional security or (assuming that you have made sure that every detail of your event conforms to local law) requesting a police lookout; but failing that, you are ultimately responsible for yourself. As a warrior tradition in which swords and spears are a part of adult ritual dress, the elder Troth has a certain advantage over other Pagan groups in this respect; however, the Way of the Gun beats the Way of the Sword just about every time, and ending a ritual with either the police, an ambulance, or both coming to take you or unwanted visitors away is a Bad Thing. Be sensible and alert, and try to keep the testosterone levels down to a dull roar.

X. Alcohol

"It's still good enough for Odin,
when mead to horn has flowed in.
Though a hangover may be bodin',
it's good enough for me!" (That Old-Time Religion, anon.)

Alcohol is the base of all the holy drinks of the Northern people; the name of one of our holiest rites, "symbel", is even used as a general term in Old Norse for alcoholic drink. It has been the consciousness-altering chemical of choice for the Northern Europeans at least since the Bronze Age, and quite possibly from earlier times.

Beer, wine, mead, and their mightier distillations are the very life-blood of Heathen feasting, ritual, and fellowship. Where our forebears filled their blessing-bowls with the actual blood of slaughtered beasts, we fill ours with those equally holy fluids, mead and ale.

However, as we all should know by now, alcohol should be treated with great care. A degree of mellowness was not only allowed, but desired at holy feasts in the days of our forebears; while drunkenness was never condemned save when it led to rash words and boasts that could not be fulfilled. We have to modify our attitude towards drink in modern times, largely because of our changing technology. In the old days, a drunk might have fallen off his/her horse, or even steered it over a cliff - but s/he could not have steered it head-on into the next lane of traffic. In some places, law now provides that the person who serves the drink is responsible if a drunk person has a traffic accident. Finally, alcohol can be physically and psychologically addictive, and, taken in great excess or over a long period of time, can cause bodily damage up to and including death.

Also, it must be remembered that alcohol was generally in shorter supply in elder times. The strong ale we can buy in pubs or at the grocery store was usually brewed only for holy feasts, while what was generally available was more akin to "light beer", "near-beer", or "low-alcohol lager". Mead, being honey-based, was even rarer, while distillates were basically unknown (though, it is true, beer kept over the winter could develop to startlingly high strengths, which undoubtedly added a little extra energy to the clashing of spear on shield at springtime moots). Thus the drinking at feast-times was more enthusiastic because the drink was mostly less available. There are many true folk today who seldom drink except at rites.

It would not be in keeping with the spirit of our forebears to discourage deep drinking at events (although loud-mouthed drunks at symbel were considered rather uncouth), or to condemn general drinking, so long as it does not lessen the atheling-thews of the person in question. Obviously, someone whose ability to work is damaged by his/her drinking, who is dependent on alcohol for any activities s/he must perform, or who allows drink to harm his/her physical health, has a serious problem as long as s/he continues to drink. This is when we, while staying true to our tradition, can say that alcohol

has become not only a bad, but a spiritually damaging thing - and should, if necessary, be forsaken altogether rather than allowed to become something that lessens one's honour, strength, or productivity.

Consumption of much alcohol at a feast, however, is quite traditionally acceptable. But the Troth stresses that this must be dealt with in certain ways today - with the responsibility and self-rule that characterize true folk. On no account must people who are not completely sober be allowed to drive home. Some kindreds require that guests give up their car-keys when they walk in the door. Other groups have good folk, staying sober for one reason or another, who volunteer to drive those who should not drive themselves. At a larger event, especially when folk have driven from a long way off, it is important that basic crash space be provided so that everyone who needs to can spend the night there. If someone has drunk enough to be obnoxious or dangerous to those around him/her, s/he should be gently, but firmly, removed so that s/he can sober up before doing anything that s/he might regret later. Those who break things while drunk should still consider themselves accountable for them when sober: to be truly free-standing, you must be responsible for whatever you do in whatever condition you are. Sometimes this means embarrassing apologies for whatever you may have done or said, paying for whatever you may have broken or soiled beyond cleaning, or accepting with good (if hung-over) humour the uncoveted "Egill Skalla-Grimsson Drekk-til-at-Spyja ("Drink Till You Barf") Memorial Award" and all accompanying teasing. If you find that the pleasure of a hearty skinful of mead at feast is not worth the prices you pay the morning after, learn from experience (or, even better, from other peoples' experiences) and think before you start drinking!

Finally, it must be noted that there are many true folk who, for whatever reason, cannot or will not drink so much as a ceremonial sip. Such folk should never have alcohol forced upon them. There are at least two ways of dealing with this in symbol or at holy rites. First, it is enough for someone who cannot drink to gape his/her mouth above the horn - to breathe in its might. Secondly, should that not seem fitting, the non-drinker may simply take the hallowed horn and raise her/his own horn or cup, knock the rim of one against that or the other, make the toast, drink, and spill a few drops of his/her own drink into the blessing-horn. Non-drinkers should warn the godwo/man ahead of time so as to assure that the rite has not been set up in such a way that they will be forced either to take a sip of alcohol or to set themselves outside the company of the true. While alcohol is traditionally linked with Heathenry as deeply as are animal sacrifices, both, at need, can be dispensed with: just as a bread-beast can be blessed and given to the gods by those who do not have the facilities to slaughter their own animals, so can many draughts be hallowed. Some are mighty in themselves - water from a running spring is very greatly holy; apple juice holds all the blessing of the fruit, and so forth - but even tap water can be made into a powerful draught by means of runes risted and scraped into it. It is the substance, not the form, which matters most in the end.

Particularly if someone is not drinking for personal reasons, it may be well to arrange matters so that they can know that their abstinence is an aid to the whole group, if this can be done without making them feel self-conscious or patronized. Asking them to be designated drivers is one practical way. They may also be asked to stand as hof-warders and ritual supervisors or guides, especially if spae-work or other forms of magic are taking place, when at least one clear-headed warder is needed. Few things are grimmer than being made to feel set outside from a rite that should be a time of coming together: a person who has decided that their drinking has become a problem is already going to feel isolated at an event where drinking is part of the fellowship to some degree, and it is the Kindred's duty to prevent that. Someone who is fighting an inner battle does not need their Kindred to stand in the line against them, and is likely to be exceptionally sensitive to any hint of alienation, slight, or criticism - which, in turn, will make them wonder why the Hel they are bothering to try to deal with their problem, since fighting it seems to be bringing them so much more misery and annoyance than just getting drunk was, without even the accompanying pleasure. This is a delicate business, and there are more ways than can be named to damage a recovering alcoholic even while trying to help her or him. The biggest problem is probably that someone who has admitted to him/herself that s/he has a difficulty with alcohol is likely to feel of little worth, and unfortunately those around her/him are often likely to agree with the opinion - even to have expressed it in an effort to get their friend to realize that there is a problem - which in turn makes maintaining sobriety that much more difficult: someone who is given reason, externally or internally, to despise him/herself is more likely to drink out of self-hatred or a desire to escape that misery. This feeling on both sides that a drinking problem makes its sufferer less worthy - despite everyone's best efforts - can come out in the smallest things - especially in a situation such as a feast, when the attitude of someone attempting to be helpful even while holding a beer in their own hand may seem to be "I can drink because I'm all right - you can't because you're defective."

As for advice on how to handle recovery from alcohol problems within a Kindred: this is a hugely complicated issue, and should you be faced with it - either as the one recovering or as a supportive Kindred member or leader - I strongly recommend that you do your best to research information on alcoholism and alcoholism counselling. In general, from my own experience, I can suggest that perhaps the best thing for a supportive Kindred to do is simply to respect that this person is not drinking, and quietly arrange rites and celebration to allow that respect, without attempting any form of parental-type supervision unless it has been specifically requested: allowing a non-drinker's sobriety is necessary, but making them feel that it is being enforced unasked, with no respect for their own free choice and adult rights, may be severely counterproductive. It is also well to keep in mind that there are many types and degrees of recovery from alcohol problems. For many people, complete abstinence is the best - often the only - way. Some are able to impose strict personal limits and

keep to them, or to take a ritual sip from a horn of ale and then let it go. Sometimes drinking problems can be caused or exacerbated by external difficulties, bad habits, or even real brain-chemistry problems such as depression which can be treated; such people may in time be able to drink again without overdoing it. And sometimes recovering alcoholics fall off the wagon: when that happens, it is their duty to pick themselves up and go on again, and their Kindred's duty not to make them feel so bad about it that they give up hope and stop trying. However angry or disappointed in your Kindred member you may be if this happens, think before you speak and ask yourself, "Is what I want to say going to make him/her hate him/herself enough to just keep drinking?" Sometimes, for some people, a caring kick in the butt is necessary - but at the wrong time, or for the wrong person, it could turn out to be a harmful kick in the face instead.

For non-drinkers and for children, a recipe for a non-alcoholic meadlike drink for ritual use is given in the chapter on "Brewing and Crafts". Several brands of non-alcoholic beer can also be bought at most large stores; Clausthaler is probably the best. Non-alcoholic wine is likewise available and appropriate for rituals, although its quality is not particularly high. Water is a very holy fluid in its own right, especially if drawn from a running stream (but beware pollution! It may be better to try to find a bottled mineral water from one of the lands of our forebears). Apple juice is also mighty and holy, especially fitting at Winternights and Yule; pear juice (perhaps etymologically related to Perthro, the rune-stave embodying the might of örlög) is especially fitting in rites involving Frija and/or the Norns, and at sýmbel where the horn embodies the Well of Wyrd. Cherry juice, plum juice, u.s.w. do not have any specific recorded correspondences, but any fruit that was known to our forebears is appropriate for rituals. Milk is most fitting for blessings to the goddesses, idises, house-ghosts, and land-wights. Given current Scandinavian and German use, a pretty good case could probably be made for designating coffee as a ritual/celebratory drink; and in fact, although the tradition can only date from the last two or three hundred years, it is used as such in the "Lucy" celebrations of Continental Scandinavia and the "Sun-Coffee" festival of Iceland.

It is extremely tacky to serve Kool-Aid at feasts. Despite certain superficial resemblances borne by some Ásatrú folk (and the fact that many of us started out in that church), we are not Lutherans!

Contributors

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Chapter XXXVIII

Rituals of Need

As well as the blessings of the times of life and the year, there are also many rituals which can be carried out whenever there is need for them. These include daily rites, drink-toasts, blessings to the god/esses, blood-siblinghood, kinship in a Hearth or Garth (or a personal pledge to the ways of the North for those who have no kindred of the true about them), and, of course, the Hammer Rite.

Daily Rites

These are the small rites that can (and should) be done every day, or whenever it seems fitting. Living with the god/esses and our elder kin is not something that only happens at the great blessings of the year, or when need drives us to call on them; it is something that should be woven into the warp and weft of our lives.

Hail to the Sun

The "Hail to the Sun" is not, strictly speaking, a part of traditional Northern practice. The idea of a blessing spoken at the Sun's four steads - dawn, mid-day, sunset, and midnight - came to us from ceremonial magic, and may find its ultimate origin in Rudyard Kipling's "A Song to Mithras". The basic idea was picked up independently by different Nordacists in recent years and adapted, with varying degrees of effort and success, to Teutonic practice. However, it has been proven very useful in several ways. Its basic purpose is to make the speaker more sensitive to the flows of might throughout the day, so that s/he will better be able to work blessings that center around the Sun's times (such as the dawn rites of Ostara, for instance). Also, it can be spoken (or whispered) swiftly at the fitting times without a great deal of ceremony, and thus serves to remind the speaker, where-ever s/he is, of the might of the god/esses and the worlds about us.

Several different versions of hailing the Sun have been put forth, including Kveldulf Gundarsson's (*Teutonic Magic*, 1990), Edred Thorsson's (*A Book of Troth*, 1989), and, much closer to Crowley's Egyptian original, Ymir Thunarsson's (*Idunna* IV, 3, 16, 1992). At Grendel Grettison's request, KveldúlfR also recently composed an Old Norse version (in *galdralag*). Although the Troth does not go out of its way to encourage Old Norse as a "liturgical language", our main stream of practice focusing rather on Saxon English, since there are a number of folk out there who do like Old Norse (and others who may prefer the English translation of this variant of the call), it is included here.

Sól, komðu heil! skínandi í morgni,
ásynja, agæt ok fögr.

Fyr Dellings durom drottning, vís sigr,
heil skaltu til himins,
heil frá nifli ok nótt!

Sól, komðu heil! skínandi í himni,
ásynja, agæt ok fögr.

Í himins sali, helga, vís sigr,
heil frá dögum drag
heil frá himni ríð.

Sól, komðu heil! skínandi í aptan,
ásynja, agæt ok fögr.

Í brennanda eldi, björt, vís sigr,
heil komðu fra himni,
heil ríð niðr í nótt.

Sól, komðu heil! skínandi í myrkri,
ásynja, agæt ok fögr.

Í nifli ok nótt, nornljós, vís sig,
heil komðu frá kveldi,
heil dragðu til dags.

Sun, hail to thee! shining in morning,
far-famed goddess, and fair.

Before doors of Delling, drightine, show sig,
holy rise you to heaven,
holy from nibel and night.

Sun, hail to thee! shining in heaven,
far-famed goddess, and fair.

In heaven's halls, holy, show sig,
holy draw up from dawn,
holy from heaven ride.

Sun, hail to thee! shining in evening,
far-famed goddess, and fair.

In burning fire, bright one, show sig.
holy come you from heaven,
holy ride down to the dark.

Sun, hail to you! shining in darkness,
far-famed goddess, and fair.

In nibel and night, norn-light, show sig.
holy swing down from setting,
holy draw up to day.

Blessing of Food

Whenever we eat or drink, we should remember the sources from which our nourishment comes, and the uses to which we will put it. We are fed by the gifts of the earth and the heavens, the gods and goddesses; the might of our food strengthens our bodies and our souls, so that we in turn may give our blessings to them.

The simplest means of hallowing food and drink has been practiced in Ásatrú at least since the beginning of the Rebirth - the Hammer-Signing. Start with a closed fist, roughly at head-height. See a ball of white brightness striking into your hand from above. Bring your fist down to just above the food and see the shining might sink into it, then move your hand across the bottom of the Hammer-sign (see illustration, "Signs"). If you are in a mixed family group, or other situations where a large and dramatic Hammer-sign might be a problem, a small and quick version of the gesture can be made.

Again, we emphasize that the Hammer-sign is not to be taken as a sign of the particular cult of Thonar, nor even of the Ases (as opposed to the Wans). It is the general sign of hallowing, and thus fitting for all to use. However, other signs may also be used: the walknot can be traced for Wodan, the spiral for Frija, the sun-wheel for the Wans, or whatever else seems fitting.

At a gathering of true folk, or whenever it seems appropriate, a longer blessing may be spoken:

Hail to the gods, hail the goddesses,
holy kin, here we feast.

The seeds were sown fair shoots came forth.

hail, the all-giving earth,
hail to the heavens high!

May our might and main wax great,
growing from frith-full feast.
works to wreak and Wyrd to dree,
in are and troth living aye,
with god-kin aye feasting glad!"

Greeting a Guest

Whenever a guest comes in the front door, at the very least, they should be asked what they want to drink. This is simple guest-friendliness.

If the guest is a true person (especially if s/he has come from some way off), and/or if s/he is coming to a ritual, s/he should be greeted with a welcoming horn of mead, ale, or wine (or the nonalcoholic equivalent thereof for non-drinkers). This should be given to him/her by the hall-frowe, if there is one. At a large ritual, one of the women should be stationed by the door to greet the guests. As always, it should be remembered that this is not a servile role: as ruler of all the hall's secrets and its inner life, it is the woman's choice to accept guests into the fellowship by offering them the holy horn. This act brings are to both the giver and the guest. Here follows a short list of greeting formulas which may be spoken:

General:

Welcome I give the wanderer here,
with bright and blessed draught.

Greeted art thou with grith and frith,
hail in holy hall!

Mead:

Mead I offer you, mighty helm-tree ("gem-tree" for a woman),
sig-wives' sweetness and joy.

Kvasir's life-draught, drink, greeting-full,
hail in holy hall!

Wine:

Wine I offer you, web-shuttle's Hilde ("war-Balder shining"),
riches of Rhine's fair banks.

Wish-fro's draught, drink, greeting-full,
hail in holy hall!

Ale:

Ale I offer you, awesome ring-breaker,
Byggvir's blood strong-worked.

Draft brewed by Ægir, drink, greeting-full,
hail in holy hall!

Before drinking, the guest should then raise the horn and make a toast to the frowe and the hall, such as:

Hail to the giver! to goddess of welcome,
hail to this holy hall!

All grith I vow with greeting drink,

and frith with all folk within.

Drink-Toasts

These toasts can be learned and spoken at any times when you lift a horn or glass, or they can be used in symbol when your own skald-wod is a little lacking. It is good to have a range of fair-sounding staves ready for use at need.

Wodan

Hail to Wodan, Walhall's drighten,
hail the rister of runes.

All-Father, Yggr, eagle-high, wurm-deep,
hail for singing spear,
hail for mead of might!

Tiw

Hail to Tiw, true and high god,
worthy leavings of Wolf.

One-Handed, awesome, oath-god mighty,
bright Irminsul's upholder,
hail thee, holy law-god!

Frija

Hail to Frija, Fensalir's ruler,
weaver of wisdom's threads.

Bright queen of household, holy wyrd-kenner,
seeress, spindle-turner,
hail for care and kin!

Thonar

Hail to Thonar, thurses' slayer,
warder of wih-stead aye.

Wurm's lone bane, Bilskirnir's king,
holding the high-seat posts,
hail the Hammer-God!

Sif

Hail to Sif, shining-haired goddess,
golden as ripened grain.

Rowan-warder, rowner of ørlögs,
hail thee, Thonar's bright bride,
hail thee, hair-fair queen!

Balder

Hail to Balder, bright one, slain-god,
hulled in Hella's halls.

Wax aye in might, waiting in darkness,

shining in steads below,
hail thee, hope of our souls!

Fro Ing

Hail Fro Ing for frith and joy,
greetings to grith-stead's god.
giver of harvest, helmed as boar-warder
hail thee, mound-god hidden,
hail thee, holy of gods!

The Frowe

Hail the Frowe, falcon-winging,
Brisingamen's bright maid,
fiery as gold fair-lighting in sea,
singer of clear seið-songs,
hail thee, Lady of love!

Loki

Hail thee, Loki, aloft bright-faring,
Wodan's friend, rich in wit.
Thonar's wise wain-friend, wily gift-bringer,
have thy oath-given horn,
not lies, but laughter I hail!

Heimdallr

Hail to Heimdallr, high-minded god,
shining above Bifröst's span.

Nine mothers' son, nine sisters' bairn,
rowner of runes to earth's folk,

Hail, all holy kins' sire!

Skaði

Hail to Skaði, shadow-dark maid,
bright-shining bride of gods.

Winner of weregild, weaponed for battle,
mother of mighty troth-warders,
hail in thy holy steads.

Gefjon

Hail to Gefjon, giver of life,
plough-goddess, proving the earth,
maids' goddess kindly, keeping them safe,
teller of tales to kings,
hail, with oxen and ard!

Wulþur

Hail to Wulþur, wielding thy bow-might,
hunter in high places, hail!

Shining on snow-shoes, ski-god track-wise,
oath-ring's hallower awesome,
hail, with shield and shaft!

Forebears

Hail ye all, my elder kin,
stock and strength of my clan,

In mound deep-rooted rowning your wisdom,
spring forth to live in my soul,
as I stand true in your troth.

Blessings to God/esses

These are the blessings that can be given to a single god/ess at need, or simply whenever you would like to touch them (but remember the words of the *Hávamál* - better not to make blessing than to make too many, for a gift looks ever for a gift!). You will mark that they follow a basic plan - hailing, horn-sharing, speech, blessing-pouring, farewell - with a particular sort of gift that is fitting to the god/ess in question. The writing of a blessing to each of the god/esses would probably be a book in itself: the ones given here are Wodan, Frija, Fro Ing, and Eir (the "Feast of Thonar" blessing, with only slight changes, can be done as a general Thonar-blessing whenever there is need).

Wodan-Blessing

You will need a hornfull of mead, cider, or wine, a blessing bowl, a knife or spear (if you have one), and a deep blue candle; if recels are burnt, they should be a mixture of juniper, mugwort, and ash wood or leaves (remember that yew is *poisonous*, whether eaten or burnt). The gift for Wodan should be a small human figure (something biodegradable, such as bread) with a noose lightly wrapped around his neck. Before beginning the rite, you should sit for some time with this figure in your hands, feeling might and main flow through you into him until he seems alive. At this time you may even sprinkle him with a drop of water and give him a suitable name. Any of the Ás- or Os-names are fitting (such as Ásmundr, Ásbjörn, Osmund, Oswald), since these names show one given to the god, as he is about to be. In this rite, we will speak of him as Aswald.

To make the gift, you will either need to go outside to a tree or bring a branch in and fasten it up to use as a hanging-tree for Wodan. If the latter, be sure that there is a wide tray of earth underneath it to catch the drips when you pour the contents of the blessing-bowl over your sacrifice.

I. *Hammer-Rite.*

II. *Light the candle and/or recels, saying,*

I light the way, the worlds between,
my call in kindled flame.
show bright the path shine bright for him,
whom heart now hails forth.

III. *Stand in elhaz-stance and call,*

Raven's blót-goði! Gungnir's wielder!

Feeder of Freki, hear me!

Sig-Father shining! shield uplifting,
walkurjas' wish-father, hear me!

Wild Hunt's leader, wolf-wood howler,
draugs' dark drighthen, hear me!

Reaper of barley red on the field,
helm-trees' high chooser, hear me!

Rune-winning Hroptr, rowner of wisdom,
seeker of Suttung's mead, hear me!

Teacher of spell-lore, lighting our skull-clouds,
loosener of all locks, hear me!

To Middle-Garth ring, I rune thee forth,
haring from Hliðskjálf, High One, adown.

Father of folk who's fared here often,
I call thee at need, come here to my stead.

To Middle-Garth ring, I rune thee forth,
riding on Sleipnir, shining mount gray...

(fill the horn and raise it)

I bid thee with horn of holy drink,

Welcome, thou wise one... ..Wodan! - to hall.

IV. *Pause a little while, until you can feel the might of the god about you. Then sign the horn with the walknot, saying,*

Wodan, this horn is hallowed to thee,
blessed, I raise it, I bid thee share.

Pour a draught into the blessing bowl, then sprinkle a drop on Aswald, then drink yourself. Do this three times, till the horn is empty.

V. *Raise the blessing bowl. Hold it silently for a few moments, meditating on the god.*

VI. *Pick up Aswald and hold him high, saying.*

Wodan, I give thee this chosen one here,
I give thee Aswald awed by your might,
signed to thee, Sigtryggr, Sváfnir, take him!
signed with the walknot as Wodan's gift.

Scratch the walknot lightly over Aswald's heart with the point of your knife or spear. Sprinkle his head with a few drops from the blessing bowl. Stand holding him in your right hand, the blessing bowl in your left. Either speak or think of the matter in which you wanted Wodan's aid, rede, or help, and open your mind to him in turn.

VII. *Go in silence to the stead where you will make the sacrifice, carrying Aswald, the blessing bowl, and your knife or spear. Tie the free end of Aswald's noose over a branch and ready the blade with its tip touching the walknot. Say,*

"Aswald, I give thee to Wodan!"

as you plunge the blade into him, tugging down against the hanging-rope with your other hand (if he is made of bread, be careful not to rip his head off!). Almost at once, dash the contents of the blessing bowl over Aswald and the tree. You should feel all the might that you put into Aswald earlier bursting free to Wodan, flowing out as the mead drips to the ground like the blood of the sacrifice. Stand there until you can feel that Aswald's "life" has all flowed out for Wodan.

VIII. *Come back to your harrow in stillness, without speaking to anyone else or looking them in the eyes. Stand in silence, waiting to see if you sense anything more from the god.*

IX. *Say,*

Welcome art ever, Wanderer dark-cloaked,

holy within my hall.

Hail in thy coming, hail in thy guesting,
hail in wending thy ways!

Fare when thou wish'st to fare,
while when it be thy will.

Blow out the candle. The rite is over.

Frija-Blessing

You will need a hornful of fruit-based drink (such as kirschwasser or apple schnapps) or good wine, a blessing bowl, a light blue or white candle, a necklace or other Frija-type gift (silver and/or rock crystal are preferable, but household items are also acceptable - remember that you will be throwing it into the water and try not to choose anything pollutant). Again, you should sit with the gift before the rite begins and charge it with might. If you use recels, they should be composed of birch, flax or linseeds, mugwort, motherwort, and/or yarrow (not all of these herbs are needful; this is just a general choice of possibilities).

I. *Light the candle and/or recels, saying,*

I light the way the worlds between,
my call in kindled flame.
show bright the path shine bright for her,
whom my heart hails forth.

II. *Stand in elhaz stance, calling,*

Mother of Balder! Maid of Fjörgynn,
holder of home-steads, hear me!

Blesser of bairns and birther of god-kin,
Idis of Ase-Garth, hear me!

Spinner all shining, spindle's fair turner,
flax-deep in Fen-Halls, hear me!

Stringer of loom-threads, linen's weaver,
wool-wise and Wyrd-wise, hear me!

Goose-bright and birch-white goddess in marshlands,
Seeress silent, hear me!

Queen of the heavens, quiet in fen-depths,
ørlög's all-knower, hear me!

To Middle-Garth's ring I rown thee forth,
faring from Fen-Halls, fair one, to hall,

Mother of gods, make your way here,
I call thee at need, come here, to my stead.

To Middle-Garth's ring I rown thee forth,
flying as falcon, feather-clad, here...

Fill the horn and raise it.

I bid thee with horn of holy drink,

Welcome, thou fair one... Frija!...to hall!

IV. *Pause a little while, until you can feel the might of the goddess about you. Then sign the horn with the spiral and say,*

Frija, this horn is hallowed to thee,
blessed, I raise it, I bid thee share.

Pour a draught into the blessing bowl, then drink yourself. Do this three times, emptying the horn on the last draught.

V. *Raise the blessing-bowl and hold it for a few moments, thinking deeply on the goddess.*

VI. *Pick up the gift and hold it high. Say,*

Frija, I give thee gift for thy joy,
Hlín, I offer it, hold it thy own.
quickener of life, thou queen most fair,
here do I gladly give thee this (name gift).

Sprinkle gift with a few drops from the blessing-bowl. Stand with the gift in your right hand, the blessing-bowl in the left, thinking deeply on the matter in which you wanted the goddess' help and rede and opening your mind to her in turn.

VII. *Take gift and blessing-bowl to the body of water you have chosen. Stand on the edge a few moments, thinking on Frija. When you can feel her still might about you and sense her being in the waters, cast the gift and the contents of the blessing bowl in as you say,*

This do I give to Frija!

VIII. *Come back to the harrow in silence, neither speaking to another person nor looking them in the eyes. Stand in stillness, waiting to see if you feel or hear anything more from the goddess.*

IX. *Say,*

Welcome art ever, wise queen of heavens,
holy within my hall.

Hail in thy coming, hail in thy guesting,
fare when thou wish'st to fare,
while when it be thy will.

Fro Ing-Blessing

You will need a hornfull of good ale, a blessing-bowl and sprinkling-twig, a hallowed sax, a bread baked in the shape of an ox with golden horns (this can be done by brushing a glaze of egg-yolk over the horns before baking, or by covering them with yellow frosting afterward), a small shovel or trowel, and a golden, light green, or light blue candle. If you use recels, they might include chammomile, a few grains of wheat, barley, or rye, dried apples, oak bark or chips, rosemary, and/or bay (not a native plant, but traditionally used for wreathing the Yule boar and therefore thought of as fitting to Fro Ing). As with Wodan's Aswald, you should sit with the ox before the rite to fill it with life.

I. *Light the candle and/or recels, saying,*

I light the way the worlds between,
my call in kindled flame.
show bright the path shine bright for him,
whom my heart hails forth.

II. *Stand in elhaz-stance, calling,*

Son of Nerthus! Njörðr's son,
freer of fetters, hear me!

Battle-boar shining, bright in the darkness,
swine-mounted, ship-keeper, hear me!

Alf-god and howe-god, holy clan's father,
from mound and might-steeds, hear me!

King of the land, kin-ruler's wisdom,
awesome in Alf-Home, hear me!

Gods' blessing-maker, given as oath-bond,
fro of the frith-stead, hear me!

Gold-giver, grain-giver, grith ever warding,
armed with thy antler, hear me!

To Middle-Garth's ring I rown thee forth,
on Gold-Bristled's back, bright one, to hall,

Wan-god mighty, wend thy way here,
I call thee at need, come here to my stead.

To Middle-Garth's ring I rown thee forth,
faring from Alf-Home, Fro Ing, to me...

Fill the horn and raise it.

I bid thee with horn of holy drink,

Welcome, thou frith-full one... Fro Ing!...to hall.

IV. Pause a little while, until you can feel the might of the god about you. Then sign the horn with the sun-wheel and say,

Fro Ing, this horn is hallowed to thee,
blessed, I raise it, I bid thee share.

Pour a draught into the blessing bowl, then drink yourself. Do this three times, emptying the horn on the last draught.

V. Raise the blessing-bowl and hold it for a few moments, thinking deeply on the god.

VI. Pick up the ox and hold it high. Say,

Fro Ing, I give thee this ox all mighty,
my hof-ox, high-horned, hallowed to thee.

The ard's strong drawer, the aurochs' house-sib,

Gold-horned and gladsome, I give Njörðr's son.

Sprinkle ox with a few drops from the blessing-bowl. Stand with the ox in your right hand, the blessing-bowl in your left, thinking deeply on the matter in which you wanted the god's help and rede and opening your mind to him in turn.

VII. Bear ox, blessing bowl, knife, and trowel outside. Dig a hole big enough to put the ox in, feeling the earth beneath your hands, thinking deeply on Fro Ing and feeling his might as you do this. When the hole is dug, lift the ox and slash its throat or plunge the knife into its breast, saying, "I give thee to Fro Ing!" As you do this, dash the contents of the blessing bowl over the ox and the earth. You should feel all the life-might you put into the ox earlier bursting free for Fro Ing as the ale flows down like the blood of the sacrifice. When the ox's life has all drained out, set it in the hole and carefully heap the earth back into a little mound over it.

VIII. *Come back to the harrow in silence, neither speaking to another person nor looking them in the eyes. Stand in stillness, waiting to see if you feel or hear anything more from the god.*

IX. *Say,*

Welcome art ever, Wan-god, beloved,
holy within my hall.

Hail in thy coming, hail in thy guesting,
fare when thou wish'st to fare,
while when it be thy will.

Eir-Blessing

Since a blessing to Eir is likely to be done when someone needs healing, the form of this blessing differs slightly from the others given here. If possible, the person who needs healing (hereafter spoken of as the Blessed) should actually be there, though this blessing can also be done for someone far away. If the one doing the rite is also the one who needs healing, the rite can be changed at the needful points (I instead of we, and so forth). Should you wish to simply do this as a rite for getting in touch with Eir, it can also easily be changed to follow the pattern of the other blessings more closely.

You will need a hornful of milk (unless the Blessed cannot drink milk for health reasons, in which case clear spring water may be used - since this blessing is to a goddess of healing rather than a house-wight, semi-skimmed or skimmed milk may also be used), a blessing bowl, a sprinkling-twig (birch is best), a bread cow, a long piece of copper wire which can easily be twisted into a simple arm-ring, and a green or white candle. If recels are used, they should include birch and comfrey if possible.

I. *Light the candle and/or recels, saying,*

We (I, and so forth through the rite) light the way,
the worlds between,
our call in kindled flame.

Show bright the path, shine bright for her,
whom our hearts hail forth.

II. *Stand in elhaz stance, calling,*

Lady of life! from Lyfja-Berg,
healer most holy, hear us!

Wise in all wort-cunning, weal aye bringing,
worker of wholeness, hear us!

Herb-crafty, kindly, keeper of life-doors,
Menglöð's maids among, hear us!

Bringer of lore of brews and salves all,
Awe-foe to illness, hear us!

Bone-setter, blood-rinser bane of all hag-shot,
warder of wholeness, hear us!

Sharp-knived and -sighted, singing the help-runes,
honey-handed one, hear us!

To Middle-Garth's ring we rown thee forth,
fare from Lyfja-Berg, lady, to hall.

With mortar and pestle, make thy way here,

We call thee at need, come here, to our stead.

To Middle-Garth's ring we rown thee forth,
from mountain faring, maid of craft, here...

Fill the horn and raise it.

We bid thee with horn of holy drink,

Welcome, thou awesome one... Eir!...to our hall!

IV. Pause a little while, until you can feel the might of the goddess about you. Then sign the horn with the sun-wheel and say,

Eir, this horn is hallowed to thee,
we ask thy blessings blithe.

A wholeness-drink, a draught of strength,
hallowed by healer's hands,
blessed by beloved Eir.

Pour the whole lot into the blessing bowl. The Blesser and the Blessed should raise it and hold it together for a few moments, thinking on the goddess. If the rite is being done for someone who is not there, the Blesser should also do his/her best to see that person becoming whole and well.

V. The Blesser then takes the copper wire and winds it into an armring that will fit the Blessed, saying,

I wind the ring, I weave the blessing, before Eir's bright-gleaming eyes. Let Eir's might flow through it aye - healing in bone, healing in blood, healing in heart and soul, healing where-ever hurt stands; driving out all elves of ill, scattering far all spells of ill, unwinding all works of ill.

The Blesser puts the ring on the Blessed's wrist (if the Blessed is not there, lays it on the harrow) and sprinkles it from the blessing bowl, saying,

Eir hallow and heal you aye.

S/he then raises the blessing bowl and says,

Eir has hallowed this healing draught,
drink, and wax in weal.

All ill the draught shall drive from you,
be whole in heart and hide,
be whole in body and hug.

The Blessed drinks half the contents of the bowl. If the Blessed is not there, the ring should simply be dropped into the bowl as the Blesser thinks deeply on the might within streaming from the sunken ring to the Blessed.

VI. The Blesser and Blessed lift the cow together. They may speak together or the Blesser may speak alone.

We offer to Eir Auðumbra's kin,
this gift to the goddess kind,
with thanks for weal and wellness here,
we hail you, healer bright!

VII. Take cow and blessing-bowl to a fitting stead - a quiet place, by choice with trees and water. Stand there for a little while, thinking on the might of Eir. Set the cow down by the foot of a tree and pour the contents of the blessing-bowl over it,

saying,

Eir, Healer, we give thee this gift, blessed ever to thee. Take it as you will, healing (name of blessed) in the time and way that is best.

If the Blessed is not there, take the arm-ring back and give it to him/her later. If this, for whatever reason, will not be possible, you should wind it tightly about an eastward-arching tree-limb, saying,

Eir, rist thy healing-runes on holy tree; let the ash (*for a man*; elm *for a woman*) of the high ones grow well through this.

VIII. *Leaving the cow where it is - Eir will take it through the course of nature, as befits the manner of her healing - come back to the harrow in silence, neither speaking to another person nor looking them in the eyes. Stand in stillness, waiting to see if you feel or hear anything more from the goddess.*

IX. *Say,*

Welcome art ever, wort-cunning maid,
holy within our hall.

Hail in thy coming, hail in thy guesting,
fare when thou wish'st to fare,
while when it be thy will.

Blood-Siblinghood

The rite of blood-siblinghood is a great and holy rite of troth, by which two folk blend their clans and their lives together. It is most often done between two men, sometimes as a rite of warrior-binding.

When swearing blood-siblinghood, the greatest care should be taken that both folk are well-known to be true and are-full, worthy of the oath they make to each other - of the bond which cannot be broken except with the death or outlawry of the other. Among other things, the tragic end of the Völsung/Nibelung tale shows what comes of the breaking of such a blood-oath. An oath-sibling is exactly the same in all ways as a sibling born of the same mother.

If both folk are absolutely known to be free of any diseases (remember, the AIDS virus can incubate for up to six months without showing up on a test), they may actually press their wounds together and mix the blood in their veins. If there is any doubt whatsoever, the blood should be allowed to flow into a horn of mead and ale, in which the blending is done with no direct exchange of bodily fluids.

In the old days, a loop of turf would be cut (with both ends still firmly anchored in the earth) and propped up with stakes; the two oath-swearers would then creep beneath it, born as siblings from the womb of the earth. If this is not possible, a clod of earth may be grubbed up and cast in an arch over the head of the two.

The gods and goddesses may be called to witness, or their presence may simply be felt. A full poetic hailing is given in Kveldulf Gundarsson's *Teutonic Religion*; however, many feel that this rite is so personal that the use of a formal ritual beyond the act itself actually takes away from the closeness of the moment.

Care must be taken in making the cuts. The most important thing is that a very sharp blade be used. You should also consider the place of cutting carefully, avoiding tendons and major blood-vessels. The heel of the hand and the muscle of the arm are among the better choices. Only a small cut is needed.

Troth-Claiming

This rite is for those who wish to take up the Elder Troth. One such rite is given in Edred Thorsson's *A Book of Troth*, in which the formula forced by Charlemagne on the Saxon "converts" is ritually reversed. The original formula was "end ec forsacho allum dioboles uuercum and uuordum, Thunaer ende UUôden ende Saxnôte ende allum thêmunholdum thê hera genôtas sint" - "I forsake all the devil's deeds and words, Thunar and Woden and Saxnot and all unholdon ("ungracious/unholy ones", evil spirits) that are their companions". Edred Thorsson, in response, has the pledger forsaking "the angels of alienation...the services of the White Christ...and all the Christian works...the works and words of the so-called father, and his son named Jesus, and their unholy spirit!" (p. 164). This is then followed, as was the original, by a statement of trust - for the Old Saxons, in YHVH, Jesus, and their Holy Ghost; for us, in Woden, Thunar, Freya and Frey, or whichever god/esses the candidate is particularly close to. The first part of this rite has often drawn criticism for "christian-bashing", and Edred Thorsson himself allows it to be omitted, but it should be marked that it is spoken in no stronger terms than the original vow which was forced on the Saxon folk. By carrying out this ritual reversal, further, true folk reach down

into the Well to touch that time at which Heathenism was cast down and rewrite that ill wyrd to a good one, as the sign of our rebirth and sig in the fullness of time. Psychologically, it also has the effect of powerfully bringing home to the person speaking it that they are really, finally, no longer a part of the belief-system which would count such words as blasphemy, and thus it can add a great awe and seriousness to the rite. You may, thus, choose to use this forsaking as a lead-in to the swearing of troth given here.

The rite of Troth-Claiming may be carried out either as part of pledging to a kindred or by oneself. In the former case, the whole kindred should be gathered in a ring with the candidate standing outside.

You will need a bowl of water (by choice, drawn from a running stream at dawn), a horn (or cup) of ale or mead, a blessing bowl and sprinkling-twig, and a Hammer pendant with which the Blessor will hallow the Pledged and which the Pledged will wear thereafter as the sign of her/his troth. If you have an oath-ring, this should also be used.

I. Hammer-Rite

II. The Blessor stands in the full elhaz stance, calling,

Wodan and Thonar, Tiw and Fro Ing, Frija and Gefjon, Frowe and Sif, Nerthus, Njörðr, need-giving Earth, all holy folk, I hail you now!

Alfs and idises and all fore-gone sibs, in howes and in heavens now hark to my words!

A kinsman comes forth, kindly look on him/her, In troth-ring of eld treading 'mongst folk.

Hear me, all, you holy ones, both high and low of Heimdallr's kin!

Give welcome to one who's wandered for long,

Welcome in clan-ring kin, with full right.

III a. If the rite is being held as a kindred rite, the Blessor then says,

Who speaks for the one standing without? Who says that this wo/man should come within the ring of our kin?

A member of the kindred stands and speaks for the Pledger, telling of his/her worth and deeds. The Blessor looks at the gathered folk and says,

Do all find this wight worthy to be one of us - a shield-fellow on the field, a mead-friend on the benches, a blessing- brother/sister at our holy feasts?

Hopefully this has been talked about at some length beforehand and everyone there will be willing to gladly hail the Pledger.

The ring opens and the Pledger steps within. The Blessor says,

Within our clan-ring you stand, before the gods and goddesses and all your fore-gone kin, before the eyes of the living folk. Now Var hears your vows: what troth do you pledge as your own?

III b. If the rite is being done alone say,

Within the clan-ring I stand, with gods and goddesses and all my fore-gone kin about me. Now Var hear my vow! I pledge this troth as my own.

IV. The Blessor holds up the Hammer and oath-ring; the Pledger clasps his/her sword-hand over them. At this point the words of forsaking the christian gods, spirits, words and works may be spoken if wished. The Pledger says,

I pledge my troth to all the Ases and Wans; to all my fore-gone kin who dwell in the hallowed mounds and the garths of the gods; and to those living folk who share the troth of the North. I put my trust in all the gods and goddesses, in (here s/he may name those god/esses which are closest to his/her heart). May they ever bless me as I strive to show forth the atheling-thews of the true, to hold the holy wights of our folk in high worship, and to care for my kin and the true folk about me. Thus do I swear: should I break this oath, let me be named a warg, the worst of wights, and cast from all the wih-steads and

dwelling of men! Var and Tiw hear me; so it is spoken!

V a. *The Blessor says,*

Welcome, child of Heimdallr's kin! New-born within our ring, by what name shall you be known to the gods and the folk?

The Pledger answers with the name s/he has chosen - the driver's license name can be just as fitting and holy as any, especially if it is a family name - and the reasons behind it, the hero/ine after which s/he has chosen to call him/herself if there is one, and the ørlög which s/he wishes it to bring. The Blessor sprinkles water upon the Pledger's head and says,

Before the gods and goddesses all, I bless you with the name (N.N.) and the wyrd you have chosen with it.

S/he then lifts the Pledger off the ground or has a heftier member of the kindred do it. S/he swings the Hammer pendant three times over the Pledger's head, saying,

Wih-Thonar's Hammer hallow you! Let this ever be the holy sign of your troth, by which all folk may know you.

S/he places it around the Pledger's neck.

V b. *The Pledger says,*

Thus I stand as a child of Heimdallr's kin. New-born within the holy ring, let gods and folk know me by the name (N.N.).

Pledger then speaks the reasons behind the name s/he has chosen, tells its story, and speaks of the ørlög which s/he wishes it to bring. S/he sprinkles water upon his/her own head and says,

(name of chosen god/ess or, if none is chosen, Thonar) lift me up, sprinkled with holy water, welcomed into the clan of the true!

S/he leaps into the air. S/he then swings the Hammer pendant thrice over his/her own head, saying,

Wih-Thonar's Hammer hallow me! Let this ever be the holy sign of my troth, by which all folk may know me.

S/he places the Hammer around her/his own neck.

VI a. *The Blessor fills the horn and gives it to the Pledger, who makes a toast to the god/esses and passes it on. Each of the folk there makes a toast to one or more god/esses, calling their blessing on the Pledger. When the round is done, the Pledger pours what is left into the bowl and refills it. For the second round, the Pledger toasts his/her forebears; the other folk may toast their own forebears or hero/ines of the folk. For the third round, the Pledger toasts the kindred. S/he carries the horn around; each of the folk drinks with their arm locked through the arm of the Pledger, making a toast to him/her. When all are done and the contents of the third round poured into the bowl, the Pledger lifts it high and says,*

I give this to the gods and goddesses, alfs and idises and all holy wights - the grith and friendship of the kin!

S/he hallows it with the sign of the Hammer and says,

Now let all be blessed by wih-might.

S/he sprinkles the harrow, the eight winds, above and below, then each of the folk, beginning with him/herself and being sure to touch her/his Hammer with the hallowed drops. When s/he is done, s/he pours the contents of the bowl onto the earth.

The Blessor says,

So it is wrought! Be welcome to our kin!

S/he embraces the Pledger, as does each of the folk in turn. The rite is over.

VI b. *The Pledger fills the horn. S/he toasts the gods and goddesses, drinks, and pours a third of the hornfull into the bowl; toasts his/her foregone kin, drinks, and pours a third into the bowl; makes a toast to those other folk, known or unknown,*

who follow the troth of the North, drinks, and pours the rest into the bowl. S/he lifts the bowl and says,

I give this to the gods and goddesses, alfs and idises and all holy wights - our grith and friendship aye!

S/he hallows it with the sign of the Hammer and says,

Now let all be blessed by wih-might.

S/he sprinkles the harrow, the eight winds, above and below, and him/herself, then pours the contents of the bowl onto the earth. S/he says,

So it is wrought! Welcome me, holy kin: I shall stand among you forever!

Hammer Rite

The Hammer Rite was first worked out by Edred Thorsson (in *FUTHARK*). There are a few different versions of it floating around, including those in *A Book of Troth* and Kveldulf Gundarsson's *Teutonic Religion*, but the basic goal - to ward and hallow a stead - and the basic method - signing the Hammer to the four or eight directions, above and below - is the same. The version given here is not especially better than the others - not to be thought of as an "Official Troth Hammer-Rite" or anything like that - but because copyright restrictions keep us from simply reproducing the earlier texts, a different one had to be written for this book.

This rite does not create a magical circle; folk may pass freely in and out after it is done. However, the person doing it should see it as ringing the whole stead where the rite or feast is being held, as all of it should be holy ground.

The Hammer Rite may be done with an actual full-size hallowing Hammer, a Hammer pendant, or, at need, the Godwo/man's fist. The signing of the Hammer should be a large, sweeping gesture full of might - as Thonar would do it.

I. *The Godwo/man faces North and makes the sign of the Hammer, saying,*

Wih-Thonar's Hammer, ward us in North-Ways!
All ill must wend away.

S/he turns to either the Northeast (if s/he likes to hallow the full ætt) or the East (if s/he prefers to use the quarters), and makes the sign of the Hammer, saying,

Wih-Thonar's Hammer, ward in the North-East (or "in East-Ways"). All ill must wend away.

S/he continues in this manner around all eight or four directions, ending by facing North again. S/he traces the sign of the Hammer or swastika above (depending on personal choice, whether the rite is being done for a lot of strangers to whom the ur-old holiness of the swastika and the fact that we are not Nazis has not been explained, and such things) and says,

Wih-Thonar's Hammer, hallow from heavens!

S/he traces the same sign below and says,

Wih-Thonar's Hammer, hallow from earth's womb!

S/he stands in full elhaz stance and says,

From Ases' Garth awesome, from Hella's home deep, from the worlds ringed around - all mights in the Middle-Garth meet! Hallowed is this stead: no mights may work ill here, and holy are all within.

Chapter XXXIX

Symbel (Sumbel)

The symbel is a rite practiced by all followers of the Elder Troth, probably going back to Common Germanic times. It is one of the holiest of rites, for the symbel-horn or cup is the embodiment of Wyrð's Well within the Middle-Garth: the symbel-hall thus becomes, for the space of the rite, that holy stead at the Well where the Ases ride to their Þing, where the dead and the living are gathered in a single moment of might. It was also the most enduring of the Heathen rituals, for the making of toasts at feasts never ceased, nor was it even driven into heaths and hinterlands as were so many of our other folk-ways: the drinking of *minne*, in one form or another, is still practised in the highest society today.

At root, the symbel is the practice of sitting (often ordered by rank; today it is also usual to sit in a ring, but in old days folk were probably lined up on their benches), passing a drinking horn, and making toasts, boasts, and oaths. Speeches were made and gifts given during this rite; alliances formed and agreements made solemn. A full interpretation of the history and spiritual background of the symbel, especially in terms of its relationship to Wyrð, is given in Paul Bauschatz's *The Well and the Tree*; nearly all true folk who have written or spoken on the meaning of the symbel in latter years have drawn their understanding of the rite from this text.

Fitting behavior at symbel is as follows: if possible, folk should sit rather than stand, though the person making the toast should choose to do either. The holder of the horn is the only person who should be allowed to speak, and s/he has the right to keep it and talk as long as s/he likes - though good manners ask that no one drone on too long. Tolerance is absolutely necessary for symbel to work well: if a toast is boring, a song badly sung, or a poem clumsily recited, or if you do not agree with the feeling that has been expressed - keep your feelings to yourself; others may not share your opinion, or may feel that the heart and soul which gave rise to the toast mean more than its presentation. There is no breach of symbel-custom worse than breaking into another person's toast; in the days of our forebears, apparently, that possibility could not even be considered.

If, however, you feel that the message of a toast is truly obnoxious, you can then make a counter-toast when the horn reaches you. For instance, there was one symbel when a guest made a distinctly racist speech; the next couple of toasts were odes to tolerance. Toasts to Loki are also (quite often) followed by toasts to Thonar or Heimdallr. So long as such counter-toasts do not range over into attacks upon the original toaster him/herself, they are quite acceptable - one could even argue that they are needful, in view of the way in which all words spoken at symbel are set into the Well of Wyrð.

When a toast has particularly stirred you, it is acceptable to cry "Hail!" or "Heilsa!" when it is over, but longer expressions of approval are also disruptive.

If you must leave a symbel or come into one after it has started, do it as quietly as possible. Do not walk across the ring where everyone can see you; sneak in or out behind people's backs. The symbel-ring is not an hermetically sealed space in the sense of a magical circle, but it is a holy stead, and distractions must be kept to the lowest level possible.

Especially in larger groups, many folk choose to keep their own drinks with them and drink while other folk are toasting. This is quite all right: the symbel is a merry time as well as a mighty one. It was thought uncouth to get really drunk at a symbel, but drinking well and enjoying oneself were very much a part of the rite. Eating at symbel, however, is and was not done. Among the Franks, the tables were carried out after dinner when the serious drinking began; Bauschatz suggests that food was "purposefully excluded from the ritual" (*The Well and the Tree*, p. 74). In *Hávamál* 33, it is told that one should have a little bit to eat before coming to a feast; the same is often true of symbel. In fact, it is probably better to schedule the symbel so that it falls after the main feasting.

While the symbel is basically a social rite, strengthening the bonds that tie true folk together within a holy setting, it can be done with as few as two or three people - in fact, some of the mightiest symbels take place in very small groups of lore-wise folk.

Either a horn or a large cup can be used, but the horn is better: Even after the conversion, the horn was still the holiest vessel, the link with the elder forebears. *Orkneyinga saga* ch. 66 tells how the men had been drinking from cups all evening, but changed to horns for the minne-toasts.

When the horn is emptied, it should be refilled by a chosen hall-idis. This frowe may also carry the horn between folk, rather than simply letting it be passed from hand to hand. It is important not to think of this as a servile role; it was the highest of atheling-frowes who bore the drink in the old days, as the walkurjas bear it to Wodan and his *einherjar* and Wealthew bore it to the heroes within Hrothgar's hall. The woman's might here is not only as the source of life but, even as the horn embodies the Well of Wyrð, so she herself is the Norn hearing and ruling over all the words that are spoken into it. In a shorter symbel, the hall-idis should make sure before the rite starts that there will be enough drink within the circle to refill the horn at least thrice; in a longer one, she may pass freely out to get more drink when needed.

The symbel has several forms, fitting to different times and occasions and to different sizes of gathering; it has

been found in modern times that it is needful to carefully consider the group gathered before deciding which form will be best.

Shopes' Symbol

Up to now, the "shopes' symbol" has not been formally marked as different from others; it has just happened at random times when enough word-skilled folk chanced to be at the same symbol. The shopes' symbol is that sort of symbol at which everyone makes long and mighty toasts, often in the form of poems, tales, or songs. This seems to have been common among our forebears, as most folk were expected to have at least a little word-craft or musical skill; for instance, Bede's account of the poet Cædmon begins with a description of how Cædmon, then lacking all such skill, sat in a beer-hall when the harp was being passed and songs sung, and had to get up and slink out before the harp came to him. A shopes' symbol can go on literally all night - and has! In a small group of folk who know the lore and have some speech-skill, this form takes the symbol-rite to its greatest heights.

For reasons of time and interest, however, a very elaborate symbol does not work as well in a large group, especially if not everyone there is used to it and prepared for it. We have seen more than a few luckless Cædmon-types take the horn after a song, awesomely spoken toast, or a recitation from the Eddas, only to shuffle, blush, mumble "Uh...gee...Hail Odin!" and pass the horn as fast as they could, hoping the next toast would get everyone's mind off them. Such embarrassment makes it difficult for the embarassee to be aware of the spiritual workings of the rite. Other folk are just not ready to sit and listen to two hours of mixed performance, and would much rather be in the next room talking with their friends or something. Boredom and distraction, too, do not help a ritual mood. If a large group is gathered at a feast, it is therefore good to mark out a time for a separate "shopes' symbol" along the lines of a ritual "bardic circle", in which taking part is a matter of choice. Some would prefer to listen without having to do anything themselves, some would prefer to listen to some performances and not others; these folk might perhaps sit in an outer ring, where they can come and go without disturbing those performing in the symbol.

Minne-symbol

The minne-symbol is the most common form, used at nearly all Troth feasts. This is the basic three-round symbol. The first round is drunk to the god/esses, each person hailing the deity of their choice; the second one is drunk to forebears or hero/ines; the third to whatever folk will. The third round is the one at which oaths are usually made and so forth. The word minne means "memory", and it is one of the greatest parts of symbol-drinking - for one of the chief goals of the symbol is to put us in mind of our forebears and the god/esses, to call forth the great deeds that lie within the Well (thus, within the cup or horn itself) and to bring their might forth into the round of our own becoming.

In a larger group (fifteen to thirty people), especially if it is not made up of folk who have been in the kindred of the true for a while, toasts at such a symbol ought generally to be shorter than those at a shopes' symbol: occasional performances are good, but everyone feeling that they must tell their whole life-story quickly causes the attention to start wandering. Usually a few lines of honour or, at most, a short poem or tale are enough. However, it may also be suggested that if the ritual coordinator knows there is someone there with an act that is particularly well-done and/or fitting to the feast, that s/he hint to that person beforehand that the performance would be appreciated.

Feast-symbol

For a large group (more than thirty people), passing the horn around the room three times and having everyone make a toast - even a short toast - begins to become less workable. In *Heimskringla (Hákonar saga ins góða)* we see how our forebears dealt with a large group. Snorri tells us that the basic custom was that "The cup had to be borne around the fire, and thus, when the banquet was readied and the chieftain was there, then he had to sign the cup and all the blessing-food. First was Óðinn's cup - that had to be drunk to victory and the might of the king - and after that Njörðr's cup and Freyr's cup for harvest and peace. Then it was customary for many men next to drink the *bragarfull* ("best cup" or "Bragi-cup" - this was the draught of oath-swearing, as mentioned in the prose of *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*). Men also drank a cup to their kinsmen, to those who had been howe-buried, and that was called *minni*" (ch. 14). At this particular feast, Hákon, who is a christian, takes the Óðinn's-draught from Sigurðr jarl and makes the sign of the cross over it. When Kárr af Grýtingi asks, "Why is the king doing so? Does he not want to make blessing?" Sigurðr, who has been working hard to re-integrate Hákon into society (and eventually succeeded; the poem *Hákonarmál*, written by the very dedicated Heathen skald Eyvindr skáldaspillr, tells of this king's coming to Valhöll), answers, "The king does as all those do who trust in their own might and main, and signs his cup to Þórr. He made the Hammer-mark over it, before he drank" (ch. 17).

The scene Snorri was describing was probably one in which each man had his own cup or horn, but the chieftain stood in the holiest part of the hall - by the fire where the meat from the blessing was being seethed - and spoke and signed the first toasts while everyone else drank with him (and those who did not want to drink to Óðinn signed their own horns with the Hammer). After the leader had made the communal toasts and blessed the food, then it seems as though the focus

of attention broke up, with each man making his own toasts to heroes and kin by himself (or among a small group of friends?). This format can be used either as set forth in *Heimskringla*, or adapted to the basic Troth formula in which the first round goes to the gods, the second to heroes, and the third at the rite-leader's choice (something widely fitting, such as forebears, the thews and the folk who show them forth, or the kinship of the true, perhaps). Individuals can then continue making their own toasts informally until they run out of either inspiration or ale.

Symbol Rite

I. *Once the folk are seated, by rank or however the leader has chosen to arrange them, the leader takes up his/her place. The hall-idis, if there is one, fills the horn. The leader speaks:*

"At Wyrð's Well we sit in stead of all might,
sitting at symbol this eve.

All holy wights hold seats in this stead,
ringed 'round the World-Tree's roots,
blithe at the hallowed burne.

Elder ways from elder times,
rise from Well to ring in toasts.
Here Ases deem, all awe is wrought,
words we speak Wyrð sets as law.

Forth froths the ale forth gleams bright mead,
the holiness brewed from heavens and earth,
from Heiðrún's horns, from Hvergelmir deep -
We drink and speak the draught of might.

II a (*for a shopen' or minne-symbol*)

In first round shines our speech to the gods,
we hail the highest of holy folk!
In second our howe-kin or heroes great,
the third round's toasts are ruled by our wills.

II b (*for a large feast-symbol*). *The leader raises the horn high; the folk raise their drinks as well while s/he speaks.*

I drink to Wodan wise drighten on high,
sig to the sibs all true!

Good to the land as leader fares well,
wisdom to wielder of might,
that deeming be done well aye,
and fair go all things with folk.

Those who do not wish to drink to Wodan may Hammer-sign their own draughts, saying something like, "Hail to Thonar - I trust might and main", or bless them quietly in whatever other way seems fitting. All drink deeply; the hall-idis tops the leader's horn off and s/he raises it again, saying,

Hail to Njörðr (*or Nerthus, as you choose*),
nytt we thy blessings, fruitfulness give thou to folk.

Well do we hail the Wans all mighty,
that ships fare all shining-laden,
wains fare heaped up with weal,
harvests all rich and high.

A ship-crescent may be traced over the horn; all drink deeply; the hall-idis tops the leader's horn off and s/he raises it

again, saying,

Hail to Fro Ing, frith-god, beloved!
weal-full world's god!

Boar-tusks ward us from woe ever,
with stag-horn shining with dew
with brightness of bells ringing high,
our Fro, bless us with frith!

All drink deeply. The leader then says,

Now hail we kin and heroes of old,
now drink we minne's might.
Bragi's cup all boasts and oaths,
speak each as seemly 'tis,
and words fair speak at will,
till feasting fares to an end.

III. *To close a symbol, the leader takes the horn (in which only a little drink should be left) for the last time, and lifts it, saying,*

Holy deeming is done this night,
our words set in the well.
Now we fare forth, and folk holy all,
from Ases' awesome seat,
from the mighty Well of Wyrð,
wend all to the worlds of home.

S/he drains the horn and knocks three times upon it. The rite is over.

Chapter XL

Sauna

"Louhi, Pohjolan emäntä, sanan virkkoi, noin nimesi:
'Niin mitä minullen annat, kun saatan omille maille,
oman peltosi perille, kotisaunan saapuville?'"

(Louhi, mistress of Northland, uttered a word and spoke thus:
'So, what will you give me if I bring you to your own lands,
back to your own fields, all the way to your home-sauna?')

- *Kalevala* 7, 289-94

Although the birch leaves have unfurled into sprays of soft green, the lake's dark waters are still rimmed with a thin glaze of ice, and winter's dying breath still cuts cold in the wind. Björn, master of the farm, comes to his bathhouse weary from a long day's work in the fields. The small wooden building's door is shut tightly, but he can see a faint glow through a chink between the logs. He draws his belt-knife, reaching up to the dangling twigs of the old birch tree which stands tall and fair beside the bathhouse, and murmurs a blessing before cutting a handful of her leafy branches and binding them together with a long supple twig.

Once inside, Björn quickly sheds his cloak, tunic, and breeches, letting the bathhouse's heat soak into his bones. In the warm light of the glowing fire-rocks, he can see his wife, Helga, resting on one of the bathhouse's linen-spread benches, a fire-reddened sheen of sweat already gleaming on her fair skin. She greets him gladly as he comes to stretch out on the bench beside her, then dips her ladle into the bucket of water by her seat and casts the water onto the hot stones. A cloud of steam hisses up, dampening the air and making it feel even hotter.

In a little while, both Björn and Helga are dripping with sweat, all the day's grime and weariness washing away in the salty trickles that run freely over them like rivulets of water over melting ice. Björn takes the birch-bundle he has made and begins to whisk Helga lightly with it; too soft to hurt, the birch's leafy twigs beat the sweat from her back and shoulders, stirring her blood so that her white skin soon glows pink and healthy. The fresh scent of the bruised leaves rises from the whisk, blending pleasantly with the wood-smoke that heated the bathhouse. After a little while, Helga takes the birch-bundle and whisks her husband with it in turn.

When they have sweated long enough, Björn and Helga rise from their place, going to the door. They plunge out together, running out along the lakeside pier and diving into the rime-chill water only to come up a moment later, gasping with the joyful shock of the crisp cold biting into their skins. The two of them swim about for a few minutes, then pull themselves up onto the pier again, cleansed and strengthened by their bath of fire and ice.

This scene, or one much like it, must have been played out over and over again in the Viking Age, when almost every well-appointed farm had its own sauna-type bathhouse, even in more marginally-settled areas such as Shetland (as at the 'Jarlshof' site). We know that cleanliness was a great part of Nordic culture at this time; the English cleric John of Wallingford (post-Viking Age, but working from older sources) mentions that the Anglo-Saxon women had preferred to go with Heathen Vikings rather than the christian English because the former bathed every Saturday, combed their hair, and dressed well. In the Nordic-speaking Scandinavian countries, the custom of sauna seems to have become less and less common after the conversion, but never died out altogether, and is still practised in the traditional way by some, as Solfrid Saue tells in her description of visits to her West Norwegian friend Norvald Tveit (*Norwegian Cooking*, pp. 38-39). In Finland, however, sauna is one of the great national pastimes, and nearly every house has at least a small sauna-chamber in the bathroom.

The origins of the Northern sauna are lost in the mists of prehistory, but the word is Finnish (correctly pronounced *sow-na*, rather than *saw-na*) and, if the Finns were not the creators of the practice, it has been far more important to their recorded culture than to that of any other European people. The *Kalevala*, Finland's national epic (which contains much religious and traditional material) includes several sequences describing the importance of sauna as a social activity, a place for giving birth, and simply one of the finest pleasures of home.

The good effects of the sauna are many and great. For the body, it gives a thorough cleansing, ridding it not only of dirt on the hide, but also of the many lesser poisons and pollutants in the system. It is the best single means of skin-care in existence, as it opens the pores, loosens dead hide, and forces out any detrius which has clogged the skin. The great heat looses tired and sore muscles. Sauna also stimulates the circulatory system, especially when the *vihto* (birch-branch whisk) or a soft-bristled scrubbing-brush is used. In sauna, the heart beats more swiftly and the blood-vessels dilate. For this reason, the regular practice of sauna is good for the circulatory system, but people with heart defects or other circulatory problems should get a physician's advice before going into the sauna for the first time, and should also be careful that the water in

which they dip after each session of sweating is not cold enough to cause a severe shock to the system.

The heat of sauna raises the body's temperature, making it possible to bear and even enjoy degrees of cold which otherwise would be highly unpleasant afterwards (as when Finns go swimming through holes broken in the ice). The process of enduring the sauna's heat and the cold bath afterwards also strengthens the soul and the will as well as the body; some Finns see the ability to bear great degrees of heat and humidity in the sauna as the best proof of *sisu* (a Finnish word meaning courage, endurance, strength, and stubborn will). I have heard, as well, that the sauna is a sure cure for a hangover, though I have never had access to one when in need of a remedy for that particular ill. However, given its general effect of cleansing poisons from the system, the theory at least sounds plausible. Yet another reason to have one near the ritual feasting site...

Casting water onto the stove to make steam and raise the perceived temperature also ionizes the air in the sauna. In an electric sauna, the ions are evenly divided between positive and negative; in a smoke sauna, where the stove is largely made of stone with little or no metal, the ions produced are mostly negative ions, creating the same sort of "charge" to the air that one feels during thunderstorms. Air ionized in this way is very good for both the body and the soul, calming and filling with might at the same time.

The best time to use the sauna for one's bodily health is after exercise, when the heat will soothe and relax one, helping the body to clean out the poisons of fatigue and aiding the muscles in recovery and growth. In the Teutonic tradition, health and strength of the body mean just as much as health and strength of the soul; the two cannot really be divided from each other. Thus, regular exercise followed by the fine care given to the body by the sauna should be a part of every Northern wo/man's life whenever possible.

It should not be surprising that something which affects the body and mind as deeply as sauna does also has a rich spiritual tradition. None of this seems to have survived in our Old Norse records, but Gloseki mentions that "Sauna-like sweat baths, too - so important in Amerindian cleansing rites - were also used by Germanic healers; the technique of bringing water together with heated rocks to produce the therapeutic steam, called *stanbæp* "stone bath" by the Anglo-Saxons, is very widespread" (*Shamanism in Old English Poetry*, p. 128). It is thus likely that most of the Germanic folks knew of the sauna, or something close to it, and used it in healing at the least. In Finland the beliefs associated with the sauna are many. Konya comments that, "The ancient Finns believe that fire came from heaven (see "Thonar" - KHG), and therefore was sacred; for this reason, they looked upon the sauna as a holy place. It was a place for the worship of the dead, a place where diseases and evils of the body were driven out, and even a place where unhappy love affairs could be settled. Some people consider that the pile of stones on top of the sauna stove is a relic of an altar used in pagan times and that the throwing of water over the stones was a form of sacrificial ceremony to supernatural beings. The Finnish word *löyly* (the vapour which rises from the stones) originally signified 'spirit' or even 'life', and the word corresponding to *löyly* in languages related to Finnish is *lil*, which means 'soul'" (*Finnish Sauna*, p. 7). Although Finnish tradition is originally non-Indo-European, both the Finns and the Lapps had extensive contact with the North Germanic tribes, including regular interbreeding, and there is a considerable body of evidence that the Finno-Ugric and Scandinavian religions influenced one another to a great degree (cf. Ahlbäck, ed., *Old Norse and Finnish Religions*). It is, thus, at least a reasonable probability that the North Germanic sauna could have been holy to our forebears in a similar manner. Moreover, although this religious usage cannot be supported beyond supposition for Viking Age Heathens, the general tradition of religious and social interaction between Finns and Norse was so strong, and the sauna so much a part of physical culture in the Viking Age, that there is no reason why it should not be adopted into modern Heathen practice, and many reasons why it should.

As well as cleansing and strengthening the body, the sauna is the best means for cleansing and strengthening the manifold aspects of the Northern "soul". The dark, quiet wooden enclosure, hot and damp with *löyly*, is not only womblike, but also recalls the trees from which humans had their first birth and the great tree which will hide Líf and Lífþrasir within its bark through the fires of Ragnarök. It is one of the finest places to sit and sink within one's own self, thinking on matters of the soul. The intensity of the heat, rather than distracting, actually aids in concentrating the mind, forcing one to breathe slowly and relax one's body.

The main runes of the sauna are the triad uruz-nauthiz-berkano. Uruz is the water cast onto the hot stones and rising as steam; it is also the streams of water which run through the body to cleanse it and flow forth as sweat. Nauthiz is the stove's fire (which, if possible, should be kindled as need-fire) and the stress of bearing the sauna's heat and cold, which call upon the bather's reserves of strength and will. Berkano is the sauna-hut or room itself, where Finnish women traditionally gave birth; the Birch-Frowe's womb in which the bather is cleansed and from which s/he is reborn; also, the birch-twigs which sting the bather clean and fill the air with the sweet light scent of spring. This basic triad can be extended from ice to fire: isa, the ice or snow in which the bather may roll, melts into laguz, the cold waters of the final bath which also give the water that is cast onto the stones as *löyly* for uruz. Berkano, as said before, is the hut in which all these mightes are woven together. On the side of fire, the runes are nauthiz, followed by kenaz, which is the cleansing and shaping work of the heat on the bather, and the pure fire of fehu itself.

In its wholeness, from ice and fire woven together, the sauna recreates the process of the worlds' making - though one can also see it as a little Ragnarök, through which the bather is remade and reborn cleaner, stronger, and fairer than before.

When taking a sauna for ritual purposes, the method I have found best is as follows. Go into the sauna, making sure it is not too hot or cool. Spread a cloth of rough linen on the bench and sit in silence until the first sweat begins to rise on your body. Then chant, slowly and softly, "Uruz...uruz...uruz..." Repeat the rune-name nine times; cast a ladleful of water on the stove; chant "Nauthiz" three times; cast a ladleful of water; and finish by chanting "Berkano" nine times as you beat yourself with the birch-whisk (top of head to soles of feet, leaving out no part of the body). Repeat this process thrice over. Depending on how hot the sauna is and how experienced a sauna-bather you are, you may be ready to get out at this point, or you may wish to sit and consider each of these runes in silence, perhaps using the birch-whisk again. When you are ready to leave - a feeling you will know when it happens - go and plunge at once into cold water. If you do not have a lake or even cold swimming pool to dip in, an ice-cold shower is the next best choice. In wintertime, many Finns delight in breaking a hole in the ice on the Baltic or the nearest lake so that they can swim there after sauna. If circumstances permit, a mighty shout should be shouted as you leap into the water or dive naked into the snow. Move fast and thrash around. If the water is not frozen over, a short swim after sauna is pleasant and healthy; otherwise, you should be able to tell for yourself when it is time to get out. If your dip is in a swimming pool, you must shower thoroughly in fresh water before getting back into the sauna, as otherwise the evaporation of chlorine in the enclosed space can present a serious health hazard.

After the cold-water phase, go back into the sauna and cast more water on the stones. This time, repeat the triad along the following lines, casting water on the stones and beating yourself strongly with the whisk after each formula:

Uruz, uruz, uruz; uruz, uruz, nauthiz; uruz, nauthiz, berkano
Nauthiz, nauthiz, nauthiz; uruz, nauthiz, nauthiz; uruz, nauthiz, berkano.
Berkano, berkano, berkano; uruz, berkano, berkano; uruz, nauthiz, berkano.

Chant the whole sequence three times over. Again, you may be ready to leave and leap into the cold water when you are done, or you may choose to sit longer.

The third time into the sauna, the formula is:

Isa, laguz, uruz, berkano, berkano, berkano, nauthiz, kenaz, fehu.

This may be chanted in a weaving pattern:

Fehu, isa, kenaz, laguz, nauthiz, uruz, berkano (thrice)

or in a snake-pattern:

Fehu, laguz, isa, nauthiz, kenaz, uruz, berkano (thrice)

as you feel yourself moved. Repeat chant, whisking and casting water at will. When you are done, sit quite still for a little while and simply feel the might around you soaking into you.

After the last cold plunge, stand in tree-stance (full elhaz) and chant,

Above me Ase-Garth's awesome might,
Roots below in Hella's halls.

Bring your feet together and spread your arms out straight from your sides, intoning,

All meets in Middle-Garth's might.

Still with feet together, press the palms of your hands together in front of your solar plexus, fingers pointing upwards. Gazing straight ahead, bring your hands very slowly up. As they pass in front of your face, gradually form a triangle with thumbs and forefingers; follow it with your gaze until your arms are fully stretched above your head. Part your hands, bringing your arms down in a full circle until your palms meet again, fingers down, then bring your hands slowly back up to the first position. As you do this, see yourself as a shining birch tree (women) or leek (men), rooted deep in the ground, bringing a stream of glowing white might up from your roots through your body, up above your head as a springing fountain of leafy branches or broad green leaves, and flowing down around you again so that you stand completely within a sphere of white light when your palms meet at the bottom of their path. Breathe slowly and powerfully in as your hands move up from your solar plexus, breathe slowly and powerfully out as they move down. Do this nine times. Finish by raising head and hands to the sky again, blessing the gods and goddesses for the fair worlds and the might we share.

Finally, pour yourself a glass cup (the "rime-cup" of our forebears) full of a thirst-quenching golden beer. Trace the runic formula Ansuz-Laguz-Uruz in the froth, chanting the names of the runes as you shape them. Lifting the rime-cup high, sing "ALU - ALU - ALU" and drink deeply.

The full rite depends, of course, on having a certain amount of privacy, which is not always possible. In America, the easiest access to sauna is generally through a health club or other such place where chanting runes aloud is not particularly acceptable. If this is your situation, you will have to perfect your internal-vocalization skills. Such public saunas in the States are often too cool to bring out a good sweat, and have no facility for casting *löyly*. If your choice is between an inadequately heated dry sauna and a very steamy Turkish bath, the latter, while not ideal, is somewhat better than the former.

If you can afford it, there are several companies which make pre-fab saunas which can be installed in your house or yard (see "Organizations and Resources"). Many Finns build their own traditional smoke saunas, which I am told is not particularly difficult - and a good thing too, as smoke saunas are very prone to burning down.

The native American sweat lodge is probably very much like the earliest form of the Northern sauna, and is even easier and cheaper to build. As Kanyo describes it, "The sweat lodge (of the Havasupai Indians, Grand Canyon) consists of a conical hut about one and a half metres high, set partly in and partly out of the ground and made of packed earth. The small crawlway is closed with a flap of canvas or skin. Several large stones are heated on an open fire outside and shovelled into the pit when they are hot enough. The men...crouch together on the earthen floor in pitch darkness and sprinkle water on the stones at regular intervals (p. 6). The practice of building sweat lodges has always been quite common among native Americans and has also become fairly widespread in the general metaphysical-magical-shamanic community in the past few years, so practical information on making one in your backyard should not be too difficult to find.

For a proper sauna, you need a linen towel to sit on, a wooden or copper bucket and ladle for the water, and either a whisk of birch twigs or a soft-bristled brush. The whisk should be made of the youngest and softest branches available after the leaves have come out, cut about the length of your forearm or a little shorter, and made into a bundle about the thickness of an average person's wrist, which is tied together with a longer birch twig from which the leaves have been stripped. For winter usage, many Finns make a number of whisks in the spring and either freeze or dry them (in the latter case, they must be softened by soaking in warm water before use). Other types of branch may also be used: the traditional Finnish Midsummer sauna-whisk "was made of twigs from nine different plants - birch, alder, juniper, and flowers of the season among others" (Kanyo, p. 6). Kanyo also mentions the possibility of using oak, maple, hazel, mountain ash (rowan), and/or some kinds of eucalyptus in areas where birch does not grow: it is simply needful that the leaves be young and soft and that the plant give a pleasant scent to the sauna.

Generally, a sauna will need no scent besides the natural scents of the whisk and the smoke. When going into sauna to meditate upon something specific or to ready yourself for a particular rite, however, it is possible that you may wish to charge the air with might fitting to your need. For this purpose, either a couple of drops of essential oil (can be gotten at most herb or alternative health stores) in the water or a pinch of herbs cast upon the stove can help in "tuning" the atmosphere to ring true with your work. In either case, you will need very little of the oil or herb to give the sauna the right aura.

In his *History of the Goths*, Herwig Wolfram comments that "the intoxicating 'cannabis sauna', which Herodotus noted among the Scythians, was not unknown to the Thracians and probably also sent the Gothic shamans on the desired 'trip'" (p. 107). The Troth, of course, does not encourage or condone the breaking of any local laws by its members, which rules out the use of this particular herb in most Western countries. For the purpose of vision-seeking within the sauna, mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) and eyebright (*Euphrasia officinalis*) may be burned on the stones to strengthen soul-sight, though actually breathing in the smoke is not a good idea. If you are using the sauna as an aid to soul-faring, be sure that you have a friend either inside or right outside the door who will be able to make sure that you come back to yourself and get out of the sauna at the appropriate time, since it is possible to stay in the sauna long enough to damage yourself if your awareness is not in your body.

DO NOT, EVER try burning any part of the yew tree, or any other toxic plant, in sauna. This can cause death. If you must have the energies of a poisonous plant, add a single drop of the homeopathic remedy in question to the water bucket.

The *löyly* water can also be filled with might before beginning the sauna, by carving and colouring a fitting runic inscription on a piece of wood and scraping it into the water or simply by chanting the runes and directing their force into it. Such water can also be charged by a drop or two of a vibrational elixir (easily made by leaving the appropriate stone or leaf in a glass bowl of distilled water in direct sunlight for a few hours) or a liquid condenser (see Scott Cunningham's *Magical Herbalism* for information on making herbal condensers).

Sauna is best taken naked. Mixed-sex bathing is not as common as it used to be, and now is usually seen only among families and close friends - though nude mixed saunas have little chance of sexual overtones, as it is simply too hot in sauna to even think about sex. If you must wear something in sauna, it should be a loose loincloth (and perhaps a small breast-covering for shy women), preferably made out of linen, which is the only fibre traditionally used in sauna gear. If linen is not possible, cotton is the next best choice. Avoid wool and synthetic fabrics.

Sauna temperature can vary considerably: the best heat for you is something you will have to find out by experience. Beginners are advised not to try sauna much above 80 degrees Centigrade (175 degrees F)- though most Finns

like it hotter, in the range of 100-110 degrees Centigrade (212 - 230 F) - and to be sparing with the *löyly* until used to it. Younger men, who sweat more easily, tend to like higher temperatures. The length of time you spend in a sauna will also vary. Beginners and children seldom stay longer than five to ten minutes at a time, slowly building up to fifteen or twenty. Going into the sauna after exercise or hard work will probably make the heat easier to bear, as well. Your own body will let you know when it is time to come out - usually when the idea of plunging through a hole in the ice or rolling in the snow begins to sound really good. If you begin to feel dizzy or faint, of course, you should leave at once. Different people usually need different rest periods between sessions; I usually go straight from the cold water back into the sauna, but I have a Finnish friend who likes to sit for half an hour to an hour between saunas.

Obviously, sauna causes some dehydration, and you should expect to be very thirsty when you come out. The healthiest drinks to have ready are probably those designed for replacing the water, salt, and nutrients lost by sportspeople. However, to the Finns, *the* after-sauna drink is beer, and I can heartily agree that nothing tastes better than a good cold beer after a session of sweating. The best brews for the purpose are the pale lager-type along the lines of, for instance, Carlsberg, with a medium to low alcoholic content. Some Norwegians also drink an evil mixture called "Karelian Virgin's Blood", a blend of spirits and Club Grape. Strong beer should not be drunk too soon after sauna, nor should any stronger drinks such as wine, mead, or hard liquor - your body will want some rest and a lot of water before you are ready to lift the mead-horn.

Never drink alcohol of any sort before going into a sauna. You should also try to avoid eating before sauna if possible, though if you are desperately hungry, a light snack is all right. Finns usually expect a good meal after sauna, with plenty of salty and high-protein foods. Fish is one of the main items on the menu, especially salmon in its various incarnations - smoked, raw-cured with salt, or baked fresh. Like most of the other peoples of Northern Europe, Finns are also mightily fond of sausage and cheese with character. This kind of food is ideal, particularly at a larger gathering where folk who are going into the sauna in shifts and cannot eat at the same time.

For those who are interested in building or buying their own saunas, or in studying the subject further, there is one really excellent book in English, still in print, which provides all the information you could possibly want. This is Allan Konya's *Finnish Sauna*, to which I have already referred a number of times and from which I got the largest part of the knowledge here. It is published by the Architectural Press, 9 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9BY; the ISBN is 0-85139-832-4.

"Jos vesi, votkaa, ja sauna ei auta, on tauti kuolemaksi." - Finnish proverb ("If water, vodka, and sauna don't help, the condition is mortal")

Contributors:

- KveldúlfR Gundarsson, Warder of the Lore. In *Idunna* V, iii, 20, Holymonth 1993, pp. 12-16.
- Eric Wodening

Chapter XLI

Birth

The first of the rites of passage are the birth-rites, which bring the newborn's soul (with all its many aspects) out of the Otherworlds and the darkness of death into the brightness of the Middle-Garth. They can be seen as the mightiest of the rites of life, for they set the *ørlog* (ur-layer or ur-law) for all the rest: name, soul, and wyrd come together.

Many religions today have strong positions on various ways of dealing with the problems of unwanted pregnancies. The most extreme is probably that of the Catholic church, which even condemns the conscious waste of sperm. More moderate religions may accept birth-control; some allow abortion and some condemn it.

The position of Teutonic tradition in these matters is quite clear. According to our forebears, a child had no soul until its name was given - nine days after birth - and if it was clearly weak or defective, or if available resources could not support it, it could be set out to die. This may seem heartless and inhuman to some today, but it stemmed from two things: short resources and the belief that soul came with name and acceptance into the clan. The former is especially important in considering different forms of family planning. It is irresponsible to have children that you and/or your kin are not able to feed, clothe, educate, and take good care of. This almost certainly means the use of birth control, inside or outside of marriage; it may also mean abortion or giving a child up for adoption, as your conscience dictates. It is likewise irresponsible to knowingly have a child who will not be capable of a decent human life. Physical defects, or even near-total incapability, no longer mean that one must be a burden on society - those who doubt that have only to consider Stephen Hawkins, among others! - but many forms of mental incapability can also be diagnosed during pregnancy. In short, there is nothing in the Germanic tradition which would offer the slightest condemnation of either birth control or abortion; and our practice of setting out infants who seemed unlikely to live also suggests strongly that it is appropriate to ensure pre-natally that one's children will not suffer from major mental incapacity. As always, however, the choice comes down to the individual family and, more specifically, to the woman who must bear the child. An *Ásatrú* individual might choose to consider abortion unacceptable for herself on personal grounds - but not on grounds of religion.

Childbirth was the greatest danger faced by women in the early age, and, quite understandably, its mysteries formed a large part of women's religious and magical practice. *Sigrdrifumál* 9 offers advice for birthing: "You shall know birth-runes, if you would give help in birthing, and loosen a child from the woman. You shall rist them on palm, and on the hand's span, and bid the idises aid." Folk-practices include the belief that there should be no knots in the birthing-hall - for that would tighten the woman's womb.

When the birthing-pains start, the obvious thing to do is to make a blessing to Frija and the idises. The woman should take a horn of whole milk in one hand, an apple or a pear in the other, and call out,

Frija, kind queen! Fair idises all,
come to help your quick kin.
Another branch your Bairn-Stock sprouts -
bring it forth bright to day,
blessed, bring babe to birth.
Mighty ghost-frowes, my Mothers,
be with me, as in the elder times,
all bale from birthing bed ward off -
bring child bright to day,
blessed, bring babe to birth.
Best of norms at need show forth
fair apples and kindly eyes,
that bairn and mother be ever whole -
bring my babe bright to day,
blessed, bring babe to birth.

She should then sign a blessing (sun-wheel or spiral) over the horn (with a spindle, if she owns one) and drink from it before pouring the milk into the blessing-bowl. She should set the apple into the milk, then dip the spindle or a blessing-twig into it and sprinkle a few drops on her forehead and a few drops on her belly. The blessing-bowl should then be either set on the hearth or the milk poured on the earth outside, preferably at the roots of a tree. If there is a tree on your own land that the family has chosen as its Bairn-Stock, she should hold tight to its trunk for a few of the pains, calling silently on Frija and the idises. The apple should be dried and its seeds planted when and if you have lands that you mean to stay on.

In older days, when the woman's water broke, she would start to weave or braid a red three-stranded string with which the child's umbilical cord could be tied off. Since most hospitals will not use a hand-woven string for this purpose,

those modern Norwegians who still keep up the practice tie it about the child's wrist as well. During the braiding, she should chant or sing softly something like: "Idises all shall aid me now; Mothers mighty all help. Norns, weave weal for my bairn; wend all woe away."

In Norway, the midwife was called the light-mother or the near-mother. She had to bring a candle near to the face of the child as soon as it was born. This probably stemmed from both the wish to be sure that the child was well-shaped, and also the symbolic bringing of it into the light. Candles appear in the birthing-context in *Nornagests þáttur* (*Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*; *Flateyjarbók*), when Nornagestr tells of how he has come to live so long.

Then there fared around the land völvur, who were called spae-women and fore-saw the lives of men. For that folk invited them and readied banquets for them and gave them gifts...My father did so, and they came to him...so as to fore-see my örlög. I lay there in the cradle where they should speak about me. There two candle-lights burned over me. They spoke of me then, and said that I should become a greatly wealthy man, and greater than my forebears or sons of chieftains there in lands, and said all that should become of me'...

(The youngest Norn then takes offense because she is not asked to prophesy and the folk there are disrespectful, jostling her from her seat. She calls out sharply to the other two, telling them to leave off their good foretellings, and says:)

'I shape for him that he shall live no longer than it takes for that candle to be burned up'. After that the elder völvur took the candle and put it out and told my mother to keep it and not kindle it until the last day of my life'.

After the child's birth, the "light-mother" sometimes took and nursed it or fed it on cow's milk; she was also, in some places in Scandinavia, responsible for keeping a candle burning in its room from birth till baptism, presumably to keep the alfs or trolls from getting it. This may well have stemmed from heathen times, as the child was equally in a border-state in the nine days between birth and naming - in the same class as the sundry wights, and thus able to be touched by them. "Light-mother" was a long-term relationship, similar to that of "godparent" in later times.

Another Norwegian term for midwife was "jordmoder", "earth-mother"; "straw-mother" was also a common term, since birth traditionally took place, not on a bed, but in a special straw-bed prepared for the occasion.

In modern times, midwives are seldom used, but there may still be a place for the "light-mother" in birthing today. Obstetricians are used to a surprising range of bizarre things done by families which are about to give birth, and a sympathetic one will put up with almost anything which does not compromise hygiene or endanger the health of the mother or child. They may or may not let you light a candle in the birthing-room, but it is worth asking.

If the child is born with a caul, this must be carefully kept and dried, as it is an emanation of the fetch in the Middle-Garth, and to lose or destroy it means to lose or destroy much of the child's soul-might. The placenta is traditionally kept and either buried at the roots of a growing tree or put in the earth with a new tree planted above it. Both caul and placenta belong to you and cannot be denied you if you ask for them.

Naming

The greatest moment of the birth-rites, however, is not the actual birth, but the naming, which takes nine days after birth. At this time, assuming the child has not been deemed defective and set out to die - or given up for adoption - a feast is held at which all the kin and friends gather together with gifts and good wishes for the new member of the clan.

The center of this rite is the moment at which the father takes the child from the mother's arms, sprinkling it with water and giving it a name. Although such "baptism" is most often considered a christian custom, the use of water as a purification is much more ancient. The Greeks, Romans, Aryans, Finno-Ugrics, and Teutons associated it with some form of initiation as well. Ceremonial use of water can be both simple and complex. As children are born of the water of the mother, a parallel of washing away the old and beginning fresh becomes evident.

The four elements of classical times, among those who believe that they have a life of their own or are even animistic (such as, for instance, the Germanic peoples) have often been venerated in their own right. Sacred wells, springs, and lakes with reputed healing powers have outlasted all attempts to christianize them if not to co-opt them. Superstitious Romans believed that water could purge them of all sins. Many Indians today believe that immersion in the Ganges will wash away all the past sins of a lifetime. If water can wash away dirt and contamination on a physical level, then it follows that it is possible that water can purify one on an emotional, spiritual, moral, and even psychic level as well. Such was the current of thought (so to speak) of the ancients. It is still prevalent among some Pagan peoples today.

Our Teutonic ancestors had a custom of "baptism" observed by Roman writers as early as 200 B.C.E. Among the Norse, it was called "ausa vatni" (sprinkling with water), and signified acceptance into the family. Until the *ausa vatni* had been performed, a child had no legal rites or standing within the community, and was not even considered a human being. Even in christian times, the wergeld for killing an unbaptized child was half that paid for the death of a baptized one.

On the ninth day after birth the baby was brought to the father (or closest male relative) for the public performance

of the ritual, and at that time it was also given a name. The Norwegians, Lapps, and Finns performed the ceremony on a Thursday. It was often accompanied with a feast given by all the blood relatives. The name chosen was usually that of an ancestor or a parent. The name of an ancestor (usually a deceased grand-parent on the mother's side) was conferred so that the qualities of that person could live again in the child (see "Soul, Death, and Rebirth"). Giving the parent's name granted one immortality in one's own lifetime (alliteration of names, as for instance Gjúki - Gunther - Guðrún, or repetition of a name-element, as in Sigmundur - Signý - Sigurðr, was also a means by which the clan-soul could be shared and reborn - KHG).

When a child was born, it was first laid upon the ground to reverence the earth as the source of all life. The Scandinavian term for midwife, *jordemoder*, means earth-mother... She then lifted the child up and presented it to the father, who had the power of life or death over it. This power was nullified, however, if the child had partaken of milk or honey, or if it had been washed. If any of these things had been done, a child was considered to have equal rights in the family into which it was born. If the father were unavailable, the mother had the right to acknowledge or expose the infant. Another important custom was the planting of a tree on the day of birth. This tree became the child's tree of life and they mirrored each other's growth. This custom has a lot more going for it than passing out cigars.

As water is elemental in nature, an *ausa vatni* is a Vanic rite. The new member of the community was thrice sprinkled with water by the father: once, in the name of Thor; again in the name of Freyr; and lastly in the name of Njord. By sprinkling the babe with water it was believed that the beneficial forces of water could be brought to bear their various powers for good and healing to the newly-born. This attunement of the child with the element of water was also thought to protect it from the harmful elements of water as well.

Among the Finns and Lapps, baptismal names were bestowed by the "wash-mother" (*laugo-edne*). The following ceremony was then performed: "Warm water was poured into a trough, and two birch-twigs - one in its natural condition, the other bent into a ring - were laid in it. At the same time, the child was thus addressed: 'Thou shalt be as fertile, sound, and strong as the birch from which this twig was taken'. Then a copper (or silver) talisman was cast into the water, with the words: 'I cast the *nabma-skiello* (talisman) into the water, to wash thee; be as melodious and fair as this brass (or silver).' Then came the formula: 'I baptize thee with a new name, N.N. Thou shalt thrive better from this water, of which we make thee a partaker, than from the water wherewith the priest baptized thee. I call thee up by baptism, deceased N.N. Thou shalt now rise again to life and health, and receive new limbs. Thou, child, shalt have the same happiness and joy which the deceased enjoyed in this world'. As she uttered this words, the baptizer poured water three times on the head of the child, and then washed its whole body. Finally she said, 'Now art thou baptized *adde-nabma* (underworld name), with the name of the deceased, and I will see that with this name thou wilt enjoy good health' (Jessen, E.J., *Afhandling om de norske Finners og Lappers hedenske Religion*, pp 33-42).

Specific legal rights were conferred by the *ausa vatni* as well. Both the Eddas and *Heimskringla* have reference to the custom. In "Hávamál" 158, the master magician states, "That thirteenth (song) ken I: if I shall cast water onto a young thane, he shall not fall, though he comes among the host, nor the hero sink before swords". In *Heimskringla*, we are told that at the birth of Haraldr gráfeld, "Eiríkr and Gunnhildr had a son whom Haraldr inn hárfagri sprinkled with water, and to whom he gave the name, ordaining that he should be king after his father Eiríkr". Haraldr inn hárfagri, we will remember, was the father of Eiríkr Blood-Axe; though he had given his kingdom up to his son before his death, he was clearly still seen as the head of the clan when it came to family matters. These legal, social, and spiritual rights could also be conferred, when necessary, by a man who was not related to the woman or child: when Hjördis bears Sigmundur the Völsung's posthumous child Sigurðr, it is Hjalprekr, the father of her rescuer, who sprinkles the child with water and, marking the keenness of his eyes, states that no one will ever be his like. By naming and claiming a child as his own, according to our legalistic ancestors, a father granted protection, provision, and the right of inheritance and succession to the father's estate.

The sprinkling of water together with the naming is also important as part of the rite which sets the child's *ørlög*. The water, which should be drawn from a holy well or running burne, embodies the might of the holiest water of the Well of Wyrð: the drops sprinkled on the child also fall back into the Well to set its roots firmly in that-which-is - the source of the bairn's name and soul - and to lay down what shall become for it.

Once the naming has been done, each of the folk there should come forth with a gift for the child which embodies some quality that they themselves have in great store and would wish to share with the newborn. These are usually not things the child can use right away, but things that will be needed in later life. A common gift is a nice edition of the folktales collected by the Brothers Grimm; other collections of folktales (such as the books translated/edited by Jacqueline Simpson) or folk songs are also fitting, as are copies of the Eddas. A particularly nice present for a child is the beautifully illustrated d'Aulaire version of our holy tales, *Norse Gods and Giants*. Weapons are also appropriate, though of course the parents will have to keep them until the child reaches the age of man- or woman-making. A cup or horn may embody both wod and the source of life and strength. Helgi Hunding-Bane's father Sigmundur gave him a sword and a leek at birth - the former an obvious gift for a warrior, the latter showing forth the swift and shining growth of the hero, and perhaps also the manly power of life to match the slaying-might of the sword. Jewelry of appropriate sorts (in the shape of holy animals or made with stones of particular power, for instance) can also be given. A young maiden may receive a spindle or a cauldron; as a boy-child is given a leek, a girl-child can be given a length of linen. Runic inscriptions can be made upon many of these

things to strengthen their working. The child should be allowed to touch each gift (*very carefully*, in the case of items with sharp edges or things that can easily be popped into the mouth).

The name-giving basically involves the father taking the child from the mother's arms, lifting it up, saying that he takes it into his clan and speaking the name that he wishes to give it (together with a brief speech on the earlier bearer whose soul he wishes to live again, and, if he feels so inspired, a statement on its *ørlög*) as he sprinkles it with the hallowed water. The sprinkling should be done with a leek or sprig of oak or ash for a boy; for a girl, it should be a twig of birch, rowan, linden, elder, or elm. The light-mother, perhaps together with two other women, can come bearing candles and speak for the Norns (though hopefully not as eventfully as at Norna-Gestr's *wyrd*-setting!). If there is an actual *spae*-speaker or *völva* in the group or within the general area, this person might also be invited and asked to fore-see for the child.

Obviously much of this rite is very individualistic, but a sample ritual framework could be as follows:

I. *The Father does the Hammer-Rite. The Norns (or Norn; can be done by a single woman) are within the circle, but completely shrouded in dark cloaks. The Mother sits on the hearth, if there is one, or in whatever spot has been chosen as the heart of the home. The Child is in her lap. The Guests sit ringed around her in a half-circle. On the harrow or a small table beside the hearth is a blessing-bowl full of water that has been drawn from a holy well or running spring, preferably at dawn but before sunrise (for the child's sake, this water should be warm, and should also perhaps have been boiled a little while before the rite). Beside it are two twigs from appropriate trees, one in its natural state, one bent into a circle, and a *taufr* [talisman] of silver or polished brass (such a *taufr* can either be a piece of jewelry or a flat piece of metal with runes graven on it - *berkano*, *dagaz*, *ansuz*, *perthro*, *laguz*, and *othala* are especially fitting, though your *high* [hugr - see "Soul"] may also guide you to others). There is also a horn and drink to fill it, and a plate with three pieces of bread. The Father has a gift for each of the Norns. There is a basin of earth on the floor. You will need either a cradle to put the Child in for some parts of the rite, or a trusted *kinsib* to hold it when both the Mother and Father are acting.*

II. *The Mother says,*

Idises, alfs all awesome wights,
ye gods and goddesses all,
Well-come are you, wise ones to hall,
who blessings would give to babe.

She turns to the Father, saying,

Nine months in womb has whiled this bairn,
Nine days in light has lived this bairn,
Now the Nine Worlds ween our choice to know,
Shall s/he be clan-sib or cast out for trolls?

The Father bends down to look closely at the Child. The Norns also move closer, as if to hear him better. Trusting that the Child is indeed to be raised rather than set out or sent away for adoption, he lifts it in his arms and holds it high, saying,

Now hear me, all ye hallowed ones,
both high and low of Heimdallr's sib!
I hold this bairn to be my own,
a Bairnstock-branch sprung bright from me.

III. *The Mother fixes the Child with a steady and loving gaze, laying the two twigs into the water and holding there as she says,*

Be sound and strong as stock of tree
from which fair twigs sprang forth!
Fruitful and joyous in frith and good cheer,
so long as your days dawn,
so long as life shall last.

*She casts the *taufr* into the water, saying,*

I lay this sign in *laguz*-depths,
it sinks, to shine from roots.
as ringing and bright when rinsed with this stream,

be thou, stemmed from our stock,
be thou, beloved bairn!

IV. *The Father takes the twigs from the water and sprinkles the Child, speaking the name, the deeds of the forebear or hero/ine after whom it is being named, and so forth. As the first drops hit the Child, the Norns should light their candles. Their hands can now be seen, but not their faces.*

When the Child has been thoroughly sprinkled or even washed with the water, what is left should be poured over its feet into the basin of earth.

V. *The Guests now come to give their gifts, each one saying briefly what it is and what gift of soul, body, or mind s/he gives to the Child with that sign.*

VII. *The Norns now come closer. The Mother swiftly fills the horn, bringing it and the plate of bread to them. She says,*

Well-come are you, women of might,
candle-bearers kind!
Holy guests, have food and drink,
I hail you in our hall!

Very slowly, showing as little of their faces as possible, the Norns eat and share the horn between them (a single Norn or völva may content herself with a ceremonial sip before handing it back to the Mother). They then come forward to ring the Child around and speak their spae-sayings. The eldest should have talked with the family about the source of the name, so that she can speak a fore-saying based on the deeds and life of the one who bore it earlier. The middle Norn should make reference to the gifts the Child has gotten and how they will show forth in its life, while the youngest should spae-speak as well as she can.

If, of course, the Norns have any inspiration or visions, they should not feel themselves bound by these guidelines!

VIII. *At the end of the spae-saying, the Norns set their candles on the mantelpiece or table. The Father comes forward with their gifts as the Mother refills the horn, saying,*

Hallowed frowes, have our thanks aye,
good ones, I give you gifts.

The Norns take their gifts, nodding in thanks, and withdraw to stand behind the row of guests again. The Father takes the horn from the Mother and raises it, saying,

Idises, alfs, all awesome wights,
gods and goddesses all,
I hail you here with horn of frith,
let none be left out,
let all bring blessings here!

He drinks, then passes the horn about to each of the Guests, who may speak a blessing as they sip from it. The Norns also share in this horn. The last to drink from it is the Mother. Mother and Father then set their hands on the horn together and pour it into the blessing-bowl. The Mother sprinkles the eight ways, above, and below; the Father sprinkles the Child, then picks it up again and says,

Now (Name of child) is named, with frith and friendship of all the mighty ones. Let all join in the feast!

The Norns leave, taking off their cloaks out of sight of everyone else before they come back. The feast begins.

Chapter XLII

Man-Making

The rite of man-making takes place when a boy is deemed old enough to be counted among the men. Although there is no single clear sign of manhood, as there is of womanhood, this is generally about the age of thirteen or fourteen. The essence of man-making is that of a test: a boy must prove his right to be counted as a man. The form in which such an initiation is carried out will depend wholly upon the men of the youth's family, Hearth, or Garth; no precise rite is given here, not only because circumstances and abilities of groups and individuals vary so greatly, but because it is important that the specific events come as something of a surprise to the candidate. The initiators should do their best to keep him off-balance all the way through; he is judged by how he responds to surprises and unfamiliar situations, for one of the defining characteristics of manhood (and indeed adulthood) is the ability not only to plan for all possibilities, but to shift and adjust so as to deal well with events that have not been (and perhaps could not be) planned for.

Though much of the lore of our forebears has been lost, manly initiations have survived better than most other rites - not only in tales, but in the folk practice of the "men's bands" of the Northern countries. Such bands are made up of men who, at certain times (usually festivals, especially Yule and Carnival), are allowed to withdraw from the "normal" society of their town or village and take on wild personas, often masked. Degrees of wildness vary: in Germany, England, and Switzerland, this is more to be compared to the masking and "Crewes" of Mardi Gras, but in Scandinavia, and in Germany in earlier days, there is much evidence that the men's bands were closely tied with the belief in the Wild Hunt (Höfler). In Norway, such bands were called "Jolesveinar" (Yule-Youths); during the Yule season, they went masked from house to house, demanding beer and food, and when they did not get it, they often broke in and took it. Gifts (or sacrifices) were often left out for them to keep this from happening. The Jolesveinar also took horses from the stable and rode them to exhaustion, and might beat unwary wanderers. They travelled with much noise; descriptions of the blowing of horns and pipes are especially common in Wild Hunt tales. Wild Hunt legends of Germany, as well, speak of processions of the dead running through the town in daylight as well as at night, and causing much disturbance; and in the last century, there are records of both a supernatural and a natural "Perchtenlauf". According to Höfler's theory, these groups were bands of men who, in their masked/ecstatic state, actually embodied the unrestful dead or were likely to have those ghosts running among them. The berserk-bands are thought to be like groups, closed societies of men who, for a certain time, entered into a state of furious wod in which they could lawfully terrorize normal society.

The most typical example of this in the Northern tradition, cited by Mircea Eliade (*Rites and Symbols of Initiation*), is the passage from *Völsunga saga* in which Sigmundr and his son Sinfjötli become werewolves. The two of them find wolfskins and put them on, but cannot take them off. They then separate, but agree that if one should come on a group of seven men or more, he will howl to call the other. Sigmundr lives up to the agreement, but when they part again, Sinfjötli finds a group of eleven men and kills them all. When he sees Sigmundr again, he taunts him with having needed help for seven men, while Sinfjötli, only a youth, was able to slay eleven. Sigmundr leaps at him in a rage and bites him in the throat, wounding him near to death. A little later, he sees two weasels playing; one bites the other's throat through, then lays a leaf on it, and it is healed. A raven then flies to Sigmundr with a leaf in its beak; he puts the leaf on his son's throat, and Sinfjötli springs up hale again, as if he had never been wounded. Sigmundr and Sinfjötli are then able to take the wolfskins off again.

This is a basic paradigm for a manhood-initiation. The first step is the physical withdrawal into the wilderness in an all-male society. The second is the soul-passing outside the realm of humanity, shown here by the taking of the wolf-shape, in Wild Hunt legends by the masking which makes the masker one of the wild dead. The candidate must fare alone for a time; then he is hunted and must fight for his life. He is successful in his first two battles, but, at the judgement of his initiator, loses the third and experiences near-death or a symbolic death. This is followed by a healing given to him by the messenger of his clan-father and patron god, Óðinn. We will remember how a raven had earlier brought an apple to the parents of Sinfjötli's grandfather so that they could conceive a child; in bringing this leaf, the raven is clearly re-creating that earlier event, so that Sinfjötli's healing is actually to be seen as a rebirth. Both Sinfjötli's defeat and healing by Sigmundr, as well as being a death/rebirth initiation, serve to establish his place in male society (and prepare him for re-integration into normal society): though Sinfjötli is young, strong, and cocky, it is the older man who must remain the band's leader. With this settled, the two of them are finally able to take off their wolfskins and come back to humanity.

Another form of manhood-initiation is the Monster-Slaying type, best seen in the story of Sigurðr the Völsung. Sigurðr's father is dead, but he has two initiatory-fathers - one who turns out to be adversarial, one who is helpful. The first, the dwarf Reginn, is actually his foster-father; Reginn has raised Sigurðr and reforged Sigmundr's sword for him, but means that Sigurðr shall die while fighting the dragon Fáfnir (who is also Reginn's brother). The second is Óðinn himself. Reginn goads Sigurðr on to fight Fáfnir, reproaching his courage and suggesting that he will be unworthy of his clan if he does not battle the dragon. He leads Sigurðr to the dragon's path, telling him to dig a pit and stab up from beneath; he then leaves the youth alone. Óðinn comes to Sigurðr and tells him that Reginn has given him bad advice; Sigurðr should dig several pits for the dragon's (poisonous, corrosive) blood to flow into. Sigurðr kills Fáfnir as advised: while dying, the dragon is able to

answer the hero's questions about the world, warns him about Reginn, and makes a prophecy of his future. Reginn then comes back, cuts out Fáfnir's heart, and has Sigurðr cook it. While the heart is cooking, blood froths out of it; Sigurðr burns his finger on the blood and puts it in his mouth. He can then understand the speech of birds, and the birds warn him that Reginn means to work his death. Sigurðr kills Reginn and takes Fáfnir's hoard for himself.

The basic elements of this initiation are the setting up of the situation by the adversarial father; the isolation of the candidate, which makes it possible for the helpful father to come to him and give him advice (and for the candidate to make his choice between them); the actual deed of slaying the large and dangerous creature from wild space; the gaining of lore from it both by questioning and by intaking of its heartblood, which gives Sigurðr the ability to understand other creatures of the wild. Finally, the slaying of Reginn represents not only Sigurðr's triumph over the plan for his death, but also his claiming of independence. As a child, Sigurðr had been dependent on the guidance and wisdom of his foster-father (which had even determined his participation in his own man-making!), but as a man, he is guided by himself alone; Óðinn, who had given him advice several times before, does not appear to him again after he has slain Reginn.

A similar tale, which is thought to preserve a description of how a "Monster-Slaying" initiation might have been carried out in elder times, is found in *Hrólfs saga kraka*. A great flying troll-beast has been terrorizing the land at Yule-time (mark the hint that Yule may be especially fitting for man-making). Bjarki goes out to deal with it, dragging the reluctant, weak, cowardly, sniveling wimp Hötttr with him. When Bjarki has slain the beast, he makes Hötttr drink a draft of its blood and eat of its heart. Hötttr is suddenly infused with heroic strength and will by this drink. Bjarki then props the dead troll-beast up as if it were alive, giving Hötttr certain instructions. When day comes and the men come out of the hall, they see it there. Hötttr then says that he will slay it or die, but he has no weapon; the king must lend him his gold-hilted sword. Hrólfr does so, and Hötttr rushes at the corpse and "slays" it again. It topples over, quite dead. Hötttr is praised with much surprise; Hrólfr kraki has an idea of what has happened, but he can see the great change in the youth, and gives him the sword for his own, together with the name Hjalti ("hilt"); Hjalti then becomes one of the greatest heroes in the king's warband. From this, it is thought that, in elder days, a mock monster-slaying might well have taken place in public at the climax of a boy's man-making. Both the gift of the sword and the new name given to the candidate are particularly significant in seeing this tale as a description of an actual initiation; the public presentation of a man's weapon and a man's name or title would naturally crown an initiatory ceremony.

The various appearances of manly initiatory rites in the holy images and literature of the Germanic folk have been written of at some length by A. Margaret Arent in "The Heroic Pattern: Old Germanic Helmets, *Beowulf*, and *Grettis saga*" (collected in Polomé's *Old Norse Literature and Mythology*, pp. 130-199). The great trials and triumphs of the heroes of our folk - the monster-slayers, the mighty warriors - mirror the trials of the soul and body of the youth on the threshold of manhood, and his triumph of achievement when he passes into the realm of grown men.

Yet another aspect of manly initiation is the recitation of lore by an older and wiser man to the young candidate, as seen in *Grimnismál* and *Hávamál*. In the former, Grímnir ("the Masked" -Wodan), tortured between two fires for eight days and nights, is given a horn by the king's son Agnarr and then recites to him the lore of the worlds, which qualifies Agnarr to succeed his father as king immediately thereafter. In the latter, Hár ("the High One" - Óðinn) gives a long list of redes ranging from the most practical to the most magical, many of which are directed to a (presumably young) man called "Loddfáfnir". Both of these take place inside by the fire; it may be guessed that the darkness, warmth, and flickering firelight are important elements - a sauna, especially a traditional smoke-sauna or "sweatlodge" would probably be an ideal place for such a recitation. Although these two examples are Wodanic, part of the inscription of the Rök stone (as spoken of under "Thonar"), may be read as telling how a ninety year-old man instructed a young, dedicated initiate in the mysteries of Thonar.

With these models in mind, a general format for a man-making can be constructed. The men of the group, or a single man who has chosen to be the youth's chief initiator, come masked to the door of the house at dawn and take him away, preferably to a wilderness area or relatively natural park. He is told that he will be wandering on his own, perhaps sent on a quest for a symbolic natural item or a specific spiritual discovery. When he has found or realized whatever he was meant to find or realize, he should come back to the designated meeting-point. If aspects of the berserk/Wild Hunt mysteries are to be invoked, this is when it should be done. The candidate is now to be hunted or assailed in whatever form seems most feasible in the circumstances. Those who live in the city may find some high-tech version of this (for instance, Quasar or various forms of virtual reality games) more reasonable than chasing the candidate through the city park with sticks. The important thing is that he must feel himself isolated, fighting against impossible odds with every man's hand turned against him.

When the candidate has been brought to bay and "slain", he must be brought back to life again. *Völsunga saga* does not say what kind of leaf the raven brought Sigmundur, but we might guess that it was a sprig of mistletoe, which opens the way back from Hella's realm as well as into it. His chief initiator lays the leaf on his forehead and sprinkles hallowed water on him, speaking his name (or new name). He stands up as a man.

By now it should be getting dark. The oldest and/or wisest man in the group takes the candidate to a house with a fireplace (if one is available), sauna, or sweatlodge. At need, a small dark room with candles burning in it will serve. He then recites (not reads, recites!) choice bits of traditional lore, such as sections from *Hávamál*, interspersed with his own

wisdom, things his father and grandfather told him, and so forth.

The men then take the candidate to a place where the whole group is gathered. A mock monster (either constructed or consisting of two or three men in a "dragon" costume, with a small flask of drink and a piece of smoked meat hidden inside) threatens the crowd. The candidate is given a real sword or a wooden one, depending on what kind of monster it is, and thrusts it into the dragon's "heart". To the sound of loud cheering, his initiator then takes the meat and drink from the dragon's body and feeds them to the candidate. If the candidate did not use a real sword, the initiator now gives him one, proudly announcing that the youth now stands among the men of the Kindred/Hearth/Garth. He is embraced by each in turn. The highest-ranking woman of the group brings him a horn of drink; other women may crown him with wreaths or cast flowers at him. Those folk who love him should give him gifts, as if it were his birthday (and this rite may well be held on a youth's thirteenth or fourteenth birthday).

When given his first drink, the young man should take it up and vow "not to be less of a man than his fathers". As Grønbech mentions, the moment a youth had spoken this particular vow, "he had taken up his ancestral luck and entered himself as one of the clan...A man uttering such promise drank off a cup into which his forefathers had brewed their fate; he tasted their hamingja of holding great feasts, of gaining victory on the battlefield, of sailing boldly and skilfully on the sea, favourable winds always standing full into their sails; and in so doing, he had made all feasts and victories his own. He was now the incarnation of the clan, he counted as the one who had achieved the past" (II, pp.193-94).

The feasting begins.

Many variations on these themes are, of course, possible. The elements of adversarial father and helpful father can, for instance, be introduced; the monster-slaying can be left out or, as in the Sigurðr-story, the hero's lonely battle with the beast can replace the isolation/hunting. Likewise, the death/reawakening can either be left out or, if the Balder-story is followed as an initiatory model (see "Balder"), can become the center of the rite. As with the Wild Hunt tradition, especially if the man-making takes place at Yule, the band of men with the candidate among them may play at terrorizing the "normal" society of the women and those men who are not taking part before the candidate is symbolically re-socialized. The re-giving may be a communal, rather than an isolated, activity; and so forth. What matters most is that the candidate be in a wholly male framework; that he has some time alone, preferably away from all signs of other human beings, to consider himself and the nature of manhood; that he stands outside of society and undergoes a combative test of some sort in which he is at a severe disadvantage; and that he is then welcomed back into society as a man grown, with love and honour.

Once a youth has done this, he must be considered a man in all ways, wholly answerable for himself and his own choices. Within the home, he should be given more freedom, but also more responsibility; at Kindred/Hearth/Garth events he has the same rights and the same duties as every other man of the group.

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Chapter XLIII

Woman-Making

A girl should undergo her woman-making during her first menses, if at all possible, or straight away following them.

Whereas the goal of a man-making is for a youth to prove his worth as a man, the goal of a woman-making is for a maiden to accept her worth as a woman. In the old days, for a woman to take part in society in the usual way - that is, to marry and have children - was at least as brave as for a man to dare battle. Childbirth in those days was highly dangerous and often painful; caesarians were not unknown, though they usually followed the woman's childbed death. While medical care has improved greatly, the risks are still there - and the maiden initiated today is more likely to give birth than the youth is to go to war.

Since Germanic literature tends to focus on battles and warlike deeds, and most of it was probably written by men (who were unlikely to know what women did in their mysteries) our sources for womanhood-initiations are much scantier than those for manhood initiations - indeed, they are almost non-existent. We cannot be absolutely certain that they existed as such; menstruation is hardly ever mentioned in the Norse sources, and when it is, it is in the context of troll-women such as Geirröðr's daughter, who swells a river into a flood by means of her menstrual blood and urine with the intention of drowning Þórr). This may suggest something of that particular relationship between women and the wild which Diana Paxson speaks of in her article on the Etins (see chapter), and if the awesome might of the great glacial rivers of Iceland is seen as stemming from a womb (albeit an etin-woman's), that suggests that the Germanic folk, like many traditional people, might have seen menstruation as a time when a woman was especially powerful, and hence dangerous. However, since there is no evidence for a strong menstrual taboo in either the sagas or more recent Scandinavian folklore, comparative lore cannot be taken too far. Under the conditions that prevailed in the North, in fact, the sort of menstrual seclusion which is common in traditional cultures in more tropical zones (Buckley and Gottlieb, *Blood Magic*) would have been highly impractical: a community simply could not have afforded to lose five days of women's work out of every month.

We know that women passed down lore while they were engaged in textile work by telling tales and singing the traditional spinning and weaving songs. Indeed, Hans Christian Andersson learned the basic stories which became his tales from going, as a small boy, to the knitting rooms with his mother and listening to the women talk as they knitted. Aside from this, we know little else.

However, we can guess that, like a man-making, a Germanic woman-making would concentrate on the seclusion of the candidate from the opposite sex; on her demonstration of the qualities fitting on a woman; on the passing of womanly lore, and finally on her re-integration into the general society. A sample model can thus be constructed.

Whereas much of the man-making took place outdoors, the woman-making would probably be in the house, from which men are barred from dawn onward. The maiden is surrounded by her kinswomen and the other women of the group, who help her to dress, brush her hair out, and so forth, while talking to her about the joys of womanhood and the beauty and might of the changes her body is undergoing. Rather than being isolated, the maiden is always with the other women, fully experiencing the female community.

If any of the women in the group know how to spin, weave, or knit, some part of the day should be spent doing that so that the maiden has a full spindle or a nice strip of work by evening. Other crafts that might be thought fitting to this special day are brewing, sewing, and cooking (particularly more traditional sorts of cooking such as bread-baking). A communal trip to a fabric store so that the maiden can choose fabric for ritual garb is a nice idea; so is going to the grocery store to buy food for the coming feast. Although the latter sounds rather mundane, one of the most deeply-rooted elements of the womanly is the giving of nourishment: the ordinary act of bringing home food and cooking a meal is a very spiritual act by which the maiden realizes her oneness with such goddesses as Gefjon and Fulla.

If any of the older women have warrior-training, and the maiden is interested in learning, this is also fitting to this day: though Germanic women usually only fought in times of the direst need, they were able to fight. Moreover, a grown woman, like a grown man, is expected to be fully free-standing, which means that those who are able-bodied, whether male or female, have no right to rely on another's strength to ward them in times of danger.

Healing was one of the particularly (though not exclusively) womanly skills; women were thought to be able to heal both through herblore and through magic. The maiden should be taught whatever of these matters the other women are able to teach her. If none of them are specialists in herbcraft or healing, much basic herbal and magical healing lore can be gotten from Mrs. M. Grieves' *A Modern Herbal* and Dr. G. Storms' *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, for starters.

Should there be a natural place nearby which is well-suited to womanly might (such as a cave, large body of water, or a grove or stone that the women of the group have claimed for their own), the maiden may be taken there for meditation on the wild might of womanhood: she should not be allowed to forget that she is a sister to Gerðr and Ran, as well as to Frija and the Frowe.

At sunset, the house should be darkened, lit only by firelight and candles; the women gather at the heart of the home to call the goddesses and idises. Different women may speak to the maiden in the names of the different goddesses

they follow, giving her the rede and wisdom of those paths. If she has done any spinning, weaving, sewing, or knitting, she should now lay the piece on the harrow for Frija's blessing; as a warrior, the blessings of Skaði and Freyja are most fitting to her; as a healer, Eir; and so forth. The eldest woman there should give the maiden a silver spoon and a rock crystal sphere wrapped in silver which she can henceforth hang from her belt together. Other women may also have such gifts for her - things such as cauldrons, candle-holders, oils and recels (incenses) blended for magical and personal use, fine cloth, ritual jewelry. An amber necklace is the most fitting of gifts at this time, as are the paired "tortoiseshell" brooches which were the most distinguishing part of the Viking Age woman's dress. If one of the older women is a warrior and the maiden is interested in that learning, she may be given a sword or other weapon at this time.

The maiden's first duty as a woman may then be to fill a horn with drink and make her own blessing to the goddesses and idises. When she has done this, sprinkled and embraced the other women, and poured the blessing-bowl's contents onto the earth, the men may be called and told that it is time for them to come back to the house. The new-made woman should be ready with a full horn of drink to offer when the first of them (preferably her father or nearest adult male kinsman in the group) steps through the door.

When all the men have come inside and both men and women have seated themselves in a circle, the eldest woman then leads the new-made forth among them and announces that she now stands as a full-grown woman in the company of the idises, the goddesses, and her sisters on the earth. If she has not gotten a weapon earlier but is willing to bear one, it should now be bestowed on her by one of the male warriors. She then goes about the ring, pouring drink for each person there, who in turn makes a toast to her and gives her a gift (if they have not already during the earlier part of the rite), as if it were her birthday. At the end of the round, she is cheered and the feast goes on.

It will be noticed that the woman-making seems less traumatic than the man-making, with less emphasis on the sharp change of status, the death and rebirth elements, and so forth. This is because all of these things are already going on inside the woman's body. Whereas the man-making is a single intense spiritual/social change marking the slower process of physical change from boy to man, the woman-making is put forth as a somewhat slower and gentler spiritual/social change designed to integrate the single intense physical event which transforms a girl into a woman.

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Chapter XLIV

Marriage

To our early forebears, marriage meant several things. Firstly, it was a legal commitment which ensured the protection and support of the children and, should one spouse die and the other be left unable to provide, the survivor; the wife's dowry was also her insurance against divorce, reverting to her in the case of a split. In the Viking Age, the price of marriage was quite high: the minimum amount a groom could pay was eight ounces of silver in Iceland, twelve ounces in Norway (it became the inheritance of the children, or reverted to the bride's family if there was no issue). Foote and Wilson suggest that originally this gift, the *mundr*, was first given to the bride's family, "probably not a purchase-price for her person, as if it were a slave that was being bought, but rather a gift that bore some relationship to her notional value within the totality of people and property that constituted her family" (*The Viking Age*, p. 113). In other words, young women were not thought of as burdens to be rid of, as in some cultures, but important and valuable members of the family whose loss was taken quite seriously. The morning-gift, given to the bride by her husband on the morning after the wedding, served a similar role of insurance against any disaster.

Secondly, marriage meant the continuance of the clan, which is the source of most of the ritual customs surrounding it. In this regard, a wedding was seen by all the family members as the mightiest event that could take place: it made sure that the kin-souls would go on, that the line would not fade away, but continue to thrive and grow. As seen at Signý's wedding in *Völsunga saga* when Óðinn comes into the hall to thrust Sigmundur's sword (which embodies the Völsung soul) into the Bairn-Stock, the marriage-rites also bring the god/esses' might forth in the Middle-Garth again. As a blood-linking of two kindreds in the persons of the children, marriage was likewise the most powerful means of making peace between warring clans (though even this bond was by no means always successful, as many of our sources show).

In general, romantic love was not as much a part of our forebears' awareness of the meaning of marriage as it is today; the chief considerations were rank, wealth, and kin, and arrangements were usually made between families rather than individuals - although the agreement of the prospective betrothed was usually considered necessary. When we see women speaking their feelings about a wedding or making a choice between men in the sources, their grounds are usually practical rather than passionate. In *Laxdæla saga*, for example, Egill Skalla-Grímsson suggests that his daughter Þórgerðr should consider marrying Óláfr Höskuldsson, to which Þórgerðr replies, "I have heard that you love me most of all your children, but now I think that must be untrue, if you want to marry me to the son of a bondswoman - although he is handsome and a great man for fine clothing" (ch. 23). Similarly, in *Völsunga saga*, Hjördis is given the choice between Lyngvi Hundingsson and Sigmundur, and chooses Sigmundur, despite his great age, because he is the more famous. Relationships which are ruled by passion seldom seem to turn out well (and, oddly, seldom end in marriage), as is the case with Guðrún and Kjartan of *Laxdæla saga*. This is not to say that the marriages of our forebears lacked love; this is anything but the truth (and, in fact, Óláfr's charm eventually wins Þórgerðr over and the two of them do get married). However, where we see marital love in the sagas and old tales, it is more likely to be the deep and stable attachment of two people who have shared their lives for some time. The relationship between Njáll and Bergþóra best shows forth the ideal marriage: when Flosi and his men come to burn Skarphedinn in his father's house, and Njáll refuses to come out because he does not want to live after his son, Flosi then offers Bergþóra safe passage. She replies, "I was married young to Njáll, and I promised him that a single fate should befall both of us"; she and Njáll then lie down in their bed to die together.

Tacitus tells us that the gifts given by the husband to the wife are "cattle, bridle and horse, and a shield with spear and sword. It is to share these that the wife is accepted by the husband, and she in turn brings some piece of armament to him. Here is the main part of the bond, here the holy secret, the divinity of the marriage. The wife may not think herself free from thoughts of heroism, or exempt from the chances of war; she is thus warned by the auspices with which her marriage begins that she comes to share labour and danger - the same risks in peace, the same in times of disturbance. This is what is meant by the yoked oxen, the bridled horse, the gift of arms: so must she live, so must she give birth" (*Germania*, ch. 18). The Northern wedding bond is a relationship of both equality and practicality, in other words.

Obviously, weddings today can hardly be carried out as they were in the old days: most families are hardly willing to negotiate life and health insurance, savings accounts, children's college funds, and such other things which fulfill the same goal today as dowry and bride-price did in the old days. Lacking the help of the blood-family, the couple's friends in the Kindred/Hearth/Garth should work on the negotiations instead. According to our traditions, a couple which cannot afford to provide security for both the husband and wife in case of disaster and take care of the children should not get married; the bride-price regulations were specifically designed to make sure that a wedded couple was financially stable from the beginning and thus less likely to become a burden on their families or, in the worst of cases, on society.

As well as the mundane financial arrangements, it is also good for a true couple to think of giving each other the sort of gifts that would have been given in the old days. The eight to twelve ounces of silver (or more, for a couple that thinks well of themselves), for instance, might be given in the form of armrings of heavy silver, with the wires either twisted together like a rope (easy to do, given strong hands and a vise for holding the ends steady) or simply wound into a spiral coil (half-round rather than round may be more comfortable to wear). Any jewelry supply store will be able to provide such

wire.

In Scandinavian folk tradition, the young woman sews and embroiders her wedding dress and household goods. In the old days, the giving of great piles of gifts by the husband to the bride and her kin was important as a sign of his wealth-status, and open-handedness. How far one wishes to go with this today is a matter of choice; those who enjoy the full recreation of an historical setting at holy times may make a full pageant of it, those who do not may limit themselves to the substance of the practical arrangements and the usual giving of presents (silverware services, china, and so forth) by the guests to the married couple.

A bride-crown must also be gotten for the wedding: these have been used from early times until the present day, and were often heirlooms passed on through the generations. Silver and rock-crystal were not rare materials, and even a poor woman would have a small crown of bronze or copper. The removal of the bride-crown represents the consummation of the marriage in a form that can be done in front of witnesses.

The rings used are the traditional circle of plain gold.

Well before the wedding (at least six months to a year), it is important to start the mead brewing. There will be a lot of mead drunk, both at the wedding-feast and by the honeymooners in the next month; the term "honeymoon" is supposed to come from this practice, as drinking mead is thought to make one both strong and fruitful (an old Scottish saying has it that "Mead-drinkers have as much strength as meat-eaters").

H.R. Ellis-Davidson has argued strongly for the use of an ancestral sword in marriage ceremonies; for those who do not already have ancestral swords, *Völsunga saga* shows the beginning of a tradition, and the scene in the Völsungs' hall can easily be made into a short dramatic ritual. Another suggestion appearing in *Teutonic Religion* is Gunnora Hallakarva's idea that the bridegroom be taken to a mound to claim the sword, where he is challenged by a man in the garb of a dead ancestor and must recite his lineage and listen to the ancestor's advice on marriage and wisdom concerning the holy clan.

According to German tradition, Friday is the best day for marriage, probably because it is Frija's Day. If the cat is well-fed and well-treated, there will be good weather for the wedding (Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, I, p. 305). Traditionally, weddings were probably held outdoors: the Scandinavian word for wedding, "bryllup", comes from the Old Norse "brúðhlaup" - "bride's run", referring to the custom of the women and the men racing from the wedding-place back to the hall (whichever got there last had to serve the other drink. One can guess who usually won...). The Eddic poem *Þrymskviða*, however, which is actually one of our fullest descriptions of a Norse wedding (never mind that the bride was actually Þórr!) seems to have the wedding taking place within the hall itself. Weather and time of year may have something to do with the choice of steeds; long custom has early summer as the time of choice for marriage.

A Swedish wedding-formula tells us that "the bridal ale is drunk 'to honour and housewife and to half bed, to lock and keys...and to all right'" (Grønbech, II, p. 169).

Troth Elders and Godwo/men, as licensed clergy, are capable of performing legal marriages. The rite given here is not required for Troth members; someone who has been certified as an Elder or Godwo/man should be fully capable of altering it as needed, or of composing his/her own ritual. This rite is basically a skeleton on which more (the hallowing of the ancestral sword, for instance) can be built. The chief parts of it are the calling of Frija and her band of goddesses and the Wanic powers (if bride or groom is deeply given to another god/ess, then the rite's leader should be able to make the needful additions or changes); the presence of kinfolk or close friends who can speak of the thews of the groom and bride; the bringing forth of all the proof that the couple's financial arrangements have been worked out (this may be done as actual paperwork, or symbolized by the gift of arm-rings spoken of earlier if that seems too prosaic); the swearing of the oath upon sword and rings; the giving of weapons between the two; the return to the feast-hall; and the giving of the morning-gift and keys the next morning.

I. *The folk are all gathered in a fitting stead, by choice outdoors in a fair woodland around a holy stone. The Bride and her folk stand on one side, the Groom and his on the other. The Elder stands before the stone. The Elder does the Hammer-Hallowing.*

II. *The Elder stands in the full "tree-stance" (hands and head raised to draw down the might of the heavens, feet spread to draw up the might of the earth). S/he speaks:*

Hail to Frija, frowe most high!
We call thee, queen, come to this stead,
with loving eyes look on the pair here,
grant to them joy, grith and frith aye.

Holy brides all bring blessing here,
Sjöfn, you rule, see your work is done!
Vár, hear spoken, the vows of these two,
Lofn's leave's given, lour none to part them.

Fro Ing and Frowe, and fair wights all,
Njörðr and Nerthus, nytt they your good.
Wans all wise bring weal this day,
with gods most high and goddesses all!

III. *The Elder returns to a normal stance and speaks.*

Now two folk stand in the hallowed stead, and will pledge their troth before the Nine Worlds. Who stands to say that they are worthy? What deeds have they done; what thews have they shown? Is this wedding fair to their clans; who says that these kins are well-met?

The Groom's kinswo/man or speaker steps forward and tells of the worth of the Groom. The other folk there may shout "Hail!" or "Heilsa!" if he says anything especially worthy. He finishes with the presentation of the actual paperwork for insurance, savings, and so forth, or the gift of rings representing it. The Bride's kinswo/man or speaker then does the same for her, presenting her paperwork and accepting the Groom's materials or gift.

IV. *The Elder beckons the Bride and Groom forward. They bear the weapons which they mean to give one another; if a beloved child has not been chosen to bear the rings for them, they also carry those. The Elder speaks.*

Your worth has been weighed and well are you matched
before the awesome ones' eyes.

What oaths do you swear that ætts be mingled,
and mighty grow kind of your kins?

V. *The Bride and Groom touch their rings together upon the hilt of the Groom's ancestral sword and speak the oaths that they have earlier written as most fitting to themselves. The Groom speaks.*

Ring and sword I share with you,
own my oath and soul.

Bright my bride, I bring thee all
my heart and hold and hopes.

He gives her the sword and puts the ring on her finger. The Bride speaks.

Ring and sword/spear/sax I share with you,
own my oath and soul,

Husband heart-dear I hold with you
our heart and hold and hopes.

She puts the ring on his finger and gives him the weapon she has brought.

VI. *While the oaths are sworn, the Elder fills the horn with ale. When the Bride and Groom have finished, the Elder lifts the horn in his/her left hand, the Hammer in her/his right. The Bride and Groom clasp hands and the Elder swings the Hammer deosil over the two of them, saying,*

Hammer hallow bride and groom!

The Elder then swings the Hammer deosil over the horn, saying,

With blessed draught of bridal ale
we hail the holy folk.

You Ases and Wans you alfs and wights,
we drink to all delights,
we wassail wedding-pair.

The Elder raises the horn and makes a toast to the two there. The horn is passed around the ring; each person in turn toasts

the wedding-couple.

VII. *When the horn has finished its rounds, the Elder pours what is left into the blessing-bowl and fills it again. S/he swings the Hammer deosil over it, saying,*

Bride and husband bound by oaths,
we hail you, holy folk.

Gladly bound and glee-full wed,
this draught seals your delights,
wassail for wedding pair.

The Bride drinks, then the Groom. Together they pour what is left into the blessing bowl. The Elder dips the blessing-twig into the bowl and sprinkles the two of them together, touching their wedding-rings and the hilts of their weapons with the wet twig as well.

VIII. *The Elder lifts the blessing-bowl high and speaks.*

Fro Ing and Frowe, we hail you! Frija fair, and all your maids, we bless! From Lyfja-Berg, bright women look blithely here! Thonar has hallowed; Sif brings sib joy! Alfs and idises, goddesses and gods - all kin and all friends, have your share!

S/he pours the blessing bowl out upon the stone or harrow, or straight onto the Earth.

IX. *The Elder speaks:*

Now the wedding is wrought - now fare all to feast!

The Bride's women and the Groom's men race back to the hall or to a point agreed on earlier. The losers will serve the winners' drink for the rest of the evening.

The Bride serves the first drink to the Groom, saying,

I bring you joy, boar of helmets,
I give you fruitfulness full.

Rede I bring you runed in the draught,
love to last while we live,
help to hold you at need.

The Groom takes the cup and raises it to her, saying,

I drink to are all our days,
housewife and half-bed, happiness ever.

To lock and keys to caring and joy,
and to right all shall I hold true.

The rest of the day and early part of the evening are spent in feasting and merriment. When it is dark and late enough, the Bride and Groom are escorted to their chamber by candlelight, amid rowdy songs and jokes. The Groom then takes the Bride's crown off and they kiss. The two are left alone, although if the group insists on being really traditional, they will stand about outside the door shouting ribald suggestions.

X. When the two wake up the next morning, the Groom should give the Bride her morning-gift and a bunch of keys which she will henceforth wear dangling from her belt as part of her ritual garb, as a sign that she is a wedded house-frowe and the queen of the home.

As the Troth has a very clear stance on the matter of homosexuality - namely, that we do not accept discrimination of any sort on the grounds of sexual preference - it follows that it is considered fitting for a handfasting rite of this sort to be carried out between persons of the same gender. If this is done, the line "Bright my bride" may be replaced with "Beloved bright"; "Husband heart-dear" may be replaced with "Heart's holy dear"; and "Bride and groom" and "Bride and husband" may be replaced with "Blessed and beloved". All gifts, the house-keys, and so forth may be given on even terms, or the

couple may decide that it is more appropriate for one to pay *mundr*, u.s.w. to the other. Likewise with the drink-toasts: you may choose roles, or each speak both parts to the other.

It is highly unfitting, unacceptable, and offensive to use the word *ergi*, or any of the related terms, in the context of a gay handfasting, unless the two being married request it due to a specific magical/spiritual reason for this usage.

Although the symbolism of the wedding, particularly the claiming and passing of the ancestral sword, is specifically based on the idea of continuance of the family line, it does not follow that wedding vows are necessarily invalidated by the failure to produce children, nor that mixed couples who do not intend to bear should not be allowed to marry; and therefore, there can be no objections raised to a same-gender wedding on these grounds. The rite still acts as a spiritual binding of two persons, and through them, two clans. It must hence be treated with the same seriousness and in the same manner as a mixed-gender wedding.

Where objections are raised by others, the couple should make a special prayer to Frija's handmaiden Lofn who "is so mild and good to call upon, that she gets leave from All-Father and Frigg for folk to come together, women and men (plural in the original - so that it may easily be read as referring to lesbians and gays as well as to straights), although it is banned or denied".

Pure traditionalists of the same gender may, however, consider a rite of blood-siblinghood (which was the usual life-long commitment rite between persons of the same sex among our forebears) to be more fitting to them than an actual marriage ritual. This is the rite that would have been done in the elder days; today, however, the choice is wholly up to the two involved.

Contributors

- KveldúlfR Gundarsson, greatly indebted to the work of Gunnora Hallakarva and her paper on Germanic marriage customs which collected together much of the information given here. "Tryggva væri konan, ef..."

Chapter XLV

Burial Rites

As a relatively new-founded organization, the Troth has not yet been called upon to deal with the burial of its folk. However, as we grow, the time will certainly come when this will become needful, and we must be ready for it.

The first thing true folk must do to prepare for their need-farings is to leave written instructions in their wills that they wish to be buried by the Troth. This is especially important if their families are christians or members of other religions with strong beliefs about burial and the afterlife. If written instructions in a legal context are not left, the family will almost certainly be able to do as they please with the body. Most of us would strongly dislike the idea of being buried under a marble cross! In this context, those who have children who would rather have them raised by other known, trusted Heathens (specific folk, who have earlier agreed to take on the duty in case of need, must be chosen) than by fundamentalist family members should also have something to this effect written in their wills - even if they suffer from no sign of ill health or danger; accidents can happen at any time.

Although the Troth as yet has no official burial grounds, this will change as we buy more lands and build our Hofes. Mounds were long known by our forebears to be holy steads; in the next hundred years, Troth members will again be able to make blessings to the worshipful dead - the first folk of the Troth - at the howe-fields around the Hofes. As fully accredited ministers, Elders and Godwo/men are legally qualified to perform burial rites as well as weddings.

As spoken of in the chapter on "Soul, Death, and Rebirth", the burial customs of our forebears varied greatly. In Scandinavia, the common practice was to bury the dead in mounds; mounds were also raised over those who had been burnt, as was the case with the great howes at Gamla Uppsala, for instance. During the first few hundred years of the Common Era, the Germanic tribes had largely lost this practice: the dead were both burnt and buried (though burial was more common, and the only form used by some tribes, such as the Burgundians). Among many tribes, the dwelling above the ground was replaced by a wooden chamber below the ground; this was the case with the Alamanns, for instance, who built quite elaborate chambers. The Franks commonly buried their dead in neat rows, not unlike the layout of most cemeteries today; they, too, sometimes built wooden burial chambers beneath the ground. While the Goths knew two words that seem to describe mound burials - *hlaiw* (from the common Germanic word for a mound, which itself may originally mean "dwelling") and *aurahjom* ("heap of gravel"), they had largely lost this practice in the course of their migrations: Gothic graves are normally flat. Another form of cemetery was the urnfield (Grundy, *The Cult of Óðinn: God of Death?*).

Some Anglo-Saxon graves are marked by postholes or beam-slots at the corners of the grave, suggesting that small huts or shrines were raised over the individual graves; others are surrounded by penannular or ring-shaped ditches, some of which have preserved stake-holes that show that the grave was originally ringed by a fence. The gap in penannular fences was sometimes marked by a larger post-hole, which may have held something such as one of the god-staffs with a head carved at the top such as Ibn Fadlan described for the Rus (Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Paganism*, pp. 53-63). If a true wo/man's body must be buried in a secular (or even, gods help us, a christian) cemetery, the setting up of such a covering structure, small ring of stakes, and/or god-post is one way in which the grave could be set apart as hallowed.

Another common form of burial among the Anglo-Saxons was the cremation/urn burial, and quite large urnfields have been found. The pottery containers were often decorated with holy emblems such as swastikas and Tiwaz-runes; pots from Lovedon Hill and Spong Hill bore runic inscriptions (Wilson, pp. 147-49). Wyrms and animal figures were not uncommon; one pot from Caistor-by-Norwich shows a large dog or wolf apparently barking at a retreating ship, and it has been suggested that this has something to do with the events of Ragnarök, with the wolf being Fenrir and the ship being that steered by Loki.

Burning and burial were both known in the Viking Age; because Snorri says in *Ynglinga saga* that Óðinn introduced the custom of burning, and given the reference in Ibn Fadlan's account to the dead man's Lord sending the wind to fan the flames of his pyre and take him straight away to "Paradise" (see "Soul, Death, and Rebirth"), it is usually taken that cremation is more fitting for the followers of Wodan (and perhaps the other Ases as well), while burial, especially howe-burial, is more fitting to the Wans - Snorri specifically mentions that Freyr introduced the custom of mound-burial. The Icelandic sagas seldom mention cremation otherwise; this likely stems from the simple fact that, even at the time of the settlement, the "woods" that covered Iceland were little scrub birches, and the amount of wood needed to burn a human body would have been prohibitive except in cases where a draugr was a major threat to the community.

Given this range, it follows that the most common means of burial in the West today - flat inhumation and cremation - are both well-set within the traditions of the Troth. The only modern custom which is not particularly fitting is that of scattering ashes; this was done only when there was reason to think that the dead person would walk again (often because he had been walking and making trouble) - and even then it was not always successful, as the story of Þórólfr Twist-Foot from *Eyrbyggja saga* shows. Cremation urns were usually buried, or at least those which have survived have all been from burials. This means of dealing with the dead offers the simplest way of carrying out the traditional practice of keeping the kin by the stead; it is unlikely that one will be allowed to bury a body in a mound in the backyard, but there is no difficulty, legal or otherwise, in heaping a small howe over a cremation urn and grave-gifts.

The setting of runestones or memorial picture-stones was deeply important to Northern beliefs about the dead, as it was through these that the dead could be remembered forever. As *Hávamál* 72 says, "Better to have a son, though he be born after the warrior is gone; memorial stones seldom stand by the road, unless raised by kinsman for kin." It was by no means definite that the stone had to be set on top of the burial as a grave-marker. Some runestones, such as the Eggjum stone, were set within the mound, and apparently meant to affect the dead or protect them from anyone who might break into the grave (but nothing stops an archaeologist!). Others, such as the Swedish group commemorating the men who "fell in the East with Ingvi", memorialize folk whose bodies are far away. The Gotlandic picture-stones are not generally found in association with actual graves, either; and they seem to be not only memorials (and some of them bear runic inscriptions making it clear that they are), but some of them also appear to describe the expected afterlife of the dead man. Runestones can be set upon the grave as markers, and if the body must be buried among other folk, this probably should be done. They can also be put up on your own lands or at public gathering places. In the old days, stringent curses were often carved into the stone against anyone who should break or disturb it, and (what with one thing and another) this is not a bad idea now. We would also advise against setting smaller or less firmly-rooted stones where vandals or thieves can get hold of them - odd as it may sound, people *have* had small runestones stolen in the past few years. Limestone is probably the ideal medium for a runestone, being soft enough to carve with relative ease, but durable enough to hold its images for a long time - most of the Gotlandic picture stones, for instance, are limestone. A Troth Elder should be able to design a fitting runestone or picture-stone at need. As far as the carving is concerned, anyone with moderate artistic skill and a little practice should be able to execute it. However, if there is some doubt, it should be remembered that there is a fairly strong body of evidence to the effect that the craftsmen who actually did runic inscriptions (as on bracteates or runestones) were not necessarily runemasters themselves, which suggests that a mundane stonemason can be hired if necessary. If you do this for a runic inscription, you do need to oversee the person carefully, as a lot of the staves look an awful lot alike to non-runemasters. This is thought to be one explanation for the great number of surviving "nonsense inscriptions". The raising of the runestone, and whatever rites seem fitting to that, was usually done nine months to a year after the death.

Likely the most common element in all Germanic burials - from the eldest days to the end of the Viking Age, from Scandinavia to Italy - was the setting of grave-goods. This practice (beginning at the dawn of humanity and common to many more peoples than our own) was based on the belief that the dead still lived in some way, and would need not only food and drink, but weapons, tools, and all those things they had enjoyed in their lifetimes. Grave-goods were given to both the burned and the buried; Snorri tells us (and we can probably trust his account of the belief, though we may be dubious about what he says of its origins) that Óðinn decreed "that everyone should come to Valhöll with the same wealth that he had on the bale-fire; and he should also enjoy that which he had hidden in the earth himself" (*Ynglinga saga*, ch. 8). Sometimes the goods themselves were cremated, and sometimes set in the grave with the urn after the body had been burnt. The description of Beowulf's funeral has both: Beowulf's pyre is "hung with helm, with battle-boards, with bright byrnies" (lines 3139-40), and Wiglaf says earlier that the treasure must "melt with the brave-one...the fire shall eat it" (3011-14); but when the cremated body is buried, it is also told how "they placed in the barrow arm-rings and jewels, all that treasure which the fierce men had earlier taken from the hoard (3163-65).

Food and drink, especially apples and hazelnuts (filberts, to Americans), were very usual, and perhaps the most meaningful of gifts (see "Things and their Meanings"). The Oseberg queen was sent off with a bucket and a chest full of wild apples, as well as grain, loaves, and meat. Food was still given to the mound-dead until modern times, although this likely stems from the worship of the alfs rather than an awareness of dead humans needing food (see "Alfs").

The dead were usually buried (or burnt) with those things which they had used in life, fully dressed in their best clothing. Usually they were laid on their backs; the Anglo-Saxon folk buried face-downward are suspected to have been considered dangerous or disgraced in some way (Wilson, pp. 80-86). Women had their spinning and weaving implements, as well as cooking utensils - the frowe of the Oseberg ship-burial had a fully equipped kitchen. Men had weapons and armour (some weapons have also been found in female graves); *Egils saga* mentions the burial of smiths with their tools, which is supported by archaeological finds. Both sexes were buried with jewelry, with fine goods such as glass cups or drinking horns; it was thought shameful for someone of good standing to be sent to the mound without some treasure. Animals, especially horses but also dogs, hawks, and farm animals, were very often laid in the mound with their owners. Some of these, such as pigs, sheep, and cattle, were probably meant for the dead to eat in the Otherworld; the horses, hounds, and hawks suggest that riding and hunting would be done in death as in life.

One of the most definitely religious practices particularly associated with cremation/urn burial in the Viking Age was the setting of an iron ring with Þórr's Hammer pendants, miniature firesteels, and other such small iron emblems (one ring, from Torvalla, Sweden, has what appear to be a spear, hammer, and sickle, which may have been meant as emblems of Óðinn, Þórr, and Freyr) on top of the urn. This was probably meant to ward the dead from all the dangers of the Otherworld. Hammers and miniature fire-steel pendants of silver are also common, as are Hammers of amber; some of the latter sort from Gotland seem to have been made for the sole purpose of burial, as they show no sign of wear (Roedahl and Wilson, *From Viking to Crusader*, p. 190). Small images of other sorts were also put in cremation graves: one from Kungsängen (Sweden), ca. 800 C.E., held both a little bronze figure of a man with a bird-horned helmet (often thought to have some connection with the cult of Wodan, as hinted at by the Torslunda matrices in which the bird-horned dancer is one-eyed) and another of a

man in a wolfskin who is apparently biting a snake, which may possibly refer to a scene from *Völsunga saga*. Such images were found in the graves of folk of both genders: a woman's grave from Birka, for instance, had a small mounted warrior, another horseman, a woman's image, and a miniature strike-a-light (Roesdahl and Wilson, p. 277). The Anglo-Saxon graves were also rich in amulets, including quartz crystals, amethyst, horses' teeth, and, for women, cowrie shells (Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets and Curing Stones*); quartz crystals in various polished and unpolished forms were common amulets/grave-goods throughout the Germanic world, as were also sundry animals' teeth (especially boar-tusks) and claws (especially bear-claws), beads, and stones.

The equipping of the dead person with the means of faring from one world to the next has been spoken of in "Soul, Death, and Rebirth". As well as boats, wains, and horses, the dead could also have "Hel-shoes" sewn onto their feet. These shoes, like the stone-moored boats mentioned in the earlier chapter, served two purposes: they kept the dead shod on the faring to the Otherworld, and also kept them from getting up and walking about in the Middle-Garth.

In modern times, if the dead cannot be buried in a full-size vehicle, a model of a ship, wain, or car might be laid in the grave or burnt for the dead person. Otherwise, the body should be readied with a warm coat or cloak, warm and sturdy walking shoes or boots, and perhaps a staff: it is a long, cold, and wet way to the lands of the dead.

In Norway, at the moment of death, a window or door was supposed to be opened; if the death-struggle was especially long, a hole might be made in the roof or someone might climb onto the roof to call the dying person out through chimney or smokehole (Christianssen, "The Dead and the Living", p. 19). It was sometimes thought dangerous to bring the body out through a window or a door, as the dead might remember the way back in (especially if they were the sort of folk who were likely to walk again, such as berserks, shape-shifters, magic-workers, and the generally obnoxious); Egill Skalla-Grimsson, whose father was a berserk, had a hole broken in the wall of the house through which Skalla-Grimr's corpse could be carried out. In Denmark, houses were sometimes built with a keyhole-shaped "corpse-door" which was usually bricked up, and opened only for the sake of bringing the dead out. Interestingly, many rune-stones and picture-stones are shaped like large keyholes, which may suggest that the memorial stone itself could have been seen as an embodiment of the doorway between life and death.

It was also usual to keep an overnight watch by the body with candles burning. In older days, this called for some bravery, as if the corpse were going to walk again, this was usually the time when it would sit up and perhaps even speak, as Þórsteinn Eiríksson does in *Eiriks saga ins rauða* and as also occurs in Icelandic folktales. In the latter case, worse happenings are prevented by the watcher - one maiden breaks her needle and sticks the pieces into the soles of the dead man's feet, while another watcher, a strong man, physically forces the corpse down.

In some parts of rural Britain today, it is still common (as it was everywhere in Northern Europe through the beginning of this century) for the women of the family to wash and lay out the corpse. It is, and was, thought of as the final act of love shown to the kin.

After death, it was common to hold a wake around the coffin with much merriment and dancing; special beer might be brewed for the funeral (Christianssen, "The Dead and the Living", pp. 28-ff). Christianssen also mentions how "In some districts (Romerike) the open coffin was left in the room where they were eating and - as reported by an eyewitness - the old women used to say in a plaintive voice: 'now you have had your last meal with us'" (p. 34). In the last century, the dead person was given a parting cup, the *velfarskål* (fare-well draught), which had a ritual of its own. In Vrådal, the coffin was placed on the sledge or cart which would bring it to the cemetery, and "A bowl of ale was placed on the coffin, between two lit candles, and the contents were poured into smaller cups and handed to those present, to relatives first...(in) Seljord, it is added that the one who led the horse on leaving touched his hat, saying in the name of the deceased, 'Farvel og takk for meg' (Farewell and thank you)". In Telemark and Setesdal, the ritual extended to someone (usually a relative) giving a longer speech in the name of the deceased, offering thanks and sometimes even answering questions about why he had died or if anyone had been unkind to him. Small wooden drinking cups were put in the bowl to float on top of the ale, and if any relatives were not able to be there, some of the ale was saved for them (Christianssen, pp. 34-36). Christianssen is dubious about the heathen origins of this custom. However, given the character of the Northern soul as something that passed, at least in parts, to the kin at the time of death, it seems not unlikely that it might have been believed that the dead person was literally able to speak through a relative, to share in the drinking and express his/her thanks, and so forth.

After the dead were buried, a feast was held at which the *arvel* (inheritance-ale) was drunk. If the dead person had been the head of the household, the next head of the household would ceremonially go up to sit in the high seat. The various shares of an inheritance could be dealt out at this time; in today's terms, the will would be read and such things as the dead had wanted to leave to specific people would be given to them. Toasts would be made to the dead person, and the deeds of his/her life would be spoken of. This was a time of merriment: Grønbech quotes the "English priest in the 10th century" (Wulfstan? - KHG) as saying, "You shall not take part in the cries of rejoicing over the dead; when invited to a funeral feast, forbid the heathen songs and the loud-voiced peals of laughter, in which folk take delight" (II, pp. 184-85).

Dressing in dark colours or pale colours for mourning goes back at least to Indo-European times. It is likely that the traditional dark or pale mourning-clothes may actually have been meant to imitate the dark or pale colouration of the dead (see "Hella" for a fuller description of these two colours in relationship to death). The black, blue-black, or white mourning garb thus strengthened the sense of the oneness of the dead and the living: for the time that the living mourned, they shared

a world with their dead kinswo/man or friend. This is especially meaningful during the burial rites, for this border-period when the dead are not quite gone and the living are dressed as the dead is the time when the two can touch most closely. It may also perhaps have been thought that for the living to imitate the dead to a degree would keep the dead from dragging them on their faring as companions, a fear which is usually strongest when the dead come back from the grave, but which is always in the awareness of traditional peoples (Ranke, "Indogermanische Totenverehrung", pp. 113-131). According to Ranke, this border-time usually lasts for thirty days after death.

For Troth practice, a general model might be as follows: if the body cannot be laid out at home, it is sent to a professional undertaker for preparation, with strict instructions about the clothing and jewelry if the dead person is to be buried in traditional or ritual gear. The lich is then brought back to the home and fully equipped with any weapons, tools, or ritual jewelry that will go with him/her. The wake is held in the evening; someone, preferably a relative, sits up with the body all night by candlelight. The next day, the *velfarskål* should be done (as described above, complete with the farewell-speech if any of the close kin or friends are willing) beside the hearse before the coffin is driven to its last resting place, and the rite done at the graveside. If the body is to be burned, the rite may either be done before the *velfarskål* and all gifts placed within the coffin to be burned with it (assuming that this can be cleared with the crematorium), or it can be done when the urn is buried and the gifts placed in the mound about the urn.

Burial Rite

The folk are gathered about the coffin (which is still open) or urn. They should be dressed in dark colours. The Elder holds a Hammer amulet or iron ring with Hammers, miniature firesteels, and so forth, and three apples - wild apples, if possible. There is a bowl with water drawn from a hallowed spring at dawn, before sunrise. There is also a horn with enough drink to fill it three times. The blessing-twig should be mistletoe, yew, or from a fruit- or nut-bearing tree, preferably an apple. All gifts that are going in the burial should be ready to go.

I. *The Elder does the Hammer-Rite with the warding-emblem which will go with the Dead.*

II. *A Kinswo/man of the Dead (either by blood or by oath) speaks:*

Alfs and idises all fore-gone kin,
hear us at side of howe!
Hallow the earth here where we lay
the lich of our loved sib.

The Kinswo/man walks slowly deosil around the burial ground sprinkling the earth with the hallowed water. What is left is poured out around the coffin or urn.

II. *The Kinswo/man fills the horn with drink and raises it saying,*

Clan of our clan, kinfolk unseen, we bid you welcome your bairn. What springs must fall, what sinks must rise, but sib stands one with sib.

S/he drinks. If there are any other relatives of the Dead - by blood or oath - there, they too may share in the horn; otherwise it should be poured into the blessing-bowl, then onto the burial ground.

III. *The Elder speaks:*

In Ases' Garth awesome, on Wan-Home's wide ways, in Hella's quiet halls - holy ones, we call you; our kinswo/man shall fare to your shores! Fair are the gods' green worlds, gleaming beyond the high wall; our kinswo/man must soon pass through the gaping gates. Wodan, open the ways; Ing, bless burial earth. Ases and Wans, we call you all, sitting at symbol in garth of the gods. (Name of Dead's patron), we call you, sitting at symbol in (name of god/ess' hall. If the Dead was very strongly given, a longer call to the god/ess may be given here - see examples at end of this rite)! Fill the beakers with shining drink, strew the benches with golden straw, for soon your host shall grow greater. Let the idises bear the ale, let the bright ones ready the bed - let (Name of Dead) see the hall, gleaming beyond the dark ways! Now hear of the deeds of the wo/man who fares forth to dwell with his/her fore-gone kin, that you may know the worth of the one you shall greet.

The folk speak in turn of the deeds of the Dead, as truthfully, but lovingly, as they can. It is most fitting to have a praise-poem spoken now, if anyone has been able to make one. When they are done, the Elder speaks.

Apples I give, as in eldest times - to set within the mound, the riddle and gate of renewing. So the seeds of our lives sink into earth; so we spring ever fresh from the howe - the new rising ever from the roots of the old. Evening's reddening is morning's watching; life shall yet harvest what death has sown here.

The Elder puts the three apples into the coffin or urn and fills the horn with drink.

I raise this toast to thee, (Name of Dead), thy safe path forth and good rebirth. Hail to you in faring; hail to you, coming again; hail to you on your ways!

The Elder hallows the horn with the Hammer-sign and drinks, passing the horn deosil. Each of the folk makes the Hammer-sign, saying, "Hail thee in faring; hail thee, coming again; hail thee on thy ways!"

When the circle is done, the Elder should pour the last of the drink out on the burial-earth. S/he speaks:

Now let all gifts be given; speak your last blessing-words.

IV. *The folk, in turn, set their gifts into the coffin or into or on the urn, saying whatever they have to say to the Dead.*

V. *The Elder speaks:*

The tide is rising; the ship is waiting; the gray steed stands on the shore. Now, (Name of Dead), you must set your feet towards the paths that lead to the lands beyond the Middle-Garth's ring.

The Elder raises the Hammer pendant or iron ring, saying.

Thonar, Warder, we call upon thee! Your Hammer hallows the howe; your Hammer hallows the dead.

The Elder swings the Hammer above both coffin /urn and burial site, saying:

Ward (Name of Dead) against the writhing wyrm; ward (Name of Dead) against the greedy wolf; ward (Name of Dead) against woe-wights all. Not wyrm nor warg, not troll nor thurse may stand against Hammer's might: Thonar ward (Name of Dead) aye!

The Elder puts the Hammer on the chest of the Dead or into the urn and speaks again.

(Name of Dead's) ringing steps shall soon sound on the bridge. Let the thurse-maid sink before him/her, but Heimdallr hail with gladdened eyes, for s/he is worthy of the halls of the gods.

VI. *The Elder fills the horn with drink again, saying*

Gods and goddesses all, we give this horn to you: bless our beloved one's faring, and give him/her fair welcome in your worlds.

The Elder Hammer-signs the horn and drinks, passing it deosil. When each of the folk have drunk from it, s/he pours what is left into the blessing bowl and says,

"We hail you from holy stead",

then pours it onto the burial ground.

VII. *The Elder speaks:*

We send thee forth to (name of chosen god/ess') hall!

S/he then puts the lid on the urn or coffin and crumbles a handful of earth over it. The vessel is then placed in the mound or lowered into the grave, and the burial begins. The Folk go back to the house of the dead person's heirs to drink the arvel.

Calls to different god/esses

These calls - to Wodan, Frijja, Fro Ing, and Thonar - can be used as models for calls to other god/esses, or easily altered as seems fitting to you.

Wodan

Wodan, we call thee! From Walhall's seat,
send ravens winging their way.

Well thou know'st pathways the worlds between -
ferryman, fare to this shore!
A burden waits for thy boat.
Saddled the gray steed stands on the shore,
readied for dead to ride,
Wodan's wish-daughters wait with bright drink,
where heroes are gathered in hall,
where swords are shining flames.
Wodan, we call thee! Wrap thy dark cloak
over thy daughter's (son's keen) eyes.
Carry him/her onward to kin in thy home,
where benches are brightly strewn,
where einherjar share the ale.

Frija

Frija, we call thee! from Fensalir's depths,
thy falcon-wings rise fair.
The way through the worlds that wends to thy hall,
- light over water's ways,
finds (Name of Dead) the path through the fens.
Saddled the fair steed stands on the shore,
readied for dead to ride.
Fulla is waiting with the bright drink,
where thy sons and daughters sit,
where spindles are swirling aye.
Frija, we call thee! Wrap feather-cloak
over thy daughter's (son's keen) eyes.
Carry him/her onward to kin in thy home,
where benches are brightly strewn,
where goddesses gather, all fair.

Fro Ing

Fro Ing, we call thee! From Alf-Home fair,
let the bright boar run.
God of the world we hail thee here,
on Skíðblaðnir sail (Name of Dead) forth,
from darkness into day.
Saddled, the Bloody-Hooved stands on the shore,
readied for dead to ride.
Gerðr waits gladly to give the sweet drink,
where sibs hold symbel in frith,
where bells ring all bright with joy.
Fro Ing, we call thee! Cloak of earth wrap
over thy daughter's (son's keen) eyes.
In howe or Alf-Home, hold her/him well-loved,
where alfs and idises feast,
where no frost freezes stead.

Thonar

Thonar, we call thee! From Trud-Home high,
let goats twain gallop with speed.
Stark through the clouds shines lightning-road,

for (Name of Dead)'s strong feet to find,
where Might-Thonar makes his way.
Harnessed are goats and hauling at wain,
ready to run above,
Trude and Sif, full-trusted, pour drink,
where worthy ones wrestle, might-thewed,
where strong folk strive at their games.
Thonar, we call thee! Thy Hammer-flash brightens
with awe thy daughter's (son's keen) eyes.
Carry him/her onward to kin in thy home,
Bilskírnir, bright through storm,
where Ase-mighty share the ale.

Written by:

KveldúlfR Hagan Gundarsson, inspired in places by Oskar Merikanto's "Hell dig, Liv!"

Chapter XLVI

Holy Feasts

Our forebears had many seasonal feasts, some greater (and common to all the Germanic peoples), some lesser and more celebrated in certain areas than in other. The solstice festivals were, obviously, held at fixed times; the other year-tide blessings were more variable, being based on things such as the beginning and end of harvest and perhaps following the shifts of the Moon as well.

As discussions of the feasts themselves will show, many of the dates are very vague. Edred Thorsson suggests that the best timing for an individual Hearth or Kindred to use can be found by three means: traditional/mechanical time (that is, based on fixed heavenly events such as the cycles of Sun and Moon); traditional/organic time (based on things like the first sighting of a robin or violet in the spring, first frost or harvest-end in the autumn and so forth); and "taking into account the general timing determined by the heavenly events in order to set a time convenient for most of the folk involved" - that is, holding your blessings on a weekend or whenever everyone can come without worrying about what shape they'll be in for work the next morning (*A Book of Troth*, p. 135)..

The three greatest blessings of the year, which we know to have been held by all the Northern folk, are those Snorri Sturluson tells us of in *Heimskringla*: Winternights, Yule, and that feast at the beginning of the summer half of the year which Snorri calls *sigrblót* (victory-blessing) and the Anglo-Saxons and Continental Germans called Eostre or Ostara. Snorri does not mention Midsummer's, but since it has continued to be a great folk-holiday all through the Germanic lands (*especially* Scandinavia), up to the present day, it is likely that our forebears thought it close in rank to the other common feasts.

The lesser blessings are Þorri (Icelandic - late January), now called Feast of Thonar from popular etymology and the fact that we thought we needed a Feast of Thonar at this time; Disting or "Idis-Þing" (Scandinavian - early February); May Eve or "Walpurgisnacht" (may have started in Germany, but now common throughout the North); and Freyfaxi or Loaf-Feast (August 1).

As well as these, modern Ásatrú has added a number of feasts and Days of Remembrance. The tales of almost all these hero/ines who do not have their own sagas or lays can be found in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*. These are as follows:

January 9 - Remembrance for Rauðr the Strong

(a Norwegian chieftain whom Óláfr Tryggvason killed horribly for refusing to convert).

February 9 - Remembrance for Eyvindr kinnrifi

(whom Óláfr Tryggvason tortured to death by putting a metal brazier of burning coals on his belly).

February 14 - Feast of Váli

Folk etymology has led to this day being called "Feast of Váli" in modern Ásatrú. Actually, St. Valentine had nothing to do with Váli, nor do the thinly disguised Pagan Lupercalia rites which take place on this day. However, this is no reason not to make a blót to Váli on "Valentine's Day", and meditating on honour and revenge is a lot better than moping if you have no one to practice thinly disguised Pagan Lupercalia rites with.

March 28 - Ragnar Loðbrók's Day

This is when we celebrate this famous Viking's sack of Paris. A highly legendary version of his story is told in his saga, and an even more fictional version appears in the film *The Vikings*, starring Kirk Douglas. The line "Hail Ragnar! Hail Ragnar's Beard!" is often shouted by drunk Ásatrúar watching this flick late at night.

April 9 - Remembrance for Hákon Sigurðsson

(Hákon the Great) - one of the Jarls of Hlaðir, a great defender of heathenism in Norway.

May 9 - Remembrance for Guðröðr of Guðbrandsdál

whose tongue was cut out by Óláfr inn digri ("St. Óláfr").

Memorial Day -

Einherjar Day, for obvious reasons.

June 9 - Remembrance for Sigurðr the Völsung.

July 9 - Remembrance for Unnr the Deep-Minded

(one of the great chieftains of the Icelandic settlement. Her tale may be found in *Laxdæla saga*).

July 29 - Death of Óláfr inn digri!

August 9 - Remembrance for King Radbod of Frisia

(see "Migration and Vendel Ages").

September 9 - Remembrance for Herman the Cheruscan,

who kept Germany from being overrun by the Romans and suffering the cultural destruction of occupied Gaul.

October 28 - Remembrance for Eiríkr inn rauði.

Columbus Day - Remembrance for Leifr Eiríksson and Freydís Eiríksdóttir

the leaders of the earliest European settlement in America (see the collection of sagas in Gwynn Jones' *North Atlantic Saga*).

November 9 - Remembrance for Queen Sigríðr of Sweden, defender of heathenism
(see the example cited under "Self-Rule" in "Troth").

Thanksgiving - Weyland the Smith's Day

(The Warder of the Lore has been trying to find out why for years with no success. If anyone out there knows, *please* write to the Troth and tell me so I can put it in the next edition! - KHG) - see the Eddic poem "Völundarkviða" and the chapter here on "Alfs".

December 9 - Remembrance for Egill Skalla-Grimsson.

The Days of Remembrance should be celebrated by making a blessing to the memory of the hero/ine in question (following Gamlinginn's 9-point blót formula), reading the appropriate saga, saga excerpt, or poem, and meditating on the thews of the hero/ine and how you can bring them forth in your own life. This can be done either as a solitary rite or within a group. You may feel that there are other hero/ines of the folk whom you would rather honour, or other times and ways for doing it, and this is perfectly fitting. While the idea of hailing and remembering the dead is a deep root of our tradition and it is a very fine thing to do it in this manner, this is a modern, rather than an ancient practice. One good exercise, in any case, is to set aside time to sit down and meditate upon your own list of the hallowed dead - who do you think is worthiest of remembrance, and why? It is such thoughts and memories of ours that wake the might of our forebears from where it sleeps, and strengthens the very roots from which we draw all our being.

One thing that you may mark as you think on these festivals is that much of their symbolism and the will shaping them seems to stem directly from the need of farmers (and folk who often had to struggle to live from one year's harvest to the next) for fruitful fields. In this day and age, this may seem less a matter touching your own person; we all know that we must ultimately trust good harvests for our life, but few of us actually have fields, cattle, or swine to bless as our forebears did.

However, there are also other ways to consider our forebears' rites. Firstly, as rites embodying love and worship for the natural world, these rituals not only brought fruitfulness to the home-fields, but they also kept the balance of nature - of storm and Sun, of Earth and sea - which, if not supported, tilts and leads to natural disasters such as droughts and the flooding of great rivers. These are things which can certainly touch us all, as has been lately proven more than once. Secondly, all that happens in the Middle-Garth is a mirror of (or mirrored by) the happenings both in the worlds without and in the human soul. The harvest which is seen in the fields of the Middle-Garth is brought forth by the moving of the mights in the worlds around us, which shape the turning of our seasons and the good or ill luck that brings the crop to fruit or destroys it. The same mights shape our selves and our lives. The springing joy of Ostara is not just the new shoots coming forth from the hidden depths of the Earth, it is new thoughts springing forth from the hidden depths of our minds, new hope from the hidden depths of our hearts. When we hold the feast of Winternights, we bring forth what we have wrought - our harvest of word and thought and deed, all of it embodied by the apples and sheafs of grain - gather what we have, and turn our souls inward for a time. The same mights that we call on with the signs of fruitfulness also bring us luck and woad as we need them. The god/esses have not changed since the days of our forebears, nor have our souls, nor do our rites: the only difference is that the stream of might that flows between us all shows itself forth in new ways in the Middle-Garth. Each ritual is a transformation of soul as well as of the earth; each ritual brings forth in this world and in our hearts the changes which take place in the great worlds beyond, with the blessing of the god/esses and mights.

The other great part of our traditional rites which may hardly seem to fit in the modern world is the many mentions of battle, weapons, sig, and so forth. Again, this must be understood not as meaning literal, physical battles, but rather all the struggles in which one must take part. The sig we win is a sig of the soul - sometimes against those who threaten us from without, sometimes against those fears and faults of our own that we ever strive to overcome. Because our forebears lived in a warrior culture, and because both strength and ceaseless striving against the greatest challenges are part of the deepest being of the true soul, the images of sword and spear, shield and byrnie, and the sparks flying from the clash of battle are the ones which we use to speak of all those things with which we must deal in the course of living as true folk.

Something else that you will probably mark is that there are many "Saxon English" words in these rites which are not known to you straight away. Particularly in ritual practice, we try to keep to the words of our forebears - and sometimes that means not using standard English. All of these words and their meanings, however, are in the "Word-List" at the back of this book.

You should keep in mind that all of these rites were written in late October of 1993 C.E. The customs that they draw on are told of in the first part of the chapter on each ritual: beyond that, they are based only on the lore and soul-wisdom of the writer. Thus, they may easily be changed as you see fit, used as skeletons for your own work, or discarded altogether. The Troth has no dogma, we have no "official liturgy". We do not claim an unbroken and ancient tradition for anything except the most basic folk-practices (such as setting porridge out for the tomtes), and if anyone out there has had any Ásatrú rites, lore, or theology passed down to them through family-traditional lines, please write at once to the Warder of the Lore (c/o the Troth), who knows a lot of professional ethnologists and folklorists who would like to interrogate you

very closely.

Other versions of rites for the same holy-days may be found in Edred Thorsson's *A Book of Troth* and Kveldulf Gundarsson's *Teutonic Religion*. Thorsson's rites are generally shorter and simpler than those given here; some of Gundarsson's are more dramatic and elaborate, written for two or three workers (though solo versions are also given). There are also rituals in Fitch's *Rites of Odin*, but they are eclectic, generally rather inferior, and sometimes contain christian materials (such as the infamous "Yule creché" with the infant Balder...).

Chapter XLVII

Yule

"Heðinn fared home alone through the woods on Yule evening and found a troll-woman; she rode a warg and had wyrms for reins, and offered her following to Heðinn. 'No', he said. She said, 'You shall pay for that at the bragar-cup.'

"In the evening was the swearing of oaths. The *sonargöltr* (sacrificial boar) was led forward, folk laid their hands upon it, and folk swore their oaths at the bragar-cup..."

("Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar")

Of all the high feasts of our forebears, Yule is by far the highest, the holiest, and the most fraught with might. During the thirteen nights of Yule, all the worlds meet in the Middle-Garth: the god/esses and the dead walk freely, trolls and alfs come into the homes of humans, and those folk who are closest to the Otherworld may leave their human selves altogether to become the riders of the Wild Hunt or *oskorei* (Ásgarð-Ride), werewolves, or the embodiments of various of the wights that wander the earth at Yule-tide. But Yule is also the time of the greatest feasting and joy, because it is at Yule that the whole clan, living and dead, gathers as one, sure in the knowledge that even as the Sun rises every year from her greatest darkness, so there will ever be rebirth for us as well. It is not by chance that Yule has preserved the most Heathen customs of any feast: the promise of the Yule log and the ever-green tree also stood as the promise that our folk-ways should live through the long dark winter and rise bright again.

The traditional Yule season is thirteen nights long - called the *Weihnachten*, or wih-nights, in Germany. These thirteen nights are the march-space between one year and another, the border where the worlds overlap. All that happens between the first sunset and the last dawn of Yule is mightier than at any other time of the year: these are the nights when Wyrð may be turned, when doom is set.

In early times, at least according to the Anglo-Saxons, Yule began on the night before the solstice (that is, either the 19th or 20th of December - varying from year to year; check your almanac), which Bede calls the "Mother-Night". The name suggests that this night was particularly given to the idises and perhaps to Frija; today we think of it as a night for the close family to spend together in the home with each other and their ghosts. This night is ruled over by the house-mother, who stands for all the womanly wights who care for their kin.

The mightiest night of Yule is the solstice itself, the longest night of the year when all the wights who wander in darkness are freest and the human hold on this earth is weakest. The word "Yule" itself is ur-old, its meaning clouded; it could have sprung from roots meaning "wheel"; "time of joy"; "year-turning", "time of sacrifice", or perhaps "blind (dark) time" (de Vries, *Wörterbuch*, p. 292; Ásgeirr Blondal Magnússon, *Órðsifjabók*, p. 433). This is the night on which the Yule-log should be burned and the watch kept; this is the night on which the holiest oaths are sworn. It is not good to be alone on this night, for then the only folk about one are trolls and the dead - chancy companions at best!

The Yule-tide ends at "Twelfth Night" (actually *Prettáandi*, "thirteenth night" in Old Norse), which was January 6th in christian reckoning (counting from December 25), but for us, is usually held to be the eve of January 1 (counting from December 19). As the first day of the new year, this is itself a day of *ørlög*, and what is done and said this day shall set the year to come. No symbol is mightier than the one held at midnight on "Twelfth Night"; there is no gainsaying the words that are spoken then, for weal or woe.

It should also be mentioned that there are some suggestions that the Norse may actually have held their Yule later than did the christians (cf. Cleasby-Vigfusson, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, p. 309), though quite how much later is a matter of some guesswork. In Norway, the "twentieth day" of Yule or "Knut's Day" (January 13) was seen as the end of the festival period (Fejlberg, *Jul*, II, p. 303), and de Vries is of the opinion that "in heathen times Midwinter fell about the 14th of January" (*Religionsgeschichte*, II, p. 305). Modern Ásatrúar, however, tend to prefer the solstice - New Year's span.

From the Old Norse sources, we know that Yule was most particularly thought of as the time to swear oaths on the holy cup (*bragarfull*) and the holy boar (*sonargöltr*), as spoken of in the quote above and described in more detail in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, where the Yule boar is especially mentioned as a beast of Freyr (or, in another manuscript, Freyja). While all oaths are holy - their keeping the measure of the speaker both among humans and god/esses, their breaking a call to the worst luck and a cause for the worst contempt of the folk - those of the Yule night are the holiest of all.

The toasts spoken of in the chapter on "Symbol" were also part of the traditional Norse celebration; *Orkneyinga saga* describes the drinking of the *minni* (memory-toasts) - even following a christian Mass. As discussed below, Yule was a time when strange things often happened, and the greatest feast of the year. It was a time in which peace had to be kept: both the phrases *jólafríðr* (Yule-Frith) and *jólagrið* (Yule-Griths) were known.

The might of the Yule time is shown forth in the fact that the god/esses themselves are called *jóln* (Yule-Beings) in Eyvindr skáldaspillr's "Háleygjatal". It is worth marking that Christopher Arnold, writing in 1674, mentions "neither good nor evil spirits, which are particularly in the air around the birth-time of Christ, and are called 'Juhlafolker', that is, Yule-folk, by the Lapplanders" - a name which bears a suspicious resemblance to the Old Norse *jóln*. He then describes how the Lapps make sacrifice by taking pieces of their meals on holy days and lifting them up, then putting them in a piece of birch-bark and making a little ship provided with sail and rudder, which they also pour a little fatty gravy into. They hang such ships on a tree behind the house, so that the swarming Yule-host has something to eat (Meisen, *Sagen der wütenden Heer und wilden Jäger*; p. 134). This may well have been a borrowing from Norse custom, in which the ship played such a great part as the sign of the faring from one world to the next; although the elder sources do not mention ships as sacrificial vessels (except in the context of burial), this seems wholly in keeping with the general beliefs of our forebears.

Of all the god/esses, Wodan has the most to do with the Yule-time; indeed, one of his *heiti* is *Jólnir*. In *Halfdanar þáttur svarta* (*Flateyjarbók, Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*), Óðinn appears in the form of an old Finn to King Hálfðan at a Yule-feast and causes all the food to disappear. Hálfðan tortures him until the king's son Haraldr (later Haraldr inn hárfagri) first asks his father to let the old man go, then frees him himself. Haraldr goes away with him until they come to the place where a banquet is being held, and it turns out that this is where the vanished food has gone; it is then prophesied for Haraldr that he shall become the sole ruler of Norway, which he does in time. It is then mentioned that Óðinn was especially worshipped by Heathen folk at Yule time.

Throughout the winter, but mostly during the twelve nights of Yule, Wodan appears as the leader of the Wild Hunt. The spread of various forms of "Woden's Host" goes down to Switzerland and up through Sweden; although various historical figures or folk from local legends (for instance, the German Dietrich af Bern, the Danish King Valdemar and Christian II; and the English Francis Drake, among others) are named in these legends as well, derivations from the *wod*-root are the most common; it seems probable that this is one of the god's oldest aspects, if not the very oldest. "Oden" appears in Sweden and Denmark, but not in Norway, where the host is led by Guro Rysserova (Guðrún of *Völsunga saga*) and her husband Sigurðr - who, despite the fact that he is called "Sigurd Svein" (Young Sigurðr) and all variants of the story describe his early death, is described in Norwegian Wild Hunt legends as terrifyingly old, and decrepit to the point of blindness, so that when he should see, his eyes need to be opened with a hook. This old man with seeing difficulties has nothing in common with Sigurðr Sigmundsson, but bears an eerie resemblance to Sigurðr's godly patron, the aged Óðinn who also goes by the names Bileygr (Weak-Eyed), Herblindi (Host-Blind), Tviblindi (Double-Blind), and Helblindi (Death-Blind), leading to a very strong suspicion that Norwegian folk tradition might have replaced the name of the god with the name of the hero.

The human side of the Hunt was spoken of under "Man-Making"; it is also clear from the legends, however, that the company included the actual dead. In the *Strassburger Chronicle* of 1516, it is described how a woman saw her husband, whose head had been split asunder in war, among the host; Hans Sachs' poem "Das wutend heer der kleinen dieb" (1539) describes the wod-host in gruesome detail, including the ravens flapping above to pick out the eyes of the dead, until at last 'there came one behind, who had been hanged the same day, still had his eyes and saw me'. Involvement of folk who are not in a full state of *wod* with the host can be dangerous: the *Zimmerische Chronik* tells how one man bandaged a ghost and became ill, while another answered the hunt with the same result. In Pomerania and Westfalia, the Hunt chases travellers to death. M. Landstad cites a Telemark story of the *Aasgardsreid* leaving a dead man hanging where they had drunken the Yule ale. "He was dressed as a Nummedaler and had silver buttons on his vest. The *Aasgardsreid* had taken him in Nummedal and carried him along, and they had presumably ridden him so hard that he had burst" (*Norsk folkeminnelags skrifter* 13, p. 20). The motif of the living person who is picked up by the horde and carried elsewhere is particularly common in Germany and in Norway. A curious form of this theme which is unique to Norway had people undergoing a sort of involuntary separation from their bodies, which lie as if dead while their souls are faring with the *oskorei*, as Landstad describes: "She fell backwards and lay the whole night as if she were dead. It was of no profit to shake her, for the *Asgardsreid* had made off with her". The woman then awakes to tell how she had ridden with the host "so that fire spurted under horse-hooves" (p. 15). In Pomerania, doors are closed against the Hunter to keep children from being carried off; in Bohuslän (Sweden), it was said that "Oden fares from up in the air and takes creatures and children with him". In Denmark, we see two opposing beliefs: houses which were built along "King Valdemar's road" had to leave their doors open so that the Hunt would have free passage, but it was also believed that doors should be shut, as "Oden's" visit would bring bad luck. De Vries is of the opinion that the original belief was that the Wod-Host's passing was thought to bring blessing, and that it was only after christianization that it was seen as a horde of demons ("Wodan und die wilde Jagd", p. 50).

As spoken of in "Man-Making", gifts of food and drink were often left out for the Hunt. As well as being a thing of terror, the Wod-Host also brought fruitfulness to the field: it was said of the Norwegian *jolasveinar* that as high as they were able to spring over the ground, the grain would grow to that height. The Northern German Last-Sheaf charm also bears that out: "Wode, give your horse now fodder. Now thistle and thorn - the next year better grain". De Vries comments that "(Wodan's) relationship to the Yule-time, in which he came to Earth with his host of einherjar, led the thoughts to the return of the dead to their old homesteads...They gave out luck and blessing, but especially a blessed harvest...The host of the dead, that roared about in field and meadow at this particular time, must tread forward in just such a mystical connection: its

leader Wodan had also a certain might over the success of the harvest" ("Wodan und die Wilde Jagd", p. 51). This was true of both the ghostly host and the wod-taken men who ran about in their masks.

Closely tied to these beliefs is the Scandinavian masking-custom of the *Yule-buck* - a goat's head on a stick, carried about from house to house by a young man under a furry cloak, who engaged in all manner of wild things. His visits could mean either good or ill luck; but in many communities, he was welcomed in with singing and dancing. However, the Yule-buck was more a frightening figure than an amusing one; one Danish folktale tells of a girl who dared to dance with it alone in the barn at midnight, whereupon it came to life and battered her against the beams until she was thoroughly dead (Simpson, *Scandinavian Folktales*, pp. 80-81). In Norway and Sweden, as well as being a guiser, the Yule-buck is also seen as a wholly supernatural wight, boneless and bloodless, with hair long enough to hide its legs; in earlier days, it hid under the cooking-house and had to be given Yule ale, snaps, and porridge to keep it from destroying everything inside. In Søndmøre, it is called "Howe-buck" and thought to dwell in the burial mound; in Sweden, sudden sicknesses at Yule-time are blamed on this buck (Fejlberg, *Jul*). It is also sometimes said that the "New Year's-buck" will take whoever does not have new clothes at this time. The Yule-buck may possibly be related to Thonar's goats (and we will remember that in Germany, "Santa Claus" is sometimes said to drive a wagon drawn by two goats), or it may embody that same wild might of death and fruitfulness which we see in the Wild Hunt. A Yule-playlet from Øland has two people, "father" and "son" together with a "buck", singing alternating lines in which they bargain for the buck's life and horn. The "buck" is "shot" at the end of the third verse, falling down and lying as if dead. They then spread a red cloak and a white cloak over the buck; the last verse tells how it gets up, shaking its beard and springing about, and the guiser playing the buck does as described. Another version has a red cloak laid on the goat before the slaughter; then a blue cloak (because he was gray), then a white cloak (because he was a corpse), then a gold cloak, because Yule was near; and before he could be salted away, he got up and shook his beard (Fejlberg, *Jul*, II, pp. 231-32). This is suspiciously close to the mythic description of Þórr's goats, which can be slaughtered and eaten, then brought back to life by the swinging of the god's Hammer.

Goats made of straw, both small and large, are seen all over the place in Denmark and Sweden at Yule-time. A common Yule decoration in those countries is a small wreath of straw with little straw-goats dangling from it. These creatures - especially the larger ones, whose beards are made from the heads of barley or wheat - suggest that same tie with death and fruitfulness. The goat itself is a rather uncanny beast, and, as Thonar's wain-drawing goats show us, it is as able as a horse or a boar to fare between the worlds.

Although the Last Sheaf was a harvest-custom, special sheaves were also put out at Yule-time "for the birds" - sometimes in the tops of fruit-trees. This was the custom in Norway, Swabia, and the most southerly parts of Germany (Fejlberg, *Jul*, I, 143). Since the Last Sheaf has a special connection with the host of the dead, as does the practice of hanging gifts in trees, it may well be that these "Yule-sheaves" were first meant as gifts to the god/esses and ghosts, who might come to take them in the form of birds (especially crows or ravens?).

As well as Wodan, the Hunt also had a female leader - Perchte/Berchte or Holda, who, as spoken of under "Frija", may well be a German survival of aspects of Frija which were forgotten in the Norse tales. In folk processions of Upper (Southern) Germany, the maskers were called "Perchten", and there were both ugly and beautiful "Perchten" - the former masked as animals and monsters, the latter decorated in fantastic costumes. The beautiful ones often gave gifts, while the ugly ones ran and leapt about most furiously. As with the Norwegian *jolsveinar*, the higher the Perchten could leap and the more wildly they shouted and ran about, the more blessing they brought to the steads where they came (de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, I, p. 451).

In a lighter vein, the young boys of a kindred might be allowed to mask as Yule-Swains and come about to the grown folk with some sign of blessing - perhaps dried stalks of grain - which they would give in return for money and candy, as the Easter-Witch girls do at Ostara's feast.

The Wod-Host is not the only band of ghosts that roam at Yule-time. All manner of dead and undead are abroad. In *Grettis saga*, Glámr meets with the wight that slays him and causes him, in turn, to become a frightful draugr; the hauntings in *Eyrbyggja saga* also take place during the Yule-time. Trolls are quite common at this time, especially in Iceland, but generally throughout Scandinavia; there are, indeed, a number of stories about bands of trolls who break into people's houses to hold their own feasts, driving the human house-holders out. In *Hrólfs saga kraka*, an alf-woman comes to King Helgi at Yule, and he gets the daughter on her who, in time, brings about Hrólf's death. The mound-alfs are especially active at this time, and are often seen traveling in bands from howe to howe; those who look well at the hills and stones where they live can see them feasting and dancing for Yule.

Christians spent much time warding themselves from the Wod-Host and the other wights that walked at Yule-time; Fejlberg describes how Norwegians put crosses over all the doors of their houses and barns, and cast steel into all springs and wells (*Jul*, I, pp. 141-42); how crosses of straw, rowan, and other materials were common, and knives were laid edge-up on windowsills and door-frames (II, pp. 64, 69). Icelanders, however, kept up a custom which was probably closer to the original: the "bidding the alfs to home" (*bjóða álfum heima*). The house-mother would sweep everywhere, in every corner, then kindle lights all through the house, where-ever there might be a shadow. She then went out and around the dwelling, some say three times, and spoke "Come, those who wish to come; stay, those who wish to stay; and fare, those who wish to fare, harmless to me and mine (*Komi þeir sem koma vilja, veri þeir sem vera vilja, og fari þeir, sem fara vilja, mér og*

minum að meinalausu)" (Árni Björnsson, *Jól á Íslandi*, pp. 138-39). This is the form of the custom recommended to true folk. For those who are troubled by trolls or ill-willing ghosts, rowan and the sign of Thonar's Hammer are the best wards against such wights.

Many of the dead were, in fact, very welcome at the Yule feasting: it is particularly important to give the house-ghosts (tomtes, nisses, kobolds, or whatever you choose to call them) their food, beer, and perhaps tobacco at this time. But most of all, it was believed that the dead came back to visit their kin and their old homes, and to see that all was being done rightly; and great trouble was taken to see that everything would suit them. In many homes in Norway, the beds were left to the ghosts, while the living kin slept in the Yule-straw on the floor; in Bornholm, it was important to leave the food standing overnight on the Yule-table (Fejlberg, *Jul*, II, p. 9). Not only were the dead bidden to the home, but the folk went out to pay their worship to the dead; the practice of making offerings to or upon howes continued in Sweden up into this century.

Fruit-trees were especially important at Yule-time. In the *Country Life Book of Old English Customs*, Roy Christian tells how, in Carhampton and other West Country villages on Old Twelfth Night (Jan. 17), "The villagers form a circle round the largest apple tree in a selected orchard. Pieces of toast soaked in cider are hung in the branches for the robins, who represent the 'good spirits' of the tree. The leading wassailer utters an incantation and shot-gun volleys are fired through the branches to frighten away the evil spirits. Then the tree is toasted in cider and urged in song to bring forth much fruit" (p. 133). In Denmark, folk went out and shook all the fruit-trees, then tied straw bands or wreaths around their trunks: thus they assured a good fruit-harvest in the coming summer (*Nordisk Bondereligion*, p. 39). The Swedes strewed the crumbs and leftovers from the Yule meals around their fruit-trees (Fejlberg, *Jul*, I, p. 201). When we think on the meaning of the apple and of fruit in general, this is little wonder: for the fruit-tree was especially the sign of life through death, the apple the embodiment of the hope of rebirth and the seed bearing the soul of the clan. The fruit-bearing tree was thus treated as an honoured member of the family - as the very Bairn-Stock - at this holiest of all times. Those who do not have actual fruit- or nut-trees to wassail should hang apples upon their Yule tree and wassail it in the same way.

Special, very strong, ale was brewed for Yule time - something many small European breweries still do; the strongest beer in the world is "Sanniklaus", at 13.5 %, which is only brewed at Yule. The brewing of the beer that is drunk at Yule should be done as late as possible - certainly after Winternights - though strong beers tend to need longer in the bottle than lighter ones. Beer which is actually brewed at Yule-time is full of magical strength, and may be used throughout the year whenever the special might of the Wyrð-shaping Yule season is needed.

The decorating of the house with greenery - that is to say, evergreen branches - is very traditional. The superstition that it is unlucky to bring greenery into the house before December 21 probably stems from the fact that this day was one for Heathen celebration, and therefore only Heathens decorated their houses in preparation for it (as opposed to the christians, whose holiday was carefully set four days later). The evergreens, of course, show life going on even in the darkest part of the year when all the other trees are bare. Bringing their branches into the house also may be thought to act as a bidding to the alfs, idises, and other kindly ghosts; holly has been thought in modern times to be especially close to the mound-alfs. Together with the apple, the yew is the greatest of Yule-trees, but its branches should not be brought indoors if you have children or pets, since its bark, berries, and needles are all very poisonous. The toxins of the yew are also supposed to be released into the air by heat, which suggests that having a lot of yew-branches in an enclosed, heated room may not be a good idea. However, in *The English Festivals*, Whistler does cite Coleridge's 1798 description of a German family which brought a huge yew-branch into the house, which they set burning candles in and gifts under (p. 29). The mistletoe is fitting to the whole season, when folk pass so easily between the worlds; but remember, likewise, that its berries are very poisonous.

The Yule tree is a southern German custom (almost certainly stemming from Heathen roots), which only reached Scandinavia in the last century; Edred Thorsson suggests that this tree was originally the same as the live Bairn-Stock, which was only cut down and brought inside when it became unsafe to hang the gifts to the alfs and idises upon a tree in public. The earlier-quoted description of the Lappish gifts to the "Yule-folk" lends strength to this theory: the tree was the center of the holy feast, the means of making the offering to the god/esses and ghosts as well as itself being a mighty wight to whom offerings were given. In modern Ásatrú, as well as seeing the Yule tree as the kin-tree, many folk also see it as the embodiment of the World-Tree, so that it is sometimes crowned with an eagle and has a wyrm or dragon wrapped about the bottom.

Especially fitting things to hang on the Yule-tree are apples, nuts, and strings of cranberries; small images of swans, horses, swine, and other such holy beasts; and, as spoken of above, little ships. Cookies or little breads in the shapes of animals are also very fitting to hang as gifts to the holy ones. It was not long ago that it was customary to fasten candles to the branches of fir trees. This is still sometimes done in Germany, but is so dangerous, especially when dealing with a cut tree inside the house, that the practice is not recommended: the standard strings of electric lights serve the purpose well enough. The practice of putting the family gifts under an indoors Yule tree also go back to the earliest mentions of the tree-custom.

In Scandinavia, the centre of the Yule festivities (especially before the German tree was adopted) was the Yule wreath; many families have wrought-iron candleholder wreaths as family heirlooms, and these are also woven with evergreen branches. The ring of the wreath may have been thought of as showing the ring of the year, and perhaps, with the

candles burning about its circle, the wheel of the Sun. As well as the iron wreath, wreaths were also made of pine branches and/or woven straw. This is a custom true folk have taken up: at the beginning of the Yule season, we often make wreaths with evergreen branches, apples, nuts, and other such signs of frith and good luck, into which wishes and blessings written in runes on thin strips of paper may be woven. These wreaths are then burned at Twelfth Night. Whistler mentions that while the Yule-tree was German, the "Yule-Bough", a great hanging sphere or half-sphere of evergreens with a ring of apples dangling from it, was characteristically English (pp. 44-47).

Work was supposed to stop at Yule; under "Frija", we spoke of the ban on spinning during the Holy Nights. Especially, no wheel was supposed to go round - not whetstones, grinding querns, mill-wheels, or any other sort. This likely bears some relationship to the importance of the Sun and the sun-wheel to the Yule-feast. For these twelve days, also, we are outside normal time and free of the usual need for ceaseless work: the Yule nights are a time for the mind and body to rest while the soul reaches out to the god/esses.

Special cakes are baked for Yule: traditional shapes include boars, sun-wheels, and interwoven snakes - all of which were being used in the 17th century, and probably do indeed stem from Heathen times (*Nordisk Bondereligion*, p. 40). Lutefisk is a traditional Norwegian Yule-food. Most folk of Norwegian descent who have been fed the stuff in their youth consider it *very* optional. Most important, however, is that the food and drink not be stinted at Yuletide: whoever comes must be fed lavishly, for guest-friendliness means more at this time (when the god/esses and ghosts walk) than at any other time in the year. In Sweden, the feast-table was prepared with two "Yule-howes", one for the husband and one for the wife. A big cheese was laid at the bottom, then two "Yule-buns" of unequal size; on top of the pyramid was a crown of wheat-dough, in which the "frith-dove" sat with a stalk of barley in its beak and an egg under its tail - a symbol that the farmer should have a fruitful year. Around the edge of the table were tree-branches, hung with pretzels and all with apples stuck on the ends. The other house folk also got their "howes", though not such impressive ones as the man and wife of the home had. From Yule evening until the third day of Yule, New Year's Day, and Twelfth Night, the "Yule-howes" were supposed to lie on the great table and got special power from the Yule-feasting. Thereby, the Yule-bread got the power to heal illness. In Halland, the *jugalt* or "Yule-boar", a boar-shaped cake, lay on the top of the "howe" with an apple set on it; another traditional crown for the Yule-howe was a ring-shaped cake with three lovely red apples (Fejlberg, *Jul*, I, pp. 182-83). Such things show the setting of Wyrð: by laying them out as part of the feast to be shared with the god/esses and ghosts, the householders made sure that they would have a rich and joyous year.

In Sweden, the Yule-boar was especially important: this was often a great boar-shaped bread of rye- or wheat-meal, up to a foot and a half long, complete with eyes, nostrils, and bristles. It was borne in at mid-day on the first day of Yule; the house-mother then cut a sun-wheel upon it and laid it before the house-father's place, decked in a white cloth. It was eaten on New Years' or Three Kings' Day, but one piece would be kept to share between the plough-oxen on the first day of work in the spring, and another would be saved until the next Yule (Fejlberg, *Jul*, I, p. 192). This boar was clearly a survival of the original *sonargöltr* on which oaths were sworn in Heathen times. In Västergötland, a block of wood had a pig-skin set upon it; the man would put his hand on this and swear to be a good father and mild husband, and the wife and the serving folk would plight similar troths. For those who do not keep and butcher their own pigs, such a Yule-bread or mock boar is clearly the most practical alternative to the sacrificial boar of elder days.

Dogs and cats got the same sort of food as humans at this time, and dogs were supposed to be kept inside (*Nordisk Bondereligion*, p. 40), perhaps because their barking at the many ghostly wights who wandered through the Yule night was thought to be an ill thing.

Many fire-customs are important at Yule-time. The best-known of these is, of course, the Yule-log, which must burn the whole night through with someone keeping Yule-watch over it. Pieces of the Yule-log are then kept through the year and thought to bring good luck; one year's Yule-log should be kindled with a piece of the last. This fire in the darkest night embodies the ever-living fire of the clan and the soul, the ever-springing hope of the worlds. In modern times, those folk who do not have fireplaces in which a log can be burned all night use a large (24-hour) candle instead, by choice either black, purple, or deep green. *Hákonar saga ins góða* (*Heimskringla*) tells how the cups for drinking the holy toasts were borne around the fires; Grimm thinks that this may have been an integral part of the Germanic customs concerning the giving of drink to the god/esses (*Teutonic Mythology* II, p. 628). The candle-wreath and burning of the Yule wreath have already been spoken of; Grimm cites the Franconian custom of going up on a peak with a wagon-wheel wrapped in straw, then setting it alight at evening and letting it run down so that it looks like the Sun running from the sky (II, p. 627) - though most of the examples of burning Sun-wheels which he cites are part of the Midsummer festivities.

In Norwegian tradition, the first person to get up on Yule morning should bring everyone else a drink of snaps (vodka or akavit) in bed (Fejlberg, *Jul*, I, p. 154). This is very like the "Lucy"-tradition of a light-crowned maiden coming about with cakes and coffee or *gløgg*, which has already been spoken of under "Frija", and may well be related.

When the Yule-season was over, there were certain customs of "chasing Yule out". If there was any ale left in the keg, a "sleep-draught" would be drunk with it. Yule could be rung out with bells or beaten out with birch-sticks. This served to mark the end of the wih-nights and the return to normal life; it also chased out any trolls or spooks who might have meant to stay past their time.

Yule Rites: Mothernight

All the house-cleaning and work should be finished before evening on this day, the Yule-wreath made and the home fully decked with the Yule greenery. If possible, the whole family should take sauna in the afternoon, thinking on the cleansing of their bodies and souls.

A candle-wreath should be readied on the mantlepiece or where-ever the heart of the home is. If you do not have an candle-holder wreath, you may weave branches or straw into a circle around four candle-holders. Lacking an actual harrow, a small table may be used as such for the evening. If you have a real spindle, it should be spun full and laid beside the wreath; if not, a dowel may be wound full with yarn. The other tools you will need are a long birch-twig (if birch cannot be gotten, aspen, willow, or pussy willow may all be used - or, at need, any long, supple twig with the rune Berkano risted thrice upon it will do), a hornfull of good ale, a bowl of milk, and ale and porridge for your house-ghost. This rite can be done by one alone at need: the family that comes will be the clan-members from the hidden world.

I. *As sunset falls, the House-Mother goes about kindling candles where-ever the shadows fall (at least so far as is reasonable, given the risks of fire), until the whole house is bright. As she lights each one, she says,*

Frija bring brightness; Frowe bring warmth

(If there is no woman in the house, a man may take her place in this rite by symbolically covering his head with a shawl). Only the candles of the wreath are not lit.

Taking a candle or enclosed lantern, the House-Mother goes outside, leaving the door open. If she can walk thrice around the house, she does so, saying

Come, those who wish to come; stay, those who wish to stay; and fare, those who wish to fare, harmless to me and mine

(or, if she prefers, using the Icelandic version given above).

II. *The House-Mother then comes inside and rings a bell three times or gives some other signal that the family should gather. She sits in the high-seat or on a seat readied for her and says,*

All my clan I call to me
come from your biding-steads, kin!

Elder and younger all I hail,
come to the Mother's call!

The family gathers in a ring or half-ring about her. Each of them brings some sign of their work - the work that is finished for the year; now to be set aside until after the Wih-Nights are over.

III. *The House-Mother lifts the spindle, walking about the outside of the ring to trace a circle and saying,*

Hlín shall hold us holy all,
ward against wights of woe.

She weaves the frith she winds the thread
she works the web of Wyrð,
she hallows the holy ring.

She faces northward.

Now Mothers all, ye mighty ones,
idises awesome I hail!

Nerthus in north-ways, nytt we thy love,
and hail her in hidden halls.

She faces eastward.

Gerðr, thy grith we greet on this night,

etin-bride, ever fair.

Gefjon, ox-mother, grant blessing here,
giver of all things good.

She faces southward.

Sunna, fair-shining, who shall bear a maid,
when death of the worlds grows dark,

In thy farthest faring, frowe, we hail thee,
in hope of thy height again.

She faces westward.

Frija, bright mother, frowe of gods,
And idises all we hail,
From fen-halls far, falcon-eyed gazing,
Spinner, at year's spiraling depths,
Weaver, through wyrd-full nights,
Kindle our candles to light.

She lights the four wreath-candles.

IV. *The House-Mother turns deosil until facing her family again. She lifts her spindle, speaking:*

Well have we worked; the year's work is wrought. So Perchte sees my full spindle; my house is swept, my candles lit. There shall be no more spinning these days; the loom lies still, the distaffs do not turn while the wih-nights last (*she then makes a like statement about whatever her actual job is, lifting up some sign of it and laying it on the mantelpiece or harrow. Each of the family in turn brings forth the emblem of their work, calling upon the god/ess who especially rules that task if there is one or generally hailing the gods and wights to witness, and stating that the year's work is done and will halt during the wih-nights*).

V. *The House-Mother then pours ale into a glass for the house-ghost, lifting it and his porridge. She says,*

Kind (tomte/nisse/haugbond/kobold), you have worked well this year. Rest as we rest through the wih-nights; feast in frith, our dear friend, that your might wax for the year to come. Glad Yule to you!

She puts the ale and porridge down on the hearth, stone, or where-ever the house-ghost's dwelling has been set.

VI. *The House-Mother lifts the birch-twig, saying,*

Let all woe be left behind! Birch's brightness cleanse us; Birch-Mother rinse us of ill, fill us with frith and joy, that all our works bear fair fruit.

She first taps herself about the head, heart, loins, and feet, then does so to each of the family in turn. After this, she gives each of them a small gift which symbolizes the granting of whatever their deeply-felt wishes are.

VII. *The House-Mother fills the horn with ale, lifting it and saying,*

Now drink to dises at dusk of feast,
the Mothers who light us through mirk.

At Yule's birth when year must die,
the Mothers watch over all ends,
the Mothers are midwives all.

Frija and Nerthus, Fjörgyn, rich earth,
Gefjon and Zisa, all givers of life,
Gerðr and Skaði, Gríðr, Jarnsaxa,

in winter's darkness wombs are yet full.

She drinks, then passes the horn about deosil. The family members may either drink in silence or make a toast to idises and/or goddesses as they choose.

VIII. *When the horn has made its round, the House-Mother pours it into the blessing-bowl, saying,*

Mothers all, we make this gift to you! Be welcome in Yule-frith and grith; share all our feasts and joy! Your blessings be on all the folk here.

She uses the birch-twig to sprinkle first herself, then the rest of the family and the hearth-stone.

IX. *The House-Mother takes the blessing-bowl and the bowl of milk and leads the family out to the chosen tree or stone. If there is nowhere outside to do this, the blessing-bowl may be poured into the Yule-tree's water or into a basin of earth. She sets the bowl of milk down by the tree/stone, or otherwise, just outside the door of the house, saying,*

I give this to whoever fares hungry through the night: wights, you are not forgotten!

She then calls her next words out through the door or an open window.

The year's work is done, Frija casts her apron aside - now wild Perchte fares through the land! Hail thee, Bright One; hail thee, Holda! Free our hearts for the Yule-tide feasting; through our fields lead your holy train! Hail to Perchte!

All:

Hail to Perchte!

If outside, the family members should now run about shouting, making noise, perhaps waving sparklers, and so forth. Otherwise, the rite is over.

Yule Rites: Yule

By choice, the Yule rite should be planned as an all-night feast, at which somebody is always awake to keep a watch on the Yule log (or candle). This means making sure that there is room for all the guests to stay over, and hopefully places where those who are not able to keep the full night-watch can go to sleep between the midnight and dawn rites. If, for whatever reason, the sunset-midnight-sunrise timing is not possible, the main ritual can be held earlier in the evening and the guests can then depart, leaving the sunrise rite for whoever has kept watch. To be really traditional, even the house's owners should leave the beds for the ghosts who will come this night and sleep on the floor themselves.

For the Yule rite, you will need a bread or cake in the shape of a boar, a holy sax, a blessing-bowl and sprinkling twig, the Yule log (or candle), apples which are fixed with a loop so that they can be hung up, perhaps straw to wreath the tree with and a sheaf to hang in its branches (if it is a living tree outdoors), and lots of ale or other drink.

One table should be set up as the Yule table, spread with a white cloth and heaped high with food and drink (some of which must stay on it all night); if you are going to build your own "Yule-howes", it is on this table that it should be done. A place near the hearth should be found where two candles can be set so that the symbol-horn and the Yule-boar can be borne about between them.

Sunset

The Godwo/man takes up a place in front of the Hearth, with the folk ringed or half-ringed about him/her. The House-Mother and House-Father; if there is such a pair, should stand beside the Godwo/man; if either is not there, the Godwo/man should do the part of whichever is missing.

I. *Hammer-Rite.*

II. *The Godwo/man speaks:*

Without, the wild ones wod-ride over land,
hills and holts and howes,
the stormwinds streaming stark through the trees,
all forth ride alfs and trolls.

Within, all wights in weal are met,
here in holy hall,
staunch kin and friends standing in ring,
with alfs and idises all.

Though Sunna sinks we shall not fail
to greet all folk in grith.

Hail, ye who come here! hail, ye who stay,
Hail, in homes of might!

Yule-folk, Jólnir! at year's turn we hail,
Yule-folk, Jólnir! all you mighty ones,
Yule-folk, Jólnir! yare is the hall made,
Yule-folk, Jólnir! yeme you all kin here!

III. *The House-Mother, if there is one, speaks:*

Now let the candles be lit for this night,
their gleam glow in blessing kind
to all far-farers and folk of earth,
their warmth shall show the way.

She lights the candles of the Wreath. The House-Father speaks:

Now let flame of Yule flare forth this night
through death and darkness deep.

To all far-farers and folk of earth,
as beacon its brightness burns,
as frith-sign its fire flares,
as blessing it blazes forth.

He lights the Yule-log's fire or the candle which takes its place, and from that blaze lights the two candles chosen as Yule-fires. The Godwo/man speaks:

Fro Ing and Frowe, though frost-cold the wind,
shines your might through snow.

Now let boar of Yule be blessed this night,
gold-bristled, glowing swine,
that Fro Ing and Frowe have!

S/he lifts up the Yule boar and bears it about and between the candles that have been set up as Yule-fires, setting it down on the table as a centerpiece.

IV. *The Godwo/man speaks:*

Now wassail we the wights all loved,
and bless the bearing tree!

Apples of awe, apple-tree mighty,
we'll hail this holy night.

If possible, several young women go about passing out apples and filling everyone's horn or cup with ale or cider. The folk all hang the apples from the tree, hugging and shaking it, drinking its health and splashing their drink over it, and wreathing its trunk in straw. If it is a living tree, it is fitting to shoot off cap pistols around it, shouting,

Wend away, all wights of woe!

Someone should also climb to the top of the tree (or at least reasonably high branches) with a sheaf of grain and bind it there, saying, Raven and crow, and riders of night! All who fare the wind-ways, we give this sheaf to you!

V. If the folk have been outside, they come in to the hearth again. Otherwise, the Godwo/man may speak from where s/he is.

We feast in frith this frozen night,
within the hall is warm.

Now go all forth to gladness here,
give your gifts in all grith,
drink draughts of ale deep,
eat of the apples sweet.

The folk give each other their Yule-gifts, then start the feasting.

Evening

While the folk are feasting, if there are any guisers who wish to be Yule-bucks or a Wod-Host, they should creep out quietly now and get into their garb, coming back to the door with great noise and tumult. The House-Father and -Mother or Godwo/man should meet them at the door and do as seems fitting - either inviting them in, if the house can stand a deal of rowdiness within, or leading the feasters out to share food and ale with them outside. This should go on until the guisers' inspiration is exhausted and they take their leave, going off into the night and becoming their usual selves again.

Each person should also have a little birch-bark (or paper) boat, in which s/he puts a bit of each thing s/he has eaten and which s/he hangs on the tree, saying, "Yule-folk, I yield you your share of the feast".

The house-ghost must also have some food and drink from the feast.

The symbol is probably best set after the feast; depending on how many folk are there, you may want to have a feast-symbol or minne-symbol of limited length, with the option of a shopes' symbol afterwards.

This is also the best time to do a ritual drama, if you have one in mind. Appropriate scripts might be "The Waking of Angantyr" (English translation found in Christopher Tolkien's *The Saga of King Heiðrek the Wise*); the last part of "Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar" (beginning with Heðinn's meeting of the troll-woman in the wood) or of "Helgakviða Hundingsbana II" (the scene with Helgi and Sigrún in the mound). Some examples of music that might be played at this time is the Wotan-Erda duet from *Siegfried*; Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*; "In the Hall of the Mountain King" (Grieg, from *Peer Gynt*); "Der Erlkönig" and "Geistertanz" (Schubert, various *Lieder* collections); Bathory's "Oden's Ride over Nordland" (from *Blood Fire Death*); and Metallica's "Of Wolf and Man" (from the album with the black cover).

Midnight

I. All the lights are out except for the wreath, the Yule-fire candles, and the Yule log. The Godwo/man stands before the harrow. S/he speaks slowly, in a very low voice.

Low swings the Sun sunk below earth,
lost is the light of lands.
Etins and trolls own now the night,
wolves howl in winter winds.

Hail thee, Skaði! Shining god-bride,
skiing over the snow,
fairest of all, frost-bleak, we hail
the maid of mountain-ways.

Hail thee, Skaði! Shining god-bride,
whose sons wrought to save our troth,
Icy and sword-armed, eagle's bright daughter,
gaze towards us, glad on this night.

Hail thee, Wulþur! wise, from Yew-Dales,
skiing over the snow,
bright shine thy banners battle-strong god,
we hail thee, hunter on high.

Hail thee, Wulþur! wise, from Yew-Dales,
shield-god, strength of our folk.
Linden and bow-string be battle-might to us,
and bring us from blackest night.

Hail thee, Wodan! Wod-Host's cloaked leader,
sitting thy eight-legged steed;
wolves and dead wild, walkurjas, fight-slain,
howl in thy haring train.

Hail thee, Wodan! Wod-Host's cloaked leader,
with spear that sings through the wind,
gray-horsed ghost-leader, grim, awe-full warg,
Jólnir owns Yule-night!

II. *Godwo/man lifts up Yule-boar, walking around and between the Yule fires as s/he speaks. His/her voice and bodily movements become suddenly bright with gladness.*

But bright Fro and Frowe
their boar ride through garth,
the Wans bring weal within.

Now speak we our oaths, and swear we our troths,
on bristles of hallowed boar,
on swine's bright, steadfast back.

III. *The Godwo/man speaks her/his oath, starting with the words,*

By the bristles of the boar I swear...

S/he or an earlier-chosen boar-bearer carries the Yule-boar around the ring deosil. Each of the folk sets hands upon it and swears an oath that begins,

By the bristles of the boar I swear...

IV. *The Godwo/man speaks:*

Now bear our oaths between the lands,
fare on the far-flung ways,
to the bright worlds, to shining realms,
to the green worlds of gods.

V. *The Godwo/man takes a hallowed sax and cuts through the Yule-boar's throat. S/he then bears it about and between the fires once more, then takes a piece of it, eats, and passes it about deosil so that everyone can share in it. Someone must put a piece in one of the little ships which goes on the holy tree; the house-folk should also not neglect to leave a piece for the house-ghost.*

VI. *The House-Mother or other woman fills the horn with drink. The Godwo/man raises it, speaking:*

Hail to all the hallowed wights,
hail to ghosts all ringed here.

Alfs and idises all beings who come, to bless those bound in this ring.

The Godwo/man then makes a toast to his/her god/ess of choice and passes the horn deosil. Everyone makes toasts to their chosen god/esses. The Godwo/man pours what is left into the blessing bowl.

VII. *The idis fills the horn again. The God/Woman speaks:*

Hail to forebears forth come again,

share you in feasting of sib.

Your beds are laid your board is set,
share you our symbol-drink.

S/he drinks and passes it on widdershins. All drink in silence. When the horn has finished its round, the Godwo/man pours what is left into the blessing bowl.

VIII. *The idis fills the horn again. The Godwo/man speaks:*

Hail to all who here now stand,
hail to holders of troth!

Kin of the gods clan of all might,
true, all the darkest night through.

S/he raises the horn and drinks from it. If there are any there who are not true to the god/esses of the North, they may not share in this draught. When the horn has finished its round, the Godwo/man pours what is left into the blessing bowl.

IX. *The Godwo/man crumbles what is left of the boar (or at least a piece of it if it is very large) into the bowl. S/he Hammer-signs the bowl and dips the mistletoe twig into it, sprinkling all the eight winds, above and below, then each of the folk, beginning with him/herself. To each, s/he says,*

Yule-folk bless you on this wih-night!

X. *The Godwo/man pours the blessing bowl out at the root of the Yule-tree. If the tree is a cut one indoors, s/he sprinkles the tree and pours most of the ale and bread onto earth. S/he speaks:*

So it is wrought.

The folk answer:

So it is wrought.

Dawn

The Frija-maid should come around to the sleepers an hour before dawn, bearing coffee, snaps, spiked coffee, hot mulled cider, *gløgg*, or whatever else seems warming and fitting, and breakfast pastries. If it is possible to do this safely, she should have a crown of burning candles and berries. She should be dressed in white.

At dawn, the Godwo/man leads the folk outside (or at least opens a window, if for instance you live fifteen stories up in a city apartment and leading a host of Heathens out onto the street to do a ritual seems impractical). S/he bears the Yule-candle or a candle lit from the Yule log. S/he speaks:

The east-ways lights the awesome queen,
dawning from depths of death.

Etins and trolls away must wend,
ghosts now go to graves.

Sun, hail to thee! shining at dawn-time,
from blackness rising, all bright.

The Yule-log's burning yields life newly,
its flame shall fire the day,
slain to strength of the Sun.

Facing East, s/he blows the candle out.

Twelfth Night

As is common throughout the West, Twelfth Night (or Thirteenth Night, if you like) is a night of feasts and parties. The house-ghost should get his share of food and drink at sunset, with words such as, "Feast well tonight, our friend; the New Year dawns tomorrow, and work shall start again." The Yule-wreath should be hung where all can see it: this is the last night on which the wish-strips can be woven into it.

A symbol should be held at midnight, at which folk speak of the deeds of the last year and the ways in which the god/esses and ghosts have shown themselves forth, and make oaths for the year to come.

Twelfth Night is particularly a time for fore-tellings; if there is a skilled rune-reader or someone with spae-craft in the group, this is when they should cast or speak for the year ahead. In Sweden, it was customary to go out into the fields or roads in the night and listen. The sound of a scythe cutting grass was an omen of good harvest, but the sound of sword on sword threatened war (Liman, Ingemar, *Traditional Festivities in Sweden*, p. 28).

When dawn first starts to light the sky, the folk should go about ringing bells and beating (lightly) on cupboards and beds with sticks, crying, "Yule is done; we drive it out! Out dwarves and trolls; in good and frith!" All the Yule-greenery in the house should be thrown out now.

The Yule-wreath should be burned at sunrise, outside if possible. The Godwo/man stands by it, facing east, with a horn filled with the last of the Yule-ale. S/he lifts the horn, saying,

Sleep now, you folk who've fared through homes,
the wih-nights are full-wound.

With blessings came you, blessed, fare again,
the howe-wights all to homes,
the stone-wights all to steads,
the wood-wights all to wilds.

S/he drinks and passes the horn deosil. Each drinks, whispering a farewell to Yule and the Yule-wights. The Godwo/man pours what is left into the blessing-bowl, raising it high in a moment of silence, then pours the contents onto the earth. S/he says,

Yare is the wreath the Yule-flame
shall send it to stead of gods.

Burn, thou wheel, bright as the dawn,
yield to us a good year!

S/he lights the Yule-candle or a piece of the Yule-log, then uses that to light the wreath, which should be dry and quite flammable by now. If it seems reluctant to burn, an offering of high-proof alcohol may be splashed over it to help. Everyone cheers, blows horns, and makes loud noises until it is fully burnt. Yule is over.

Chapter XLVIII

Feast of Thonar (Þorablót)

In Iceland, the feast of Þorri (falls on a Friday between 19 and 25 January) is seen as a time to celebrate the fact that the days are getting longer again (and to keep up the spirits in the nastiest part of winter). It is also a feast at which the Icelanders hark back to the trials of their forebears by eating their ethnic food - sheeps' heads and a peculiar dish called *hákarl*, which consists of Greenland shark buried in the ground for a few weeks to rot and then dug up and eaten, and tastes just as horrible as it sounds. Hákarl is usually eaten by alternating small bites of shark with large sips of *brennivín* (the local Icelandic snaps, called Black Death for good reason).

Icelandic tales about Þorri are rather limited; it seems to be a traditional feast, as it is spoken of in *Flateyjarbók* (though the author apparently did not know why the celebration was held, and simply invented a "King Þorri" who held it on a regular date).

In 1728, Jón Halldorsson of Hitardal wrote a letter to Professor Árni Magnússon of Copenhagen about Icelandic celebrations. Jón stated that the celebration on Þorri's arrival was made so that it might be a mild month for those offering the celebration. In the mid-19th century, the folklorist Jón Arnason wrote that celebrations on the first day of Þorri were called Þorablót.

Þorablót has gained much more popularity in the last century. A song about the festival, "Þorraþrælinn 1866" tells of the complaint of a farmer in the depths of winter; Þorri then comes to him and tells him, more or less, that if he does his best in summer, his winters will go better, and he should hold on, because spring is nearly there. As the title shows, this is not a particularly old song, but it is rather cheery and nicely done. The words and music can be found in *Hvað er svo glatt* (see "Resources and Organizations" for ordering information). On Friday, 24 January 1873, Icelandic students in Copenhagen celebrated Þorablót according to their idea of the ancient custom. In 1874, the people of the city Akureyri celebrated this feast, and have done so every year since. In 1880, Þorablót was held in Reykjavík, but did not become a regular event until the 1940s. The custom started spreading into rural areas in the 1900's. Some Christians object to the holding of Þorablót, and make a point of refusing to participate, since toasts are drunk to the Æsir and Vanir.

Generally, there is a vague sense that Þorri was some kind of personification of winter, married to a womanly wight named Góa (the first two months in the Icelandic calendar are supposed to be called after them). According to some Icelandic traditions, the wife went out to greet Þorri and the man went out the next month to greet Góa, who was addressed as being milder than her rough husband. According to others, the man of the farm was supposed to go out half-dressed and walk around the house at the feast of Þorri.

In modern Ásatrú, we often hold the Þorri celebration as "Feast of Thonar". There is no actual etymological connection between Þorri and Þórr, despite the apparent similarities and the claims of certain booklets put out by Iceland's Tourist Board. However, this is the time of year when the frost is strongest and the weather worst - when the rime-thurses are at their mightiest, and, as "Þorraþrælinn" mentions, "Kveður kuldaljód Kári í jötunmóð" - Kári (the Wind), in his etinmod, sings a cold song. Thus, it is the most fitting of times to call upon Thonar, whose Hammer wards us from all the dark wights of winter and whose mighty mod cheers us through the icy storms: it is he, after all, who drives back the rime-thurses and thus should bring milder weather.

Since hákarl, luckily, cannot be gotten outside Iceland, there are several other foods which might be thought fitting to the "Feast of Thonar". In *Hárbarðsljóð3*, Þórr mentions that he has eaten "herring and oats" for breakfast, to which Óðinn scornfully replies, "You deem your breakfast an early deed". This passage has led to a certain tradition of serving herring and oats for breakfast at Troth feasts (or at least making them available for those who are up for doing early deeds). They are equally appropriate dinner-foods for this feast. Lutefisk may be served in stead of hákarl; blood sausage or "black pudding" is also fitting, as it was one of the main staple foods of the Icelanders in the Viking Age. Akavit can be drunk in place of brennivín (also not often exported). Goat cheeses are, of course, appropriate.

Any of the myths of Þórr can be adapted as ritual dramas for this feast, or read out or retold if you have someone in your group who is good at this.

Thonar-Blessing

The tools needed for this blessing are a Hammer, horn, ale, blessing bowl and twig (by choice, oak), platter, and food for everyone to share with Thonar. If anyone has anything in particular that s/he wishes to give to the god, or have Thonar's blessing on, it should be brought to this rite.

I. The folk are gathered in darkness. The Godwo/man, Hammer in hand, turns to the North and makes the sign of the Hammer while calling,

Wih-Thonar's Hammer hallows this stead,

hold us from harsh nibel-cold.

S/he turns to the East, u.s.w., calling,

Wih-Thonar's Hammer hallows this stead,
hold us from etins' ill.

S/he turns to the South, u.s.w.,

Wih-Thonar's Hammer hallows this stead,
hold us from Muspell's main.

S/he turns to the West, u.s.w.,

Wih-Thonar's Hammer hallows this stead,
hold us from Wyrn beneath waves.

S/he turns to the North again, swinging the Hammer in a circle above his/her head and calling,

Ase-Thonar, ward us aye above!

S/he swings the Hammer downward in a Hammer-sign or circle, calling,

Buck-Thonar, ward us aye below!
Thy might roars through Middle-Garth here!

II. *The Godwo/man lowers her/his arms and begins to speak, softly at first, but with growing strength.*

Rime-thurses howl and hare over fields,
through frost and frozen earth.
Kári sings harsh in cold etin-mood,
and green leeks nowhere grow.
The strong alone can stand through ice,
and hold hearts high through snow,
with mod and main with might of troth,
through winter, we keep cheer.

III. *The Godwo/man continues to speak, lifting the red candle.*

The lightning's flash our flame makes bright -

If the Godwo/man is good at lighting a fire fast with flint and steel, s/he should do that now and light the candle from it; otherwise, a lighter will do.

We hail the Hammer's stroke! Main-Girdle's wearer, might-gauntlets' bearer, swinger of staff of strength!
Mjöllnir's wielder Middle-Garth's shielder, Thonar, thy thunder rings forth.

Drive out the rime-thurses thunder through snowfall, bringing the earth to blither days, as days grow longer
doughtily fight thou, against cold wights all in etin-mood fierce.

Helper aye of human folk, who hunts over snowfields howling thurse-maids, who won Hymir's cauldron for
wassail of Ases, in wain drawn by goats, wend to our feast!

IV. *S/he fills the horn with ale and raises it, making the Hammer-sign over it at each half-line.*

Wih-Thonar mighty! Wyrn's sole bane!
Ase-Thonar, awesome! All-mighty god!
Wain-Thonar, strong one! Wielder of Hammer,
Will-Thonar, holy! Wodan's stark son!

The Godwo/man sips from the horn and passes it on. Each person Hammer-signs it and makes a toast to Thonar.

V. The Godwo/man tops the horn up when it has made its round and pours the ale into the blessing-bowl. S/he lifts it in both hands, speaking again. S/he and the folk alternate lines.

Godwo/man:

Hrungnir's woe-dealer, and Hymir's bane!

All:

Thonar, we hail thee here!

Godwo/man:

Slayer of Gjalp and Geirrøðr's death,

All:

Mjöllnir-armed, hail thy might!

Godwo/man:

Husband of Gold-Hair, hater of troll-kin,

All:

Hlórriði, hail in thy wain!

Godwo/man:

Goat-drighten, make we gifts to thee here!

All:

Thonar, we hail thee here!

Each of the folk comes forward and puts a piece of food and any other gift s/he should wish to give the god on the platter. As they do, the Godwo/man sprinkles them with the ale from the blessing bowl, saying, "Wih-Thonar blesses thee with alu-might." S/he blesses him/herself last of all, then says,

Now feast we in frith with fighter-of-trolls,
the dark shall daunt us not.
Friend to all humans, foe to all ill,
Thonar, we hail thee here!

All cry out, "Thonar, we hail thee here!" The Godwo/man or rite-helper should knock or bang loudly thrice - perhaps on something that will really resound like thunder, such as an aluminium trash-can - and the rite is over. The blessing-bowl and platter should hold their place all through the night; in the morning, the bread should be placed on an oak-branch or on the earth and the ale poured over it.

Contributors

- Gamlinginn

Chapter XLIX

Idis-Þing

In Sweden, a feast or fair called "Disting" (the Þing of the idises) was held early in February, perhaps around February 2. De Vries thinks that this feast, rather than Winternights, may well have been the feast spoken of as *dísablót* in some cases (de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, I, p. 455). F. Ström clarifies the difference as being regional: the Winternights *dísablót* was West Nordic (Norwegian/Icelandic), the ploughing-time **Dísaping* or *dísablót*, East Nordic (Swedish), while the public celebration of the West Nordic *dísablót* only took place in the southeastern part of Norway (*Nordisk Hedendom*, p. 194). It seems to have been something of a communal event, as opposed to the private household rites of Winternights which were also centered around the idises; the Disting was actually held as a public fair, apparently the first large gathering of the year.

Other customs associated with this time were the ploughing of the first furrows, which had special might. Cakes were laid in the first furrow, likely as an offering to the earth and perhaps the field-wights. One understanding of the first ploughing is seen on the Bronze Age rock carving from Litsleby, Bohuslän (Sweden). An ithyphallic man with a hammer or axe in one hand and a tree in the other is starting to plough the third furrow; P.V. Gløb comments that "it is obvious that he is engaged in the first ploughing of the year to awaken the earth's fruitfulness after the sleep of winter with the phallus of the plough, the ploughshare", and cites the old Bornholm saying that "'Three furrows in Thor give a green spring'" (*Mound People*, p. 150). The tale of Gefjon ploughing out Sealand with her four oxen-sons may well be rooted in the rites of this time.

In *Teutonic Religion*, the association of the plough breaking the ground with the tale of Freyr and Gerðr is spoken of at some length: this feast is the one at which Skírnir wins his way, breaking through Gerðr's resistance by use of the thurisaz rune so that Freyr will be able to wed her and make her fruitful. Under "Skaði", we have also spoken of another form of the thawing of the wintry goddess. Either myth is fitting for performance as a ritual drama at this time.

The discussion of Gerðr and Skaði in this book also brings up the likelihood that the tales of the wooing of both of these goddesses were related to the rite performed in "Völsa þátr" (fully described in the chapter on Fro Ing) in which the preserved horse phallus "Völsi" was passed about with the refrain, "May the Mörnir (etin-women) take this blessing!" It is possible that this rite might particularly have taken place around the time of the Idis-Þing, for this is the time when the frozen fields must be broken and the frozen earth coaxed to thaw by the same might - when the winter goddesses cast off their cloaks and let fruitfulness spring forth again. As well as the ritual dramas spoken of above, another way of calling these powers forth (as seen in the rite below) would be to make your own "Völsi" out of stuffed leather, paper-maché, or perhaps a large dried leek, and let it be passed among the folk, with each holder making a verse that ends "May the Mörnir receive this blessing!" The "Völsi" could then be set into the first furrow, or kept for later use.

Idis-Þing: Rite

If possible, this rite should be done outdoors; if not, all the windows of the house should be opened. You will need horn, blessing-bowl, blessing-twig, ale, a whip, a "Völsi" (or, if shyness or the problems of doing such a rite in public make this not a good idea, a bread baked in the shape of a bull), a miniature plough or something that looks reasonably like one, and a small round bread or cookie with a sun-wheel traced into its top. If you cannot go outdoors for the ploughing part of the rite, you will need a tray full of earth.

I. *Godwo/man does Hammer-rite.*

II. *Godwo/man stands facing Northwards and calls out,*

Idises all, awake from your sleep!
I hail you, holy, to Þing.
Dark from the north-ways day-bright from southward,
fare over air from the east,
fare over waters from west.

Frija from Fensalir, Frowe, we hail thee!
and all of the goddesses gathered about,
and all of the idises in your fair halls,
and all of the maids of might who dwell there.

Holda, cast off your hulling of frost,
Earth sleeps no more in still.

The birches are budding bright Sun is lighting,
the wind is wet with spring.

Idises waken from winter's long darkness,
holy, from worlds hid,
Idises' eyes are opened by summons,
thronging, they come to their Þing!

The Godwo/man fills the horn with ale and says,

Idises and goddesses all, be well-come in this stead. Here at your holy Þing, we raise this horn to you!

S/he drinks and passes it on, each in turn toasting the idises and goddesses.

III. *Godwo/man lifts the whip, cracking it through the air three times and then when-ever the rhythm of the call to Gefjon seems to need it. With the last word, s/he strikes the earth three times with the whip.*

Gefjon, plough-steerer, graving the land
urge thy oxen on!
Etin-might rising ruled by goddess,
steered and shaped by thy hand.

Gefjon, winning geld for thy tales,
urge thy oxen on!
green are the furrows grown behind plough-tooth
of Gefjon, giver of life!

IV. *Godwo/man sets the whip down, puts both hands on the "Völsi" or bull, saying,*

Etin-maids shining awesome god-brides,
fair and cold as the frost,

Gerðr and Skaði glimmer before us,
barred from us by bright byrnir,
fenced off by flickering flame.

Etin-maids shining awesome god-brides,
white-armed as winter's snow,

Skaði in grimness Gerðr unloving,
still show their shapes unkind.

V. *If the wooing of Skaði or Gerðr is to be done as a ritual drama, it should take place here. Otherwise the Godwo/man goes on:*

Bright might must flow to melt the ice,
shining with leaping light.

Here is goddess-greeter, gift to the dises,
to break the bark of earth,
to ease the hate of ice.

S/he lifts up the "Völsi" or bull and speaks a fitting verse, ending with the words,

May the Mörmir take this blessing!

S/he passes it around the folk and each of them do the same. For those whose word-skills are not quite up to those of our forebears, some sample verses might be:

I take the *vingull* tall with might, I shake it towards the shining brides. He grows like a leek, and great, he

springs up, *May the Mörnir take this blessing!*

I lift the *vingull* aloft in hand, I hail his height, the hallowed spring, For fruitful fields and full wombs all,
May the Mörnir take this blessing!

I hold the *vingull* heartily blessing, the might that flows that makes ice loose, thrusting through the thurses'
garth-walls, *May the Mörnir take this blessing!*

VI. *The Godwo/man puts the vingull or bull on the earth, saying once more, "May the Mörnir take this blessing!" If a bread bull is used, s/he cuts its throat as s/he speaks these words. S/he then takes up the plough and says,*

Shining, the plough shall the earth furrow,
thrice is the thorn thrust to earth,
The plough must score that seeds spring forth.
First furrow drive forth a good year

- *s/he cuts the first furrow.*

Furrow second drive seeding weal

- *s/he cuts the second.*

Furrow third drive thews of troth

- *s/he cuts the third.*

Nerthus kind we nytt thy gifts,
and Earth, who gives to all.

Gefjon, we greet thee as growing starts,
goddess who gives at need.

The Godwo/man lifts the round bread, saying,

Now see we Sun-wheel as she rises brightly, and glad shines on the ground.

Sun to earth we send with bread, and shall all have their share.

S/he breaks the bread into three pieces and lays a piece into each furrow. S/he fills the horn with ale again, signs the Sun-wheel over it and says,

"To the all-giving Earth!"

S/he drinks and passes it around the circle, pouring what is left into the blessing bowl after.

VII. *The Godwo/man takes up the blessing twig, dips it in the bowl, and sprinkles the plough and vingull, saying,*

"Blessed be those who open the earth."

S/he then sprinkles the harrow if there is one and each of the folk, speaking such blessings as s/he feels inspired to. S/he lifts the blessing bowl, pouring the ale slowly onto the earth as s/he says,

Ale to earth and all to nytt,
thus be the blessing made!
Hail the idises all!

The folk answer,

"Hail the idises all!"

The rite is over.

Chapter L

Ostara (Eostre)

The first mention of the goddess Ostara (Old High German), or Eostre (Anglo-Saxon) comes in Bede's *De Temporum Rationale*, in which the christian cleric tells us only that she is a Heathen goddess after whom a month (April, roughly) was named and that during this month a holiday was celebrated in her name. The Frankish Ostarmanoth (recorded in Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne*) and the surviving Modern German name for the festival, Ostern, support the belief that she was known among the continental Germans as well. Not only was she known, but she must have been well-known and firmly rooted, since her name had to be kept even for the christian feast. The name Ostara does not seem to have been known in Scandinavia at all; though we have no evidence for it, it is quite tempting to suggest that Iðunn may have stood in her stead.

Her name is closely related to the word "East". The same Germanic root is seen in the folk-name "Ostrogoths", which means "the 'Goths of the rising sun' - hence 'East Goths' - or the 'Goths glorified by the rising sun'" (Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, p. 25). It may ultimately derive from the Indo-European *aus- ("shine"), from which the Latin *aurora* and Greek *eos* (both meaning "dawn") came; its general range of connotations are brightness/dawn/East/glory. This suggests strongly that Ostara was seen as a goddess of dawn, as well as a goddess of the spring.

The time at which our forebears held this feast is not at all sure, except that it was sometime in April for the Anglo-Saxons and Continental Germans. It has been suggested, by Grimm among others, that the original feast may have been the one at the beginning of May, the customs of which were then pushed back to fit the christian feast. However, the designation of April as "Ostara-Month" by both English and Germans may tend rather to show that the feasts were separate. Yule and Midsummer, which both fall near the end of the month, have their respective months December/January and June/July designated as Fore-Yule and After-Yule, Fore-Litha and After-Litha; and if the Ostara feast had been the same as May Day, we might have expected to see a matching Fore-Easter and After-Easter. Still, there does seem to be a great deal of overlap between the customs practiced for both of them (fires and fire-leaping, driving out of Winter and welcoming Summer), especially in Scandinavia, where summer does not really seem to begin until May Day and the earlier Easter-feast is less a celebration of the Sun's sig than a promise that the weather will start warming soon. It is quite possible, as well, that the Scandinavians, who did not know Ostara and for whom summer came later in the year, only held the one festival at the beginning of May, and that some of the feast's traditions (for instance, the belief in the witches holding their revels at this time) were simply displaced to the christian Paschal celebration.

In modern practice, the two favoured dates for Ostara are either the spring equinox or the first full moon (sometimes new moon) after the spring equinox. This may be modified by where you live and other circumstances; for instance, spring comes much earlier to Dallas than it does to Ottawa. In general, we would suggest holding Ostara's feast during the waxing Moon, as there are some hints that the Moon may have been important to her festival (for instance, the "Ostara-Moon" pastries cited by Grimm, below) and because this is the time of new-springing and growing might.

Today, we see Ostara as being dressed in white. This may go back to early times; German folklore, for instance, has white-clad women appearing on rock-clefts and mountains at dawn on Easter morning, a belief which Grimm suggests is related to the goddess Ostara (*Teutonic Mythology*, I, p. 291). One of these is the white maiden of Osterrode, who appears with a large bunch of keys at her girdle (the sign of a married woman in our forebears' times), who goes down to the brook to wash every Easter Sunday before sunrise. Similar tales are told throughout Germany (Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, III, p. 963); Grimm also mentions that hills were particularly holy to this goddess (IV, p. 1371).

Diana Paxson has suggested that the hare may well have been Ostara's holy beast, slain and eaten only at her festival. The Tuvasgård bracteate (Hauck, *Goldbrakteaten*, Tafeln 2, p. 137) shows a single, rather stylized hare, which strengthens the understanding of this beast as especially holy; very few other bracteates have single natural animals, and when they do, it is usually birds of prey or something of similar mythic resonance. The hare is especially a beast of springtime, since it is in March and April that they are seen "dancing" on their hind legs (fighting and courting) in the fields. This is usually seen at dawn (since hares are night-beasts) which offers another reason for linking them with Ostara. The belief in the "Easter hare" bringing eggs was first written down in Germany, and seems to have stemmed from that country; German children still build nests for the hare to lay its eggs in. In Germany, also, a rich buttery bread decorated with almonds and currants is often baked in the shape of a hare at this time, and bakery windows are full of hare-breads, cookies, and cakes. The Ostara Hare is certainly Heathen; to the christians, the hare was especially the symbol of lust and not to be encouraged. Hares mate when very young, and the does can produce several litters each year, hence the common vulgar expression, "to fuck like a bunny".

Squirrels are also part of the Easter rites in the Harz mountains of Germany: the people of Bräunrode go into the nearest woodland to hunt squirrels "by throwing stones and cudgels, till at last the animals drop exhausted into their hands,

dead or alive" (Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, II, p. 616).

The use of eggs as signs of life goes back to early times; clay eggs painted white with red and black stripes were found in a child's grave in Worms, and may have served a purpose like that of the apples given to the dead. The hunting of Easter eggs is common throughout America, Germany, Denmark, Yugoslavia, Switzerland, and parts of France. In Germany, the eggs are often placed among nettles or thornbushes so that the children who want them have to show either bravery and hardiness by plunging straight into the thorns, or cleverness by figuring out how to get them without getting pricked. This may also be kin to the mock switchings which are carried out at this time: the sting is the thorn of waking, the bright counterpart to the dark sleep-thorn, bringing both fruitfulness and wakefulness.

In England, it was especially traditional to go up on a hill and roll coloured eggs down the hill (Christian, *Country Life Book of Old English Customs*, p. 114).

In Germany, eggs are blown out, painted, and hung on flowering trees outside; flowering branches are also brought in for making "egg-trees" within the home. Such blown eggs will keep indefinitely, and are often decorated very elaborately and packed away safely every year. Blown eggs are very fragile, and eggs which have been painted and hung outside tend to run in the rain, but it has been found that a few coats of clear spray-on polyurethane will make painted eggs waterproof and their shells very difficult to break.

Gunnwar Skaðadóttir recalls customs of her husband's family, passed down from his Russian-born grandmother (whose family came from Lake Ladoga, originally settled by the Swedish Rus):

On Easter, a "pile" of food, vegetables, fruits, etc. of the previous year's harvest would be made up. Added to it would be a fresh ham. It was extremely important, according to Ken's grandmother, that the ham be freshly killed that same day. In fact, she and her husband kept pigs at their home for this exact purpose each year.

The food had to be kept undisturbed until the priest came around to "bless" it. The priest did not wear his normal garb, but what Ken's grandmother called "robes". Since she's nearly 80 now, her memory on this point wasn't quite clear.

"A special bread would be made out of particular grains (another point she was rather shaky on - this bread is available commercially - it's flat, thin, and white - looks a bit like styrofoam, actually) and blessed, and then it would be "shared" at the holiday meal with everyone else. You would go around and take pieces off everybody's piece and eat them, and everyone would come around and take pieces off yours to eat.

"Their egg custom, however, was the one that caught my eye. Everyone would take one of the eggs that they had personally dyed and would try to smash everyone else's egg. Sort of an 'egg war' - you smash them on the ends like you're jousting almost (she adds later that they would actually put thorns or other "stickers" on the business ends of the eggs). According to Ken's grandmother, when your egg got broken, the essence of the egg (its might) would be released on the person."

Another means of giving egg-might has been taken up by Ásatrúar in South Texas: the making and breaking of "cascarones". These are blown eggs which have been filled with confetti (a small circle of shell is removed at one end and the egg filled; a piece of tissue-paper is then glued over the hole). These eggs must either be decorated before the hole is opened or spray-painted after filling. The cascarones are then broken on other peoples' heads as a blessing. This is a much nicer way of releasing the egg-might on someone than is breaking a raw egg upon them.

You should eat as many eggs as you can at this time, and especially encourage your children to eat them as well. Various collections of folklore from Germany, Scandinavia, and Orkney tell us that the eating of Easter eggs is said to bode strength, health, and good growing.

In *A Book of Troth*, Thorsson mentions that it is traditional to toss an Easter egg high in the air and try to catch it with shell unbroken; those who do this get great luck for the year to come (p. 185).

It is traditional in many places, especially Germany, to keep Easter eggs and shells all year to ward the family and cattle against harm, and they are also used very specifically as a charm against hail and lightning. In both Germany and Czechoslovakia, an egg which was laid on Thursday was taken, coloured green for fruitfulness, and buried in the largest wheat-field. After burial, the egg was flanked on either side with a burning "hail cross" (Newall, *An Egg at Easter*, p. 248). The Thursday egg is an obvious remnant of the worship of Þórr, here invoked in his fertility aspect to bless the fields, and as the God of Storm to protect the new crops against the springtime hailstones, while the burning cross is a christianized remnant of the old Sun-wheel. Charred sticks saved from the fires were kept and taken home to protect the home against hail, fire, and lightning, and the ashes of the fires were often spread in the fields for fertility.

Fires were very important to the Ostara rites of our forebears. Among the German-descended inhabitants of Fredricksburg, Texas, as Gunnora Hallakarva recalls, the inhabitants still light bonfires on the tops of nearby hills on Holy Saturday. In Germany, sun-wheels were made from oakwood, straw, and green branches, and brought to the tops of the highest hills. There the wheels were set aflame, and the burning sun-wheel sent rolling down the hill and through the fields of the village below, literally bringing the might of the Sun and the warmth of its rays into the fields which were to be

ploughed and sown (Newall, *An Egg at Easter*, p. 326). One common belief associated with the fire festivals was that the men alone were allowed to take part, and women were kept strictly away from the vicinity of the fire, suggesting that men will absorb the might and fruitfulness of Fro Ing or Thonar when they take part in such a rite. Gunnora Hallakarva suggests that today's Ásatrúar might adapt these spring fire rites to modern use by using one of the "Catherine's Wheel" type of fireworks, or actually construct a small sun-wheel, placed high atop a pole to be lit. Rather than taking the burning wheel around one's home or apartment, burning candles or torches might be lit from it, and be used to carry the flame around instead.

In Hildesheim, the Easter fire was particularly struck with a steel, and Grimm also mentions the tradition of lighting it with a burning-glass or piece of crystal (*Teutonic Mythology*, II, p. 616). The latter would be particularly mighty for this day, drawing in and concentrating the very fire of the Sun, though as a single element in ritual it might be thought rather tedious and difficult. Possibly someone could begin the process during the main dawn rite, and when the fire finally does start, use it for blessings or the procession afterwards.

Ostara is the time for the Wanic wain-procession of fruitfulness; the Nerthus procession written of by Tacitus took place in the spring, and the Anglo-Saxon Rune Poem's verse for Ing has the god coming "from the East", which also suggests the likelihood of a connection with this festival. Gunnwar Skaðadóttir mentions her grandmother-in-law's recollection of how the "Christ-child" would be brought about in a little wain at Easter - hardly anything having to do with the christian feast, but bearing more than a slight resemblance to the fruitfulness-rounds of Freyr. In modern times, such a procession can either be done with a Wanic god/ess image set in a wagon decorated with flowers, apples, cakes and so forth (or perhaps even done up to represent a ship) that is pulled about the grounds or the neighborhood - or those who wish to spread their blessings more widely might decorate their cars as if for a wedding, with the lead-car carrying the god/ess image, and drive about the borders of their town.

In Sweden and southern Finland, the Easter-season is especially thought to be a time when witches are abroad: they were thought to fly off to the mountain Blåkulla to "consort with the Devil" on Maundy Thursday and come back on Holy Saturday. "People did everything they could to protect themselves from the evil powers at play these days. They lit bonfires, shot off fire-arms into the sky, painted crosses, stars, and other holy symbols over their doors, buried psalters under their thresholds and hung scythes and axes criss-cross over their livestock" (Liman, *Traditional Festivities in Sweden*, p. 9). Some of these rites are clearly meant as wardings, and will remind us of the crosses and knives used by christians at Yule-time; others, such as the bonfires and perhaps fire-arms, are likelier to stem from Heathen celebration.

It is also traditional in these countries for young maidens to dress up as witches, often with brightly coloured kerchiefs over their heads, and go about in a manner similar to the American Trick-or-Treat. In southern Finland, as observed by KveldúlfR Gundarsson, the "Easter-Witches" pluck pussy-willow branches (the pussy-willow is the first tree to bud at this time, and the Finns think of its soft gray blossoms as the first sign of spring), which they decorate with ribbons. The girls go about with the branches they have adorned, giving them to passers-by in return for coins and sweets; those who have nothing to give to the witches must listen to verses of mocking.

In the old days, of course, these "witches" might well have been travelling spae-wives, or perhaps followers or godwomen of the Frowe bringing her blessings. This may still happen today; or the young girls of a kindred might be decked out in white dresses and red scarves, and carry decorated birch or pussy-willow branches around to the grown members, perhaps with apples as well, giving their blessings and getting money and candy in return (the boys, we will remember, had done something similar at Yule as "Yule-Swains").

One of the most common elements throughout the Germanic lands was the ritual battle between Summer and Winter, ending with Winter being either slain or beaten out of the village, while Summer often claims a fair maiden for his bride. Grimm mentions the Middle German *osterspil* (Ostara-play) which seems to have been a sword-dance for twelve men and showed Summer beating Winter out of the land. He adds that a particular type of sword, the "Ostara-Sax" was used, which "leads us to infer that a sword of peculiar antique shape was retained; as the Easter scones, *osterstuopha*, and moonshaped *ostermâne* indicate pastry of heathenish form" (*Teutonic Mythology*, II, pp. 780-81). This battle is an excellent source of ritual drama, and several of the poems in the Elder Edda (for instance, *Svipdagsmál*, *Skirnismál*, and *Sigrdrífumál*) seem to hold elements of such a rite, with *Svipdagsmál* probably being the best example. In *Teutonic Magic*, Kveldulf Gundarsson has a script for a ritual drama roughly based on *Svipdagsmál* and *Sigrdrífumál*. Modern Ásatrúar often see Summer as the bright Fro Ing coming to bless the lands.

Even without a full-combat drama, the beating and burning or drowning of an effigy of Winter is a very common Germanic folk custom. One way in which this may be done is - if you had a "Last Sheaf" which you hung outside at Winternights or a like sheaf-offering "to the birds" at Yule - to take the winter-sheaf and make it into a *tomtegubber* or "corn-dolly" which embodies Old Man Winter. If this is done a few days before Ostara and the tomtegubber kept in a warm place, he will be very dry and burn easily. Whether you are going to burn Winter or toss him into the water, be sure that he is of an organic material which will burn or fall apart in the water easily. For the latter purpose, a figure made of bread might be the best idea. A human being can also play Winter, being switched and then ducked three times in a pond, lake, or river.

Ostara was called "Sig-Blessing" by the Norse, and we must also remember that her feast marked the time at which battles could begin again. It is fitting to hail Wodan as Sig-Father at this time, and also to bless Thonar for his sig over the

rime-thurses. Swords and spears are by no means unfitting to this rite, though it must be remembered that the Wanic procession is always one of frith, during which no weapons may be drawn.

The "Hail Day" section from *Sigrdrífumál* is almost always spoken somewhere in the course of an Ostara rite.

Ostara Rite

Usually, we try to hold an all-night watch on Ostara. This can be livened up with sýmbel, ritual dramas, the procession of the "Easter Witches" - and, most of all, communal egg-painting, confetti-egg making, and so forth. The contents of eggs that are blown out this night can be saved and made into omelettes for breakfast. Some of the painted eggs can be hidden for an egg-hunt the next day.

The rite itself should be done at dawn, outside if possible or with the windows open. The tools needed will be Hammer, horn with drink (mead or cider would be best, but ale or wine are all right), water drawn from a running spring at sunrise the day before, blessing-bowl and sprinkling-twigs (birch and pussy willow are the two best choices for this rite), a Winter-effigy or person with a dark cloak and straggly gray wig and beard, three candles (white, red, and black or deep purple/blue), a bowlful of golden apples and a bowlful of painted eggs (one for each person there). Everyone will also need a flexible young branch, by choice birch or willow, for whipping Winter. The Godwo/man should be dressed in white, perhaps with a red, green, or golden belt. Her/his hair, if long enough, should be brushed down to flow freely. If the rite is led by a Godman, there should also be a white-clad idis to bear the horn, apples, and eggs.

I. *The folk are gathered in a ring about the harrow. Winter stands or is propped up at the North. The Godwo/man does the Hammer Rite.*

II. *The Godwo/man faces Eastward, speaking.*

Hail to Ostara, eastwards lighting,
white maiden, in thy might.
Step through the door of Delling, glimmering,
lifting the lance of day,
offering eggs of day,
giving the gifts of day.

Hail to Thonar! home come from thurse-realm,
thy winter warring done.
Shining in sig, striker of etins,
Storm-god, we hail thee here!

Hail thee, Fro Ing! ride here in thy wain,
to drive winter from our doors.
With stag-antler shining, sig-sign uplifted
we see thee, summertime king,
beat out all Winter's bale,
no longer linger he here!

III. *The folk fall upon Winter, whipping him three times about the circle (if an effigy is used, he must be carried by someone). As they do this, they cry out:*

Now death must die and dawn have sig,
now winter ends and woe is fled.

Ice-melt flowing, fetters loosening, fair-shining Fro fells winter's dark.

If Winter is to be drowned, the folk whip him along to the pond or stream into which the image may be cast or in which a human Winter is ducked thrice, coming up the third time without wig, beard, or cloak. If Winter is to be burned, he is now set on fire - preferably by need-fire or flint-and-steel, if there is someone in the company who can make either of these reliably and fast. The pyre should already be set with plenty of fuel so that it will continue burning until after the rite is over.

If Winter is drowned, the folk should dip their branches in the water and lash each other lightly; if he is burned, they should pass them through the smoke and do the same, saying,

"Awake, awake! Frith dawns, and a fruitful year."

IV. *The Godwo/man says,*

Hail to our Fro, who's freed the earth,
the shining Summer King!
Now Sunna treads the sky's blue rim,
the sig-queen takes her stead.

V. *All raise hands above heads, looking upward and chanting together,*

Hail, Day! hail, Day's sons!
hail to Night and her daughter!
With loving eyes look you upon us,
and sig give to those standing here!

Hail to the gods! Hail the goddesses,
hail the all-giving Earth!
Fair speech and wit to famed ones here grant,
and healing hands, while we live.

Hail!

VI. *The Godwo/man takes the white candle and lights it, saying,*

Burn ever brightly, blithe candle white,
dawn-flame on threshold of day.
Set for us sig strong in the morn-light,
fire blessed by Norns fair!

S/he takes the red candle and lights it, saying,

Burn ever brightly, brave candle red
day-flame on threshold of day.
We shall win sig through Sun's long faring,
fire, be blessed by Norns bright!

S/he takes the black candle and lights it, saying,

Burn ever brightly, black candle, wise,
dusk-flame on threshold of day.
We shall hold sig at summer's ending,
fire, so deemed by Norns dark!

VII. *The Godwoman or idis lifts the baskets of apples and eggs. The Godwo/man says,*

Iðunn awesome! Ostara's fires
burn to brighten thy way.
Green aye new-growing from ground 'neath your footsteps,
holy frowe, fare here!

To apples and eggs all give your blessing,
Iðunn and Ostara fair,
bearing in blitheness buds of our new life,
bearing the blessings of dawn.

S/he sprinkles the two baskets with the holy spring-water. The Godwoman or idis bears the baskets around, sprinkling each person with spring water as they take an egg and an apple and saying, "Iðunn and Ostara bless you." If this burden has proven to be unwieldy when you practiced the rite, she may draw the baskets in a small wain behind her, or more than one

woman may help in carrying.

Contributors

- Kveldúlfur Hagan Gundarsson and Gunnora Hallakarva, from "Easter", in *Mountain Thunder*
- Diana Paxson
- Gunnwar Skaðadóttir
- Eric Wodening

Chapter LI

Waluburg's Night

The May Eve festival is one held by all the Germanic peoples. It is generally known as "Walpurgisnacht", after the christian St. Walpurga or Walburga; the native Teutonic name for the festival has not survived. The *Oxford Dictionary of Saints* tells us that "(Walburga's) feast of 1 May inappropriately coincided with a pagan feast for the beginning of summer and the revels of witches, whence the customs of Walpurgisnacht, which have no intrinsic connection with the saint. It is, however, not impossible that the protection of crops ascribed to her and represented by the three ears of corn in her images may have been transferred to her from Mother Earth" (p. 395). However, many folk choose to give the name "Walpurga" a Heathen reading, though it is incorrect to associate the first element with Wal- as "Slain" and thus to connect it either with the cult of Wodan or with the Frowe as the chooser of her share from the battlefield. The name's original form was "Wald-Burga" (Wood-Protection). However, a similar name, "Waluburg", is recorded for a Germanic seeress in the second century C.E.; this probably derives from *walus (stave or staff), just as the word "Völva" does (Simek, *Dictionary*, pp. 370-71), and thus is wholly fitting to this night of magic.

Waluburg's Night is probably best-known as the night when witches gather to feast, as at the Brocken in the Harz mountains (Germany), which was recorded as their meeting-site as early as the fifteenth century (Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, III, p. 1051). A similar belief from Russian folklore was set to music by Modest Mussorgsky, as the well-known piece "Night on Bald Mountain". As spoken of under "Ostara", it is possible that the "Easter Witches" of Sweden and Finland might first have been thought to go about at this time, but that the belief was displaced to the earlier holiday. In Jutland, there was a special prayer said at this time which asked for blessing for cows and calves, horses and foals, sheep and lambs, goats and kids, swine and piglets, geese and goslings, cow-milk and sheep-milk, ale and brandy, brewing and baking, and so forth - showing the repetition and attention to detail characteristic of magical charms. This prayer also included a verse banning "all etins and troll-folk...south and north, east and west" from the house; it is likely that the Danes shared the common belief in this night as a night of magic when all sorts of wild beings might be abroad (Bjarne Troelsen, *Nordisk Bondereligion*, p. 60). As at Yule-time, the house and cattle were warded carefully on this night. Rowan and crosses tied with red thread were two of the most common protections the christians put up against the witches and troll-folk at this time. In Ásatrú, it is seen as more fitting to put out food and drink for the sundry night-farers, as the Celts also do on this night.

This is a good time for seiðr-workings and for fore-seeing of all sorts.

Waluburg's Night was also a night of folk festivals, one of which was described in detail by Nicolay Jæger in the early eighteenth century. The folk rode out with beating of drums; one person went before them with a white banner with a cross on it. The next folk rode with a "May-spear", which was danced about in every village they came to. The folk stayed up late at night, drinking, dancing, and enjoying themselves (Troelsen, *Nordisk Bondereligion*, p. 64). In Scandinavia, Waluburg's Night (the German name has simply been translated as Valborg) is seen as the true beginning of spring, and is still a time of great rejoicing. In Uppsala, university students put on their white caps and gather to celebrate the end of winter; in Helsinki, the whole city holds ecstatic outdoors festivals, often with all-night drinking.

In the old days, this feast was probably most often held on mountain-tops or on gravemounds. Troelsen cites a reference from 1847 to a "Pinseberghøj" ("pentecostal mountain-howe"), which was danced around on this night, as were several other Danish gravemounds (*Nordisk Bondereligion*, pp. 65-66).

Waluburg's Night is also a night for love - a Teutonic equivalent of the modern Western Valentine's Day: German youths go out to gather green branches and flowers, which they put at the windows or doors of their chosen maidens before May Day dawns. For this reason, as well as the witch-meetings, Waluburg's Night is especially thought of by Ásatrúar today as a feast of the Frowe, patroness of magic and love. It is very fitting for true folk to give love-gifts and cards on this day; amber hearts are especially well-suited as declarations of love.

According to German folklore, this is the night on which a blue flame burns over buried treasures - the fiery might of the gold showing itself forth. This may cause one to think of the Frowe's Gullveig-Heiðr burning initiation in which the gold-woman was thrice eaten by flames and reborn as a seeress.

Fires are a great part of the celebration at this time, especially need-fires. The need-fire, kindled by the friction of wood on wood (see "Working Rites and Holding Feasts"), is the form with the most magical power, particularly for turning aside an ill wyrd, sickness, or curses: and Waluburg's Night is the mightiest night for such a working. Cattle were led through the smoke of such fires to cleanse and protect them, and folk jumped over the fires for good luck. Grimm cites, among other uses, the Highlands custom of boiling a pot of water on such fire and sprinkling the water on people and cattle suffering from diseases (*Teutonic Mythology*, II, p. 610). He also mentions that such fires were often laid with nine kinds of wood.

As well as fires, greenery is much used in the traditional celebration of Waluburg's Night. The May-Tree, a large bough adorned with ribbons and such and borne about the village in a festive procession ("bringing in the May"), is known from the south of Germany to Scandinavia, and may have been part of Germanic spring/summer rites as early as the Bronze

Age, as some of the Swedish and Danish rock-carvings show. Fossenius mentions that in the Saar area, it was particularly a birch-tree chosen for the procession, and that the riders stopped before every house (p. 69); conifers were also common choices for May Trees, perhaps because their needles were also seen as warding against evil wights (p. 326). May-songs were sung about this tree in many of the Germanic countries, including England: Fossenius quotes,

We have been rambling all this night,
And almost all the day,
And now returned back again,
We have brought you a branch of May.

A Branch of May we have brought you,
And at your door it stands
it is but a sprout, but it's well budded out
by the work of Our Lord's hand.

(pp. 71-72).

The May-tree was very often stripped of bark and branches up to the point, leaving only a small crown of foliage. These trees clearly show the springing might of rebirth and fruitfulness. Egg-shells were also used to decorate both the May tree and maypole, rather in the manner of the egg-trees still common in Germany at Ostara-time (Fossenius, p. 347).

The Maypole can, for obvious reasons, be read as a particular embodiment of the might of Fro Ing, although in some parts of Sweden (Västergötland, Bohuslän, Nordhalland) it was also set up in the shape of a womanly figure. Maypoles take many different shapes. The typical Bavarian Maypole, for instance, is a long post painted with blue and white stripes or wound with ribbons, and ringed with hanging garlands. On this Maypole, symbols showing the work of all the folk in the village are hung or nailed. In England, the Maypole is the familiar sort topped with long streamers which are woven about it in the traditional Maypole dance, but it was also commonly decorated with branches and flowers. The Danish Maypole often has the form of a cross, with wreaths hanging from the cross-arms; it is likewise decorated with greenery as well as ribbons. In Bavaria and German Bohemia, the Warder of the Lore has also been seen that it is still common for folk to decorate the living birch trees in their yards with coloured ribbons on May Day.

In Denmark, the young women went to the woods to make wreaths of flowers, with which, when they came back to the village, they crowned and garlanded the May-Bridegroom (chosen by the last year's May Bride); he then chose a maiden to crown as his bride (*Nordisk Bondereligion*, p. 60). In Germany, the young man was covered with birch and willow branches and green bushes until no one could recognise him; then the folk had to guess his name. When the man's actual name was spoken, he was uncovered and the branches divided out among all the folk - especially the young maidens, who then put the twigs on their windowsills (Fossenius, p. 74). Sometimes he might be ducked in a pond, so that the flying drops of water from his splashing should bless those around him. Here, it seems clear that the youth was thought to embody Fro Ing or a like god, walking in the Middle-Garth for a little time to give his hallowing to the folk. The May Queen and King might well have been thought of as bearing the might of Frowe and Fro; it is also possible that - especially in areas where only one ruler of the May was chosen - they could have been seen as sacrifices similar to the maiden who was wedded to the Last Sheaf (see "Winternights"). These things traditionally happened, not on May Eve, but on May Day itself; it is good for a group to camp out all night, or else meet again early in the morning at May Day.

Waluburg's Night: Rite

This ritual should start around sunset or a little after. If at all possible, it should be held outdoors, by choice in a high place. You will need at least two fires on the site so that folk can walk between them. If it is indoors, the fires can be replaced with a candle, which, assuming that all possible safety precautions are taken, can be *carefully* leapt over at the end of the rite. It is best if there is someone in the group who is able to kindle a need-fire, but if not, matches (though not lighters or flint-and-steel) may be used instead.

You will need need-fire tools or matches, horn, blessing-bowl, ale, sprinkling-twigg (birch or elder, by choice), and a May-Tree.

I. *The Godwo/man does the Hammer-Rite.*

II. *The Godwo/man stands in an inverted elhaz stance (hands at sides, feet spread) and speaks:*

Bright is the glow of gold hid in earth,
bright is the Rhine's red fire!
Gullveig's might kindles candles through worlds,

we greet the goddess gold-fair!

Above howe and holt high wings the falcon,
flashing as fire through night.
Heithe is flying, hunting for wisdom,
we greet the goddess gyr-winged!

Light burns in rings around Brising-necklace,
fairest of finery all.
The Frowe is faring forth in wood and sky,
we greet the goddess gem-bright!

Waluburg, Waluburg! wise one, fore-sighted,
wand-bearer, wanderer, through widest lands,
witch, wend to us, with weal enchanting
all those who hail you this holy night.

Wodan, Wodan! wise one, rune-rister,
wand-bearer, wanderer through widest lands,
wizard, wend to us, with weal enchanting
all those who hail you this holy night.

Wish-frowe, wish-fro! winding together
your crafts and chants your keenest spells,
come to us here! we kindle the fires,
that need may be met this night most fair.

III. *The Godwo/man or a skilled ritual helper lights the need-fire, from which the main fires or candles are lit. As the lighting is done, the Godwo/man speaks:*

Need-fire burn out woe,
need-fire burn forth weal,
need-fire hallow us here!

This is taken up as a chant by all the folk as they walk between the fires, taking special care to pass through the smoke if possible.

IV. *The Godwoman or an idis fills the horn with ale. The woman holds the horn above the fire while the Godwo/man hallows the ale with a hex-sign, saying,*

Hexe-Heithe, holy, hallow this draught,
with fiery might and main.

Witch, turn wyrd, as our wills shape,
within the hallowed horn
in froth of the awesome ale,
by symbol spoken here.

The Godwo/man makes a short toast, speaking of some matter in which s/he wishes to see Wyrd turned, and drinks. Those who do not wish to speak aloud may whisper their toasts over the horn.

V. *The Godwo/man pours what is left of the ale into the blessing-bowl and refills the horn. It is held above the fire; the Godwo/man hallows it with a Hammer-sign, saying,*

We give our gift to the gods ringed here,
we share the symbol-ale.

Gleeful this night, we gladly hail

Ases and alfs of awe,
Wans of wisdom and weal,
all folk who share our feast.

The horn is passed around and each person drinks. The Godwo/man pours what is left into the blessing-bowl and refills the horn.

We hail the summer now here among us,
we greet the green-crowned tree!

Blessed, beloved, bending above us,
lusty are May-tree's leaves,
fair are the May-tree's flowers,
strong is the May-tree's stem.

S/he hallows the horn with the sign of the Sun-wheel and drinks, spilling a couple of drops on the May-tree. Each of the folk comes forward to do the same. The Godwo/man pours what is left into the blessing-bowl and lifts it, saying,

We've wassailed all the wights about,
all blessings be blended here!

Holy drops splash to hallow the kin,
stemming from springs beneath stone,
falling from heaven-bergs fair,
blithe-running over Fold's breasts.

S/he sprinkles first the May-tree, then the harrow and fires, and lastly each of the gathered folk, starting with him/herself.

VI. *The Godwo/man says,*

So give we ale to gods!

S/he pours the ale out over the May-tree and onto the earth. S/he says,

Fro Ing and Frowe, fruitfulness bring us,
merry this month of life!

Waluburg, Wodan, wise in your seeing,
show that our wyrds are set well,
shape all aright with your runes,
that nytt we joy from need.

Hail gods and goddesses all!

The Folk answer,

Hail gods and goddesses all!"

VII. *The Godwo/man leads the folk in running between the fires and leaping over them. Dancing and singing are all fitting at this time; when everyone has leapt and danced, the feast may begin.*

Chapter LII

Midsummer

Midsummer is the celebration of the summer solstice. It was called "St. John's Night" by the Christians. As the shortest night of the year, it was (and is) particularly a time of rejoicing for the Northern peoples. Being a solstice feast, its date is slightly variable, ranging from the twentieth to the twenty-third; however, it is usually Midsummer's Eve on which the celebrations are held, and it is this night which is the night of the greatest magic.

Traditional Midsummer celebrations have much in common with those for Ostara and May Day. In Sweden, a "maypole", tree, or post is also put up at Midsummer's. Olaus Magnus, writing in 1500, mentions that folk went to the midsummer-tree to pray that the field might be given growing-strength and laid a cross of leaves on the field so that it would grow with God's help without being harmed by lightning, thunder, or hail. In Heathen days, such a rite might have been done while calling on the help of Þórr to ward the fields and hallow them with his Hammer so that they could grow.

In Skåne, the Midsummer-wreath was a large wreath made of all the flowers and plants that grew in the area, tied to hang from a pole that two men or boys carried on their shoulders. Beneath the pole was a paper image of a hen on her eggs. The two "wreath-boys" were accompanied by six to twelve "wreath-girls" in their procession around the village. In Jutland and Skåne, it was also common for girls and boys to give each other wreaths to wear this night as a sign of their affection (Olrik and Ellekilde, *Nordens Gudeverden*, pp. 678-79).

Fires are very important to this festival as well: Grimm comments that "in the north of Germany (the fires) take place at *Easter*; in the south at *Midsummer*...it all turns upon whether the people are Saxon or Frank...Some countries, however, seem to do homage to both, as Denmark and Carinthia" (*Teutonic Mythology*, p. 615). The chief difference he notices overall is that the Easter fires are usually set in mountains and hills - wild places - while the Midsummer fire was usually made in streets and marketplaces (p. 626). In Denmark, the "St. John's Fire" is supposed to be burnt on a howe or other high place; hay or rye was an important part of this fire, and in some places a hay-dolly called the "Child" was cast on the flames (Troelsen, *Nordisk Bondereligion*, pp. 70-71). The Norwegians also burned a manlike figure of straw, called "kallen" (the carle, the old man) or "kællingen" (the carline, the old woman) (Olrik and Ellekilde, *Nordens Gudeverden*, p. 671). Sun-wheel fires, like those of Yule, are also burned on Midsummer's; Grimm tells us that the town of Konz made such a wheel which was rolled flaming down into the Moselle, and that if it was alight when it went into the river, that was a sign of a good wine-harvest and the cause of great rejoicing (*Teutonic Mythology*, p. 620). The Scandinavian Midsummer-fires were very often burned on howes or high places; Olrik and Ellekilde cite in particular a seventeenth-century reference to "Ildhøj" ("fire-howe") on which these flames were kindled to drive out the witches, now that harvest was nearing (*Nordens Gudeverden*, p. 670). Grimm also mentions the common practice of casting herbs into the Midsummer's fire, and of leaping over it, as is done on Waluburg's Night.

In modern Ásatrú, as spoken of in the chapter on Worship, some groups have taken to burning models of Viking ships for this festival. This may be somewhat influenced by Balder's burning ship-funeral, or it may simply be a fiery hallowing of one of the greatest signs of the Northern culture.

In Denmark, before the Sun goes down on Midsummer's, it was traditional to "adorn" or "birch" the flax fields by putting up greenery (especially poplar). The length of time that the leaves stayed green was a sign of the life of the flax; the poplar was also supposed to ward off those witches who wasted the flax crop (Troelsen, *Nordisk Bondereligion*, p. 68). The Norwegians, Swedes, and Swedish Finns hung leaves and flowers of all sorts, especially rowan, all over the house to protect it on this night. Cows were adorned with wreaths put about their horns; afterwards the wreaths were hung in the barn until the next year (Olrik and Ellekilde, *Nordens Gudeverden*, pp. 676-77). In modern times, this was remembered as a ward against witchcraft, but could well have been a blessing of the beasts as well; there are several descriptions in the sagas of cows receiving special worship, and "Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar" mentions the gold horns of the hof-cattle.

All herbs are at their mightiest when picked on Midsummer's Eve. This was the night on which "St. John's Wort" was plucked, and could be used for various sorts of foretelling. It is said that if you sit under an Elder tree at midnight on Midsummer's, you will be able to see the riding of the "King of Fairyland" and all his host (Grieves, *A Modern Herbal*) - that is, the alfs, perhaps with Fro Ing at the head of the train. Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was also (loosely) based on English folklore of a similar sort.

Midsummer Night is the mightiest night in the year for drawing water from hallowed streams or wells; the dew that falls this night is supposed to be used for healing eyes. Those who go fasting and silent to a northward-running stream on this night will be able to see their future spouses in the water at sunrise (Olrik and Ellekilde, p. 683).

In modern Ásatrú, Midsummer's is especially associated with the Þing, due to the fact that the Icelandic Alþing was held in the summertime. It is also thought of as a feast at which Tiw should be hailed; Midsummer's is the bright half of the axis-pole of the year, and the Midsummer-tree might well be seen as the embodiment of the Irminsul.

Midsummer is clearly a feast of the Sun in her strength; many folk today also hail Balder in his brightness at this time.

Midsummer Rite

This feast should be done outside if possible, somewhere where a bonfire may be kindled. You will need a fire of nine kinds of wood (including juniper, if possible), horn, blessing-bowl, mead (by choice) or other drink, sprinkling-twig, a roughly human-shaped figure of straw (the Carle), a Midsummer-pole or -tree set up beside the fire, and sprigs of mugwort (if possible) or other plant for everyone. The rite should begin a little before sunset. Lots are drawn beforehand among the women to see who will dance with the Carle. If you would rather, a ship can be used instead of the Carle; an alternate form of the rite is given here.

I. *Godwo/man does Hammer-Rite.*

II. *Godwo/man stands in elhaz stance (feet together, hands and head raised) and calls:*

Hail thee, Sunna! shining in might,
driving thy horses on high.
Early-Wake, All-Swift, awesome, forth gallop
drawing the shield-maid stark
around her holy ring.

Hail thee, Tiw! at Thing-tide's height,
by Irminsul, ur-old tree.
One-Hand, Wolf-Binder, worthy oath-payer,
hold thy high seat here!

Hail thee, Fosite! at fount of law,
standing by flowing spring.
Bridge-builder, wise one from bright Glitnir's heights,
reach out with holy rede,
awe us with axe's stroke.

Hail to thee, Balder! bright in remembrance,
shining in sig and frith.
At height of hope on hallowed Midsummer's,
we bless thee, hero bold,
we hail thee in halls hidden,
strength to the seed of life!

Hail thee, Heimdallr! from Heaven-Berg gazing,
white-shining watchman of gods,
high-minded horn-god, at height of all lightening,
brighten the Rainbow Bridge here,
stream down to us God-Home's strength.

Thonar, ward us through summer's height,
against all harm of hail,

Frija, bless us while flax is growing,
Sif's hair shines in the fields,
Gerðr's breasts decked brightly,
Fulla gives freely to all.

Fro Ing and Frowe fires shall kindle,
growing great through the land,
where alfs are riding all are singing,
green shall our fields grow!

III. *The Godwo/man kindles the fire, saying,*

Now dance in ring around the flames,
Dance to might of Midsummer high!
Dance in weal woe dance out,
Dance to gladness of gods all here!

IV. *The Folk all dance about the fire and the Midsummer-tree. If they have made wreaths, the men and women may crown each other with them at this time. The woman who drew the marked lot must dance with the Carle. As the folk dance, they cast their twigs into the fire, saying,*

"All woe burn away with these leaves!"

A large Midsummer-wreath may be borne about the fire and the tree at this time.

V. *When the dance begins to slow, the Godwo/man should stop and fill the horn with mead. S/he should hold it up, saying,*

Eagle's flood glittering falls down here,
seed of Sig-Father's beak.

Wodan, awake us with Wod-Stirrer mead!
Thy eye gaze on us this eve,
light with thy lore this night.

All of the Ases'-Garth, awesome, shares
the Wans, all wise, have their share.
Here we drink to the holy gods,
with might that roars through mead.

VI. *Each person then makes a toast to one or more of the god/esses. The Godwo/man pours what is left into the bowl and signs it with Sun-Wheel, Hammer, and Walknot. S/he sprinkles the sundry items as named with the mead, saying,*

"I hallow the harrow this holy night. Midsummer-tree, I hallow thee! I bless thee, Carle (or "longship"), given as gift; I bless the fire that burns. Here I bless all the airts - "

s/he sprinkles in the eight directions,

"those above and those below. I bless all the folk gathered here."

S/he sprinkles each of the folk in turn.

"I give this gift to you, gods and goddesses all!"

S/he pours the blessing over the Carle (or ship) and the tree. If there is a lot of mead, and the Carle is a small figure, care should be taken that he is not so well-soaked that he will not burn.

VII a. *The woman who danced with the Carle lifts him up, saying,*

"I bring my bridegroom, my Midsummer-man, holy and blessed for the gods. Let him be given, that green grow the earth, that well may wax all our works!"

b. *Two men come forth and lift up the ship. One of them, or both together if they have practiced and can do it well in unison, say;*

"We bring the ship to the shore; we turn its prow towards wide ways. Forth sail it, flaming, a gift to the gods - that green shall grow the earth, that well may wax our works!"

VIII a. *The Godwo/man sets a hand on the Carle, speaking or whispering a bidding or thanks to the god/esses. Each of the folk comes up to do so in turn, till all are touching the Carle. The Godwo/man says,*

"So we all give Midsummer-man! We heave him up for the high ones..."

The folk all swing the Carle up and down once...

"We heave him up for the holy wights..."

They swing him again...

"For gods and goddesses all!"

They swing him up and toss him into the fire. As he burns, all cheer and hail him.

b. The Godwo/man sets a hand on the ship, speaking or whispering a bidding or thanks to the god/esses. Each of the folk comes up to do so in turn, till all are touching the ship. At this time, folk may have written their requests or thanks in runes on strips of paper, with which they may load the ship. Other small flammable gifts, such as stalks of grain, flowers, amber beads, and so forth, may also be put into the ship at this time. The Godwo/man says,

"So shall the ship be launched! One heave for the high ones..."

The folk all swing the ship up and down once...

"One heave for the holy wights..."

They swing it again...

"For gods and goddesses all! Let the ship fare forth!"

They swing it up and toss it into the flames. As it burns, all cheer and hail it.

IX. When the tallest flames have died down, the Godwo/man leads the folk in leaping over the fire. The feasting and drinking begins. Folk may toss pieces of their food and spill drops of their drink into the Midsummer flames as small offerings, or lay them before the foot of the Midsummer-tree. Food and wreaths may also be hung from the branches of nearby trees as gifts to the alfs.

X. The Midsummer fires should burn all night. If this is not possible, when they are put out - which, as usual, must be done thoroughly so that there are no live embers left behind - the Godwo/man should say,

"Though stilled in the Middle-Garth, burn yet in our souls - Midsummer fire holy, Midsummer fire high.
Light us through summer, in love and luck - Midsummer fire holy, Midsummer fire high. Kindle our coals as
we quench your light - Midsummer fire holy, Midsummer fire high!"

Chapter LIII

Loaf-Fest (Freyfaxi)

This feast falls on the eve of August 1, at the beginning of harvest-time. The actual Heathen name of the festival is not certain. In England and Scotland, the "Loaf-Mass" (corrupted to "Lammas") was held when folk brought the first fruits of their harvest to the church as an offering - a custom which might well, in turn, have sprung from Heathenism. Similar customs were followed in Germany: the beginning of harvest was always both an offering and a bidding for a good harvest to follow, safe from hail and other dangers. In Donnersberg, a woman bound three stalks of grain together beneath the ears in every field, saying, "That belongs to the three maidens"; where she could not go herself, she tied three stalks of grain together with white silk and sent a child under seven years old to lay them on the field (Jahn, Ulrich, *Die Deutsche Opfergebräuche bei Ackerbau und Viehzucht*, pp. 158-59). Many of the "First Sheaf" customs that Jahn cites, such as the making of a corn dolly or the setting out of the sheaf "for the mice" are similar to the "Last Sheaf" customs discussed further under Winternights. The First Sheaf could be left lying on the field, thrown into running water, burned in fire, or hung up in the house or over the door, "because it, as a holy offering, possessed the strength to keep all ill-luck from house and court". Eggs were also given with it, as was bread (Jahn, *Deutsche Opfergebräuche*, pp. 160 - 63).

In Iceland, this was the time of fairs which were particularly marked by the sport of horse-fighting. From this sport we get the name "Freyfaxi" (Freyr's-Mane), as that was the name of one of the most famous Icelandic horses, the stallion which Hrafnkell Freysgoði dedicated to his god. The horse-fighting may well have been seen as a ritual act in itself; a horse-fighting scene appears on the stone from the Häggeby church (Uppland, Sweden - ca. 400-600 C.E.) in which we see both the horses and the men goading them on. The horses' heads are decorated with the crescent-horn head-dresses which also appear on many bracteate-horses from this period. A number of other picture stones from this period show duelling horses, usually flanking a great wheel with spiralling arms which may show forth the Sun. Nýlen and Lamm suggest that "The duel was probably of religious significance. The animals most suitable for sacrifice may have been selected in this way and the battle between the lord of the winter and the summer, between death and life in nature, which was current in Sweden up to the seventeenth century may reflect ancient fertility rites" (*Stones, Ships, and Symbols*, p. 26). The horse, as spoken of earlier, is a beast of both fruitfulness and death, and thus is very fitting to harvest-time rites. The bright horse is still the ruler at the time of this feast - but this will not last too much longer. The strength with which the horses fought could perhaps also have been seen as showing how the harvest should turn out, or even as blessing the fields with the might they spent in their battling.

Grønbech mentions that this same belief was shown by the Norwegian horse-contests held in Sætersdale in August. "The stallions were led out two by two, excited by the presence of a mare, and after the fights, there followed wild rides on bare-backed horses. And it was known that 'when the horses bite well it means a good harvest'. In this double play between the interpretation of the action as a test of manhood and an assurance of luck, there is very likely a glimmering of old sacrificial ideas" (II, p. 190).

In *Practical Magic in the Northern Tradition*, Nigel Pennick mentions that Loaf-Feast was also a time when wells and other holy waters were especially worshipped and offerings made to them, though his sources for this are difficult to track. He also suggests that the English folk song "John Barleycorn" is a fitting ritual song or ritual drama for this feast; and here we may think of Fro Ing's bondsman Byggvir, "Barley". In Scotland and parts of England, it is still traditional to make corn dollies at this time. These can easily be done as harvest-images for various god/esses (see "Crafts"), set on the Hearth harrow from now until Winternights.

In the elder days, this time would not only have been the beginning of the grain harvest, but also the end of the season of battling. Those warriors who lived through a summer of raiding and trading would be coming home with the harvest of gold and glory they had won, ready to set their weapons aside and get to work bringing in the winter's food. The other side of the Häggeby stone shows a ship rowing in, and this ship might perhaps be seen as the sig-ship faring homeward from battle.

We may also note that Óláfr inn digri was slain just before this festival, at the battle of Stiklastaðir on July 29, 1030 - by three men named Þórir Hound, Þórsteinn Shipbuilder, and a man named Kálf (though Snorri tells us that there was some disagreement as to whether the last was Kálf Árnason or Kálf Árfinnsson). KveldúlfR Gundarsson suggests that "If one were looking for a broader pattern in Óláfr's death, one might, perhaps, read the Hound as a lesser form of Óðinn's wolf, the Calf as Freyr's ox, and know Þórr in the name 'Þórr-Stone'. Certainly it is fitting to think of the three great gods gathering together to strike down one of the worst traitors who ever slaughtered his own folk and turned against the holy ways of the North..." ("Outlaws in the Hof!", p. 12) Thinking on this, it might also be thought fitting to see Loaf-Fest as a time to celebrate the gods' harvest of sig over the foes of our folk, and the beginning harvest-time of the newly reborn Troth.

In modern Ásatrú, this feast is especially tied to the tale of Loki's cropping of Sif's hair, for which he pays not only by bringing her hair of real gold, but arranging the making of several of the great treasures of the gods (Þórr's Hammer,

Óðinn's spear and ring, Freyr's boar and ship). This tale is well-fitted to be a ritual drama at this feast. At this time, also, many true folk call on Sif as a field-goddess and Thonar as the warder of the fields, whose lightning ripens the grain and whose thunder drives out all the wights that would scathe the harvest.

Loaf-Feast Rite

If possible, this rite should be held outdoors by a body of water, with a bonfire also burning and trees nearby to hang things on. You will need horn, ale, blessing-bowl, sprinkling-twigs (possibly a few stalks of grain bound together), a small hand-baked bread or biscuit and a stalk of grain for everyone, and something with which folk can hang pieces of their offerings in the trees (such as little paper ships with strings attached to the masts). The fire should be kindled with one of the brands from the year's earlier holy fires; it should already be going well by the time the rite starts.

I. *Godwo/man does the Hammer-rite.*

II. *Godwo/man stands in full elhaz stance (feet spread, hands upraised) and calls,*

The Sun turns down from Summer's height,
the Earth is giving her gifts to all.
Fro Ing is faring frithful through acres,
Stands Byggvir high-waxed, staunch by the god.

The Sun turns down from Summer's height,
The ships are faring from sea to home-bays
Sig-laden, fair-winded, Farmatýr guides them,
Glad bear they loads, the glow of Rhine-fire.

The Sun turns down from Summer's height,
The Hammer flashes above fields gold.
Thonar hallows his holy bride,
Mjöllnir hallows high-growing grain.

The grain has grown for gifts threefold,
barley and bread and beer,
The quern shall whirl and quicken the yeast,
the seeds for sowing be saved.

Loaf-Giver, Loaf-Kneader, full-laden, we greet you,
with barley and bread and beer,
Hrosshárgrani, we hail thee forth,
to quicken the ale with awe,
to seed it with frothing foam.

III. *The Godwo/man fills the horn with ale and signs it with the Sun-Wheel, saying,*

Fro Ing and Frowe, Nerthus, Njörðr! Wans, look wynn-full on our harvest - Wans and all holy wights who help the growing grain.

S/he drinks and passes it about to all the folk. When it has made the round, s/he pours what is left into the blessing bowl and fills the horn again, signing it with the Hammer and saying,

Thonar and Sif, hallow this harvest-time - Bringing our works to being, blessing the winnings we reap,
driving all ill away!

S/he drinks and passes it about to all the folk. When it has made the round, s/he pours what is left into the blessing bowl and fills the horn again, signing it with the Walknot and saying,

Farmatýr, we hail thee for summer sig - battles blessed, now coming to end. Draupnir's owner, holy ring-giver, strew forth the seed of the hawk's land's fire!

S/he drinks and passes the horn about to all the folk. When it has made the round, s/he pours what is left into the blessing

bowl.

IV. *The Godwo/man speaks,*

Now we bring forth the signs of what we have wrought - the gifts we give to the gods! One-third to alfs of the air; one third to water-wights deep; one-third fares through the fire.

S/he breaks his/her bread in three parts and sticks a stalk of grain into each - hanging one on the tree, casting one into the water, the third into the flames. Each of the folk does likewise. If the rite is being held indoors, a basin of water (which will later be taken out and poured into the nearest body of water) may be used instead of a stream; the pieces for burning may be burned in a fireplace or passed through a candle-flame until they begin to char; and the pieces for hanging may be hung out the window. The Godwo/man lifts the bowl and speaks:

Hail to the gifts hail the givers, hail gods and goddesses all! Hail to Byggvir whose blood we share, barley-god, all blessing-full.

S/he sprinkles harrow, the airts, the water, the fire, the gifts which the folk have hung, and each of the folk in turn, finally pouring the last of the ale into the water, onto the tree, and into the fire (if the fire is very small, a few symbolic drops may be sprinkled on it here). S/he says,

Now fare all to feast in frith - win strength for harvest work.

Chapter LIV

Winter-Nights (Alf-Blessing, Idis-Blessing, Frey-Blessing)

The Winter-Nights feast marks the end of the harvest and turning of the year from summer to winter. At this time, those cattle and swine that could not be kept through the winter were slaughtered as part of the harvest-blessing. This was a time for celebration: the harvest-work was over for the year, the cattle brought in from the fields to the barn. Now the awareness of folk turned inward, for now there was time during the long Northern nights to do all the things that might be done within the hall - carving and fixing, spinning the year's crop of flax, knotting nets and shaping shafts for the year to come - and deep thinking largely took the place of the doing of deeds.

The date of Winter-Nights is uncertain. In Icelandic tradition, it usually fell between the twelfth and fifteenth of October, or at any rate sometime in the middle of October. Bede mentions the name "Winterfyllith", "Winter Full-Moon", which has led many true folk today to set the festival at the first full moon after the autumnal equinox (or the nearest weekend). Icelandic sagas describe people playing ball-games on the frozen lakes at this time, something which can hardly be done in a lot of places where Ásatrú is practiced now: it might not be wholly unfitting for folk in warmer places to delay the feast until later in the month or even the beginning of November, when there is some chance that the festival might actually match the changing of the seasons.

As spoken of under "Alfs" and "Idises", Winter-Nights is the feast at which we give worship to our dead forebears, from which two of the Old Norse names for the festival, "álfablót" and "dísablót", stemmed. It can be thought of as the Germanic equivalent to the Celtic Samhain, the end of summer when the dead were remembered and food put out for them. In this respect, Winter-Nights is something like Yule; however, the emphasis at Winter-Nights is largely on the harvest (to which the alfs and idises have lent their aid). As the harvest celebration, Winternights is greeted with much joy; the meeting of the living and the dead, and the remembrance of our fore-gone kin is likewise not a sorrowful, but a joyful thing.

However, the turning from summer to winter, from light to darkness, was keenly felt by our Northern forebears. After Winternights, the Wild Hunt begins its night-riding through the shorn fields; the trolls and ghosts come closer to the dwellings of humans. So, as well as being a feast of joy, there is a certain solemnity to Winternights: it marks the beginning of that time at which the darkness belongs most to the wild wights, which peaks at Yule and ends at Ostara. During this season, Wodan is more to be seen in his elder shape as death-god and leader of the Hunt, and Skaði rules as the etin-born maid of winter. Those who wish to accept the reading of Wulþur and Fro Ing or Njörðr as the alternating Winter/Summer Kings will also hail Wulþur, taking his high seat at this time.

Winter-Nights was also called "Freysblót" - the blessing of Fro Ing: *Gísla saga* mentions that "Þórgrímr was used to having a harvest-feast at Winter-Nights and to greet winter and to make blessing to Freyr" (ch. 15). As the god who is chiefly associated with the alfs, particularly the mound-alfs, and who also has much to do with both death and fruitfulness, he is one of the main rulers of this feast - though, as spoken of in "Alfs" and discussed further below, Wodan was also sacrificed to at this time.

From the name "Dísablót", and the fact that women seem to have played a special role at this feast (Starkaðr's grandmother Álfhildr making the blessing to the idises and the farm-woman telling Sigvatr to go away because her household was making a blessing to the alfs and feared Óðinn's wrath - see "Alfs"), we may also see that the womanly beings of death and fruitfulness were especially called on in the course of this feast. It was at this time that the dark *dísir* of Þiðrandi's family took him (see "Idises"). "Ynglingatal" tells of the death of King Aðils, who rode his horse about the idis-hall at the blessing; the horse, by the workings of a "witch-wight", stumbled and Aðils dashed his brains out on the stone floor. Turville-Petre suggests that the "witch-wight" or idis to whom the hall belonged was a single goddess, perhaps Freyja, and that "This goddess, like the dead *dísir* of the *Atlamál*, had called the king to join her. If she is not herself dead, she is the goddess of death" (*Myth and Religion*, p. 226).

In *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, the "dísablót" is spoken of as a feast where "there was the best banquet and much drink within the hall" (ch. 44). Although Sigvatr's description of the multiple rejections he got while faring about in the autumn seems to hint that this feast was usually a family affair, *Gísla saga* mentions that Þórgrímr invited many great men to his Winter-Nights banquet, and *Egils saga* has the event as a feast to which a chieftain could invite king and queen, as Bárðr invited Eiríkr Blood-Axe and Queen Gunnhildr; a number of folk are also invited to the *dísablót* in *Víga-Glúms saga* (ch. 5). In *Víga-Glúms saga*, however, the guests were all friends and relatives of the householder, while in *Egils saga*, the uninvited guests were put outside in another building, and given only skyr, so it seems that our forebears may at least have been very particular about who they invited to their Winter-Nights feasting. In *A Book of Troth*, Edred Thorsson suggests that, when the folk are sprinkled with the ale from the blessing bowl, "in a very pointed manner, the speaker should directly sprinkle first the members of the kindred, then all known good folk and true. If any gathered are known to be uncommitted to the Troth, sprinkling them should be avoided" (p. 169).

One of the most widespread harvest-customs of the Germanic folk is the leaving of the Last Sheaf. Rites for this

vary greatly. In some areas, the grain-ghost or grain-wight is thought to dwell in the sheaf, and must be chased and either driven out or carefully captured, bound, and brought home. In Jutland, when the Last Sheaf is bound, folk say, "We have captured the hare"; in Fyn and Zealand, they talk about "catching the fox" or "driving the fox out" (Troelsen, *Nordisk Bondereligion*, p. 72); de Vries cites a number of like examples ("Contributions to the Study of Othin, Especially in his Relation to Agricultural Practices in Modern Popular Lore"), such as the Dutch custom of making a hare-effigy out of grass and flowers at the end of harvesting and having the boy who bears it act as the hare and presently suffer capture (p. 15).

Elsewhere, "(the corn-spirit) is regarded as a supernatural being in human shape and it is identified with a real person at the moment of the cutting of the last sheaf. This person may be the labourer who wields the last stroke of the sickle, or the woman who binds the last sheaf, a stranger accidentally passing by, or even the landlord himself" (de Vries, "Contributions to the Study of Othin", p. 17). De Vries cites the Jutlandic practices of making the girl who has bound the last sheaf dance with a hay figure in the shape of a man (made from the last cartload of grain), who is called her husband, or of wedding the girl to "the Old One". This, he suggests, was originally a sacrifice in which the girl was first killed as "the Old One's" bride; then later, perhaps, "tabooed by virtue of her spiritual relation to the corn-demon and consequently treated as a widow" (p. 18). Troelsen mentions that the person who has bound the Last Sheaf is the butt of unmerciful amusement, and that a maiden who has bound it has to bear it home hanging about her neck and dance with it at the harvest festivities (*Nordisk Bondereligion*, p. 73). In *Dragons of the Rhine*, Diana Paxson presents a fictional, but traditionally based and spiritually inspired, rendition of harvest-rites in which Sigfrid is tied to the Last Sheaf and threatened by the scythes of the peasants; Hagano (who is one-eyed and appears in a dark cloak and broad-brimmed hat) then ransoms him with the promise of ale for the harvesters.

Especially in Sweden and Denmark, the Last Sheaf is supposed to be left out for Oden's horse. The North German Last Sheaf-charm, recorded in 1593 by Nicolaus Gryse as a song sung by the harvesters dancing around the Last Sheaf ("Wodan, give your horse now fodder. This year thistle and thorn - the next year better grain"), was mentioned in "Yule", and the relationship between the Wild Hunt and the fruitfulness of the fields spoken of there. In Germany, the Last Sheaf is also given to a demon called Wode, Wold, or Waul; de Vries originally disputed the connection between Wodan, the Wild Hunt, and the Last Sheaf rites ("Contributions to the Study of Othin", 1931), particularly doubting that Wode/Wauld was the same wight as Wodan, but later came to modify his opinion considerably ("Wodan und die Wilde Jagd", 1968?). Later folk tradition has the Last Sheaf left "for the birds"; it is also mentioned that "In Gellerup...a little bit had to stand unharvested for the birds and the beasts and the nissen. Here the 'Unsjæger' (Óðinn's-Hunter) comes when the corn is harvested" (Troelsen, *Nordisk Bondereligion*, p. 71). More corrupt (and likely older) forms of the name appear in Germany: in Mecklenburg, the Last Sheaf is food for the horse of "de Waur"; in Gross-Trebow, it is left to stand "for the Wolf, as fodder for his horse". The oldest references to this custom stem from a South German Statsregister (ca. 1350-90), which mentions the leaving of the "Wutfuter" or "Wod's fodder" (Jahn, *Deutsche Opfergebräuche*, p. 164). In Bavaria, the Last Sheaf is left for the "Wauldhunde" (Little Wod-Dog?), together with beer, milk, and bread; this wight was supposed to come and eat them on the third night. The Wauldhunde may well be seen as one with the black hounds or wolves that follow the Wild Hunt, or perhaps Wodan himself in a wolflike shape. Throughout North Germany, the Last Sheaf itself is called "the Wolf", which Jahn sees as possibly a corruption of the name "Wodan"; it is sometimes made into the shape of a wolf, adorned with blossoms and green twigs where it stands in the fields (pp. 178-79).

In Germany, it was common to bind the Last Sheaf into a "Waul-staff" with bright ribbons and decorate it with flowers; the Sheaf itself could be called "Wode", and may also have been seen at times as the embodiment of the god. The harvesters then danced about the "Wode" in a ring, calling on him with charms such as the Last Sheaf-charm quoted above; Jahn suggests that, especially in earlier days, each person got a bit of the Sheaf to hang over their door as a holy thing (*Deutsche Opfergebräuche*, p. 170). In Niederporing, the Last Sheaf was made into a large corn-dolly by the men, while the women gathered flowers to decorate him with; he was given the name Åswald (Ase-Ruler - someone who really wanted to could possibly also suggest that this name might have been derived from, or substituted for an earlier *Ansuz-Woðanaz), and they all thanked him for a good harvest without accident. In other parts of Lower Bavaria, the harvesters made a knot (without using the left hand at all) around the three standing stalks of grain, saying "That is for the Åswald" (*Deutsche Opfergebräuche*, p. 175).

A few apples were also left hanging from the fruit harvest for "der Wod" in the area of Raddenfort and Käterhagen; in Pommerania, the last apple or pear was left for the "weather-maiden". Jahn mentions that the bones and various bits of the sacrificial beasts were, like the remains of all Germanic sacrifices, seen as mighty talismans, and often put out in the fields for harvest-luck (p. 230).

Beside the Old Man, the Old Woman (that is, the Earth?) was also worshipped at this time: the Last Sheaf was called the Old Woman in Denmark (de Vries, "Contributions to the Study of Othin", p. 17). In Northumberland, the Last Sheaf was called the "harvest Queen" (Whistler, *The English Festivals*, p. 188). As well as Wode himself, we have "Fru Gode" or "fru Gauen", to whom the Last Sheaf was often left in Northern Germany; Grimm chooses to read the name as a survival of the archaic manly title "Fro" instead of the contemporary womanly "Frau" or "fru", interpreting this deity as "Fro Wode/Wodan" rather than "Frau Wode/Wodan" (*Teutonic Mythology*, pp. 252-53). This is a matter of choice; although since we have womanly leaders of the Wild Hunt as well as sundry manly leaders, and since the Earth is the chief giver of harvest,

it seems not unlikely that she (one of Wodan's many brides!) could well have been the receiver of the Last Sheaf. Jahn quotes a German charm: "Wir gebens der Alten, / Sie soll es behalten. Sie sei uns im nächsten Jahr / So gut, wie sie es diesmal war" - We give it to the Old One, / She shall hold it. / Be she to us in the next year / As good, as she was in this (p. 183). Those who wish may change the Last Sheaf/Wodan-gift in this rite to a gift to the Old Woman.

A custom which is just taking hold among true folk in America is the carving of "Winternights pumpkins". These have the same general goal as Halloween pumpkins - that is, to scare away ill ghosts and wights, while offering much enjoyment to the children of the kindred. The "Winternights pumpkins" can also be seen as gifts to the god/esses after the manner of the Last Sheaf. This practice stems from the Celtic carving of turnip-lamps for Samhain adapted to the (better-suited) American gourd, and so purists may reject it as being not properly Germanic - but our folk were never shy about borrowing, especially from the Celts. Those with both Germanic and Celtic heritage (that is, most Americans and British), may like to carve such pumpkins at Winternights and leave them up until November 1.

Winternights Rite

It is better if this ritual can be done outside, though this is by no means needful. You will need a horn with enough ale to fill it four times, blessing-bowl, sprinkling-twig, a sheaf of grain or maize (some bind it with a threefold braid of red, white, and black strands), and wreaths of straw, grain, nuts, berries, and/or flowers to deck it with, two apples for everyone, sax, and a stallion-shaped bread. A woman (or more than one if it is a large group) must be chosen beforehand as idis to go about with the basket of apples. Half of the apples need to be pierced with ribbons or strings so that they can be hung up beside the Last Sheaf.

I. *Godwo/man does the Hammer Rite.*

II. *Godwo/man stands still in the middle of the folk-ring, speaking very softly,*

Now the harvest is gathered; now the seeds sleep in the storehouse, the ale brews in the cauldrons. Now the nights are growing long; the cattle are come in from the hill, the folk from the shorn fields. Soon the living folk shall leave all the acres - soon Wodan shall lead the Wild Hunt across the dry grass, and Thonar hunt thurse-maidens over the fields of snow. But now the living and the dead shall meet, gathered here in a single ring: now the ghosts shall come to their feast, and all kin shall gladly eat the apples and drink the ale together.

III. *Godwo/man suddenly throws back his/her head, casting hands up and spreading feet to stand in a full elhaz-stance as s/he cries out very loudly,*

Alfs, we call you! Old mound-dwellers,
fathers of all folk here!
Light Alfs and Dark Alfs, depth-dwelling Swart Alfs,
We hail you, holy kin!

Idises, we call you! Eldest of women,
mothers of mighty ones here!
Bright and dark idises blessings all holding,
we hail you, holy kin!

Ghosts, we call you! gather in ring,
kin of all kindred-folk here!
Shadowed about us shining through worlds,
we hail you, holy kin!

Fro Ing, we call you, and Frowe beloved,
Alf-Home's ruler, Wans' Idis.
Faring from Wan-Home forth on your boars shining,
garlanded with bright grain,
hulled in howe-dark cloaks.

Wodan, we call you, and wise Frija, bride,
Idises' leader, awe-god.
Faring from Ase-Garth forth on pale steeds,
at head of the holy hosts,

leading the wights over lands.

IV. *A chosen idis goes about with the basket of apples, giving one pierced and one unpierced fruit to each of the folk. The Godwo/man speaks,*

Idises and alfs, elder ones all,
with harvest we hail you.

Apples we offer, awe-full kin-ghosts,
to bear the worlds between,
born once more in your bairns.

Each of the folk eats the unpierced apple slowly, thinking on their fore-gone kin and the great ghosts they wish to remember. They will hold the other apple until the end of the rite.

V. *The idis fills the horn with ale and the Godwo/man raises it, signing it with the Hammer. S/he speaks,*

Fro Ing and Frowe, Frija and Wodan,
I hallow to you this horn.

Alf-leaders blessed idises high,
come to feast with your kin.
We drink your minne-draught,
we share the symbol with you.

The idis bears the horn about and all drink in turn. When the horn has finished the round, she pours what ale is left into the bowl and fills it again. The Godwo/man speaks,

Alfs all mighty about us ringed,
I hallow to you this horn.

From howes rising, from holy steads all,
come to feast with your kin.
We drink your minne-draught,
we share the symbol with you.

The idis bears the horn about, u.s.w. The Godwo/man speaks,

Idises awesome about us ringed,
I hallow to you this horn.

With blessing-baskets bright with fruit,
come to feast with your kin.
We drink your minne-draught,
we share the symbol with you.

The idis bears the horn about, u.s.w.

VI. *The Godwo/man lifts the stallion-bread and makes the sign of the walknot over it, saying,*

Holy the horse that hares between worlds,
signed for the gods be steed.
sworn to be slain at stead of the blessing,
given to gods with grith,
bear biddings on your back,
wending to worlds unseen.

S/he puts her/his hand upon the stallion and speaks a blessing of thanks and/or a request to whichever wights seem fitting. Each of the folk does so in turn.

VII. *The Godwo/man says,*

I give thee to those gathered here!

S/he cuts the horse's "throat", letting its head fall into the blessing bowl, and pauses a moment so that all can feel the might flowing from it into the ale. The Godwo/man then bears the stallion about and each person tears off a piece to eat.

If the rite-leader is a Godwoman, she will sprinkle the harrow, airts, above and below, and all the folk with the ale in the bowl; if the rite-leader is a Godman, this should be done by the idis. When all the folk have been sprinkled, the bowl should be poured out over the harrow or onto the earth.

VIII. *The Godwo/man lifts up the Last Sheaf and cries,*

Hail to Wodan! Wild Hunter, Wod-Rider!

All the folk answer,

Wod! Wod! Wod!

Godwo/man:

Hail to Wodan! Wolf-god, wind-god!

All the folk answer,

Wod! Wod! Wod!

Godwo/man:

Hail to Wodan! Wanderer, Old One!

All the folk answer,

Wod! Wod! Wod!

The Godwo/man says,

Now ring the Wod-Sheaf with your blessings - thanks for the harvest come, hope for that which shall be! And hail you Wodan, those of you who dare to draw the gaze of his eye. Hail the Drighten of Death, the Wild Hunt's leader - the bringer of life to the fields, the rister of hidden runes, the brewer of awe-might's ale.

IX. The Godwo/man leans the Sheaf against the harrow and fills the horn with ale. All the folk set their garlands on the Sheaf; those who dare also sip from the horn and pour a few drops onto the Sheaf, speaking blessings and/or biddings to Wodan as they do this. When all have come forth, the folk link hands as the Godwo/man pours the remaining ale into the blessing-bowl.

The folk dance in a ring about the Sheaf, chanting thrice,

Wodan, give your horse now fodder. This year thistle and thorn - the next year better grain!

The Godwo/man stands in the middle of the ring, with the blessing bowl upraised and one hand on the Sheaf.

At the end of the third chanting, all shout,

Wod!

and leap as high in the air as they can, as the Godwo/man pours the ale over the Sheaf.

X. *The Godwo/man gives a stalk of grain from the Sheaf to everyone who wishes to take it, then leads the folk to the place where the Sheaf and the apples shall be hung. This is done in silence, each thinking on the god/esses, wights, and fore-gone kin who shall have their share of this feast.*

Section 6

True Lore:

Crafts and Lists of the Troth

Chapter LV

Some Crafts of the North

Our forebears were great crafters, whose works in wood, metal, and stone still stand as some of the finest artwork of the world. Not only do we have their example to follow, but, if we want to do the things they did in something like the way in which we did them, we often have to make our own materials for so doing. Good mead is not sold in every winestore, nor drinking horns in every mall; and traditional woodcarving or handwoven fabric, when they can be found, cost more than most of us can even think about affording. The crafts spoken of here - mead-making, horn-making, woodcarving, and spinning - are only a few among those practiced by our forebears; they also worked with metal, leather, embroidery, stone, horn, amber, and everything else that was available to them. They made their own clothes, their own ships, their own beer, and their own weapons. Some of these skills are easily mastered; some require years of training and a great deal of equipment. In whatever way it is practiced, crafting is a deeply rooted part of the Northern tradition, and doing it strengthens our souls and brings us closer to the thoughts of our ancestors.

Simple Mead, Or, How to make The Drink of the Gods with a Minimum of Pain (by Will von Dauster, from *Mountain Thunder* #3)

There is no question that mead, or honey wine, was a favourite drink of our Germanic forebears. For those of us who have tasted real mead, it remains a favourite drink today. Notice, I said real mead. Much of what is sold in the United States (or Great Britain, Germany, and Scandinavia! - KHG) as mead is mead only under the loosest of definitions. A great deal of it is cheap grape wine laced with honey and other sugars. It is, in my humble opinion, truly awful. Those few purveyors of true mead seem enamored of the idea that, since mead is made with honey, it must always be sweet. In some cases, drinking a glass of Mrs. Butterworth's pancake syrup would be preferable. Who could like this stuff? Our ancestors must have been really desperate for a drink.

Well, maybe not. Perhaps you've had the pleasure (usually) of drinking a friend's homemade mead. One taste of homemade and most of us need no further convincing. The best way to get real mead is to make it yourself. No problem. You ask your mead-making friend for advice, and you are treated to a two-hour lecture on the niceties of specific gravity, various yeast strains, discussions of acid, and enough other details to convince you that the only way to make mead is to get your Masters degree in molecular biology with a minor in chemistry.

What is wrong with this picture? While our ancestors were certainly not stupid, chances are very few Vikings had the aforementioned sheepskin hanging on the bulkheads of their ships. Yet they certainly made and enjoyed mead. Hum.

Your instincts would be right. Making really good mead is not as difficult as brain surgery, requires no magical incantations (although one wouldn't hurt), and will not bankrupt Donald Trump (whoops! too late). Mead making, in this author's experience, is actually easier, albeit slower, than making beer. Speaking of slower, there is an order of monks in Ireland which is said to make mead, then set it aside for eight years or so before drinking it. While this no doubt produces a fine product, the good news is that mead is usually quite tasty much sooner. The other good news is that, unlike beer, properly made and bottled mead only improves with age. At least as much age as you or I are likely to give it.

In this article we'll go over the basics of mead-making: The simple way. My only qualifications for writing this is that I have made quite a few batches of mead, all of which turned out, in my opinion and the opinion of my enthusiastic friends (including the current Warder of the Lore! - KHG), excellent.

Hardware

So let's get started scrounging. As with most hobbies, mead-making takes an initial investment. Uh oh, here comes the bad news. Right. Here is a one-time shopping list, in no particular order.

Find yourself a five-gallon *glass* water bottle, the kind water companies used to deliver water in. Where can you find such bottles in this age of plastic? Some water companies still use glass, so there is one source. Your local brewer's supply shop will carry them, usually for around \$10. Put the word out; you might be surprised how many people have one or two of these lying around. Get as many as you need, but get at least one. Two are better. These are called *carboys*, by the knowledgeable mead-maker, or by those who want to appear smarter than you.

While at the brewer's shop, purchase a couple of bubble-type water traps. These traps look like something straight out of Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory, forming an "s" pattern with a plastic tube, with maybe six bulges along the length of the tube. These are used to keep the mead isolated from the outside air, and contaminants, while it is aging. Do *not* buy the beer-style floating water traps - these can reverse flow and contaminate your mead.

Buy as many plastic corks with holes in them as you need, the size of the opening of your carboys. The holes will hold the base of the water traps you just bought.

Under the category of plumbing supplies, purchase a length of clear, flexible plastic hose, and two lengths of plastic tubing long enough to reach from the neck to the bottom of the carboy. Then, if your shop has it, buy one bottle filler valve and one stand-off end cap. These should not run more than a dollar or two in the US. You will find them invaluable when it comes time to bottle your mead (in eight years? Patience!). The bottle filler valve is the little orange plastic dohickey (a scientific term) with an even smaller plunger at the end. The mead flows into the bottles only when the end is pushed down onto the bottom of the bottle. The stand-off end cap keeps your plastic tube out of the dead yeast...but I get ahead of myself.

Another invaluable plumbing item is the faucet-mounted bottle-washer. This represents an investment of around six dollars. The gadget (another scientific term) screws on the end of your sink faucet, and sprays (hot) water up into any bottle or carboy at a high rate when one is pushed over it, making bottle-cleaning a relative snap.

Now it's time to pick up some cleaning supplies. Get a packet of sodium bisulfite - this is used for sterilization (the bottle's - relax). One packet lasts a very long time. There are other substances popular for sterilizing equipment, but the bisulfite has always worked well for me, and is relatively easy to rinse off (it comes either in a powder form or as "Campden tablets" - KHG). Get a bottle brush or two, for obvious reasons.

The last hardware item you should get before leaving the brewer's supply shop is a good brewing thermometer. This is important, because yeast critters are touchy about baths that are too hot.

Somewhere conjure up a five-gallon stainless-steel pot. Revere Ware makes a good one, and is readily available. Porcelain pots are also OK. Some people recommend a seven-and-a-half gallon pot, but this is too heavy when full for easy manipulation, and you've already bought five-gallon carboys anyway.

While at the brewer's shop, you will pick up a few other things, but this is your initial capital outlay as they say in the wonderful world of corporate America. Everything else falls under the heading of supplies or froofroo. The latter can include such things as a specific gravity (SG) tester (*Science!*). Nice to have, but you don't really need it (heresy - the mead police knock at my chamber door). The SG tester helps you determine how much alcohol is in your mead. Don't worry, it will be the right amount.

Makin's

From now on, all you have to get when you are ready to make mead are the main ingredients, and bottles. As for bottles, swing-tops (Grolsch beer comes in these) are best and most forgiving. You are going to need about forty when it comes time to bottle the mead, so get started.

As for the main ingredients, basic mead consists of water, honey, acidifier, and yeast. That's it. Let's go over each of these in order.

Water: Just turn on the tap, right? Wrong. Chlorine-contaminated water was never a part of the mix, and still shouldn't be. The best is to find a mountain spring and get your water there. A good well is next best. As a last resort, bottled spring (*never* distilled) water is OK. You need about four gallons of it, five gives you a bit of leeway.

Honey: Can't do it without honey. The little yeasty-beasties munch on the honey to do their magic. I recommend about twelve pounds of honey per batch, which usually works out to about one gallon. Raw unfiltered honey is best in my experience. Your local health or organic food market should have bulk honey. Here that runs about \$1 per pound. If you live near the country, honey is also commonly sold along the roadside. The kind of honey does make a difference. Clover honey is light, thin, and makes a light and fresh mead. Wild flower honey is heavier and a bit sweeter. If you are fortunate enough to be near a honey supplier, ask there and ye shall receive knowledge.

Yeast: Here is where I am supposed to give you a bunch of Latin names. My ancestors not only couldn't speak Latin, but spent much of their time trying to hold back the expansion of the Latin church and its minions. So, in plain English, there are three basic kinds of yeast used in mead-making. These are white wine yeast, red wine yeast, and

champagne yeast. Pick up two packets of which ever one you decide to used. Each kind produces a different end product, so pay attention.

White wine yeast is the least energetic. These guys like to party and have a good time. They generally do a pretty poor job of eating all that nice honey. The net result is that this kind of yeast produces a lower-alcohol, very sweet mead. This is usually quite tasty, but some people find it too sweet. I find it works well with spiced meads.

Red wine yeast is the all-around workhorse of the bunch. It works a bit harder than the white wine varieties, eating more of that yummy honey. This means there is less of it left over, but a bit more alcohol. Typical results with red wine yeast are moderate sweetness, tending to be a bit drier than with white wine yeasts. This yeast seems to work best with fruit-flavoured meads.

Champagne yeast is the heavy metal of yeast. These buggers really go to town, working overtime to consume every last bit of honey. The result is a very dry mead, with a good flavour but almost no sweetness. With a few tricks, you can easily make sparkling mead with champagne yeast (gee, who would have thought...). Personally, I like this yeast with the sweeter honeys, such as wild flower, and no extra flavourings. Be forewarned: this stuff can produce very high levels of alcohol in your mead, amounts in the 17% range are not unheard of. Careful!

Acidifier: Unflavoured mead made without an acidifier is flat-tasting, almost bland. Always use an acidifier in unflavoured mead. The simplest method is to pick up a quantity of acid-mix powder from your brewer's supply shop. Generally three-to-five rounded tablespoons are used for a batch, so use this as a guide. You can use lemon juice or other food acids, but I recommend against it to start. Get brave after you've made a batch or two.

Making the Mead

OK. You've scrounged all the supplies and hardware you need. Let's do it. Begin with rule number one, one of probably the only two rules this author will ever cite. This rule, by the way, is one of the things that differentiates our mead-making from that of our forebears:

Everything you use in the making of mead, that comes in contact with it, must be *clean*. Period.

There are no exceptions. The problem with filth is that it contains bacteria and foreign yeasts. These can contaminate the mead and ruin it. Before you panic, I have never lost a batch to contamination. Just *pay attention*. Clean up your work area, probably your kitchen, thoroughly before starting. You are now ready for rule number two:

Never use soap in any form to clean the containers which come into contact with the mead.

Why not? Soap almost always leaves a residue which gives yeasty-beasties heartburn. If they survive anyway, most soap adds very little to the taste of mead. To sterilize the containers, hose, tubes, etc., use a solution of about a tablespoon of the sodium bisulfite dissolved in water. Dip your hands in this solution, then shake them dry. Rinse everything with tap water when you are finished. If you *had* to use soap, such as an SOS pad, to clean something, rinse the soapy item thoroughly, then scour it with a clean nylon mesh pad dipped in the sulfite solution. Then rinse it with tap water.

By the way, many mead recipes call for sulfite to be added to the mead at various stages. I have never found this necessary. Though generally harmless in small doses, many people are allergic to sulfites. Don't add it to your mead. Best to just be clean and careful, and you should have no problem using just the traditional ingredients.

OK, you've cleaned everything. Pour four gallons of water into the five-gallon pot. Bring this to a boil (gas burners work well). While it is coming to a boil, soak the jug of honey in warm tap water. This makes it easier to pour when the time comes.

That time comes when the water boils. Pour the honey in and stir with a clean spoon (*not* wood!). Add in about three rounded tablespoons of your acid mix. Gently drop the clean thermometer in, too. It will normally read around 180 degrees F or so after the honey has been added. I like to bring the temperature up to around 190 degrees F before removing the pot from the stove.

This is also not trivial. It weighs around 40-45 pounds, and is full of steaming, hot, sticky liquid. If you aren't built like Arnie, find someone who is or be very careful. Place the pot in the sink and fill cold water around it to aid cooling. No, do not add ice cubes to the mead!

When the temperature gets to around 100 degrees F, it is time to hydrate your yeast. Follow the instructions on the packet. If there aren't any, take about 2 cups of lukewarm (boiled) water and sprinkle the yeast on top of the water. Use a clean fork to gently stir the yeast into the water, then let this sit for about 15 minutes. Pour it into the bottom of your nice clean carboy.

When the mead has cooled to around 80-90 degrees F or so, siphon it from the pot into the carboy. Once the carboy is filled, place your water trap into the hole in the cork, fill the trap halfway with water, then cork the carboy and place it in a place where the temperature stays between 60-80 degrees F.

Within two days the mead turns cloudy. This is good. Pretty soon you will notice the water trap "burping" every

few seconds. This is exactly what we want. It means the yeast is active, "alive", and doing its thing. One half of that thing is producing alcohol, the other half is producing carbon dioxide, which is what we see burping through the trap. Now put the carboy full of mead where your friends, or your pet, or you, will not bump into it and knock the water trap off.

This burping continues for months. How long depends on the mix, the yeast, the temperature, etc. Count on between two and six months. This process is called fermentation. After a while, the percentage of alcohol in the mead gets too high and the sugar too low for the particular yeast to survive, and the bubbles quit. Don't touch it! Let the cloudiness settle out of your mead slowly. Do not worry about the "scud" that builds up at the bottom of the carboy, you'll leave it behind when you bottle.

Party Time

Some time after the mead has quit burping, the sediment will begin to settle out of the liquid. Ideally, you would wait a year or two for the mead to become crystal clear, but you won't (how do I know? Get real...). Once it has significantly cleared out (usually a couple of months after the burping stops), it is time to bottle the mead. Place the carboy carefully on a counter or other higher place, preferably a day or two before bottling.

Hopefully you've been diligent and emptied forty swing-top bottles. Hopefully you have also not drank from the bottle itself, but have used a glass, horn, or stein. Finally, if you were really diligent, you soaked the labels off, then rinsed the bottles thoroughly and placed the top loosely back on. If you have done all these things, bottling is easy. Otherwise, get to work. Once the labels have been removed, use your handy faucet-mounted bottle washer to spray the inside of the bottles with hot water. Place the bottles in a sink full of warm water and one tablespoon of sodium bisulfite. After a bottle has soaked for a few minutes, rinse it again, drain the water out, set the top loosely on it, and put it aside.

Some people always use new rubber washers on the tops. These can be had at the local brewer's supply shop, and is probably a good idea the first time you use a set of bottles. It is not necessary if the rubber of the old washer is in decent shape, and thoroughly cleaned.

Carefully remove the water tap so as not to spill water into the mead. Assemble your siphon with one of the plastic tubes in each end of the hose. Sterilize it by running first bisulphite solution, then tap water through it. Place the stand-off end cap on one end. Insert this end into the mead and draw enough mead to fill the siphon, watching out for backwash. Let the siphon flow into a cup for a second, then pinch it off and attach the bottle-filler valve to that end and relax. You don't have to taste your mead now.

Yeah, right.

When you're finished drinking the cupful, place an open bottle on the floor. Insert the tube and push the valve against the bottle's bottom and watch carefully as it fills. Be sure to hold the tube steady, so as to not knock the bottle over if the valve slips against the bottom. When the mead reaches the base of the neck, stop, seal it, and begin again with the next bottle. A friend is helpful in this process. I have never had trouble finding friends when it comes time to bottle mead. Humm.

When you get to the bottom of the carboy, it is best not to bottle this mead, as it might have a bit of turbulence. I leave it to your imagination as to what to do with it. Rinse the carboy thoroughly when you are finished, clean it if you aren't a tad tipsy, else wait until sober for safety's sake.

Labeling your bottled mead is a good idea. It isn't hard to get some self-sticking peel-off labels, or you may wish to print your own, or have someone with a printer and computer make some for you. Be sure to include the date.

While the mead tastes good right out of the carboy, you will be surprised how quickly it improves with age. Even six months add fullness, six years is better. Best to always have a batch bubbling, this makes it easier to leave the aging mead alone...

Remember, making mead or any alcoholic beverage *for sale* in the United States without a license, and without paying high taxes on the product, is very much illegal. Share your mead, and with a little luck, your friends will share theirs with you.

Chill sweet meads before serving. Personally, I think all mead tastes better cold, but to each his or her own. Mead is particularly appropriate to toast our gods at blots and sunbels, and never unwelcome at new or full moons. Any feast is improved with the addition of some good homemade mead. As my family likes to say, *Prost!*

Non-Drinker's Mead

For feasts, it is important that habitual non-drinkers, designated drivers, children, and other folk who for whatever reason should not or do not want to drink alcohol that evening have something available which seems festive and also fits in with the ways of our forebears.

Near-beers and low-alcohol lagers such as Clausthaler work for ale, and are in fact historical, being quite close to the "small beer" drunk on an everyday basis in the elder days. Ritually, these, as grain-drinks, can be used where-ever ale would usually be called for.

Non-alcoholic cider can be used in place of the more traditional alcoholic sort (which is often difficult to come by

in the States in any case). For a good festive winter drink, apple juice can be carefully heated (but do not boil!) in a saucepan with cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg (about 1/2 tsp. cinnamon, 1/4 tsp cloves, and 1/4 tsp. nutmeg per 4 cups of apple juice). Serve with a cinnamon stick in the cup. *Never, ever* pour any hot drink into a horn which is coated with wax inside, as the wax may melt.

For mead, honey and water alone are not especially pleasant-tasting, and you will almost certainly want something more. A nice "near-mead" can be made by mixing water and apple juice (by choice, the organic/unfiltered sort) in equal proportions and adding honey at the general rate of 1-2 tablespoons (depending on how sweet you want it; children tend to like it sweeter, adults drier) per 2 cups of mixture. This, blending both honey and apples, is quite suitable for ritual use and can be used whenever mead or cider is called for.

Milk is very fitting for Northern religion, especially in rites worshipping the goddesses, though we would not recommend offering it to Wodan.

Making the Drinking Horn

by Kveldúlf Hagan Gundarsson, from *Mountain Thunder* 8, Spring Equinox 1993

"Nu hæves Hornet, Hærfadr Odins horn...Hellige Hovild, Aketors Hammertegn, hellige Hovild viet det har."

(*Now lift high the horn, Host-Father Óðinn's horn...Holy hof-fires, Ake-Thórr's Hammer-Sign, holy hof-fires hallowed it here*)

- Bjørnsterne Bjørnson/Edvard Grieg. From the operatic fragment *Olav Trygvason*.

The drinking horn is the treasure which distinguishes Germanic heathens from everyone else: the lifting of the holy horn is the heart of our rites, the symbol which we share with the god/esses of our folk. It is with a draught from the horn that the wayfarer is welcomed into the hall; a like draught, borne by the walkurjas, greets and heals the heroes who come blood-drenched to Wodan's shield-roofed hall. The passing of the horn when our holy kin are toasted and oaths are sworn binds the folk into a single ring of friendship and frith, and the drink that flows from its silvered rim brings the High One's wot to our minds.

Our forebears chose the horn of the aurochs above all others for their drinking: the fierce wild bull of Europe's ur-woods was the measure of the strength and bravery of those who could claim its horns, and the luck of the drinking horn must have come in some part from the might of the beast that first bore it. Not only natural horns were thought holy, however: two of Denmark's greatest treasures (stolen and melted for the gold in the last century, sadly) were the Gallehus drinking horns - several pounds of solid gold, decorated with religious symbols and images of people and beasts which may have represented scenes from cultic drama. One of these was also adorned with a runic line of alliterative verse: "I, Hlewagast Holte's son the horn fashioned." Glass drinking horns were also made along the Rhine for the Germanic market; despite their fragility, some of these found their way up north and were buried with great chieftains such as the 3rd century (C.E.) warrior of Östervarv, Östergötland whose beautifully adorned glass horn is kept in Sweden's National Museum today.

Although the drinking horn is holy to all the god/esses, it is sometimes especially associated with *Wodan*, the giver of the mead of poetry who "lives from wine alone" (Grimmismál 19) and whose name can mean either "the furious one", "the inspired one", or "the drunken one". The three interlocked drinking-horns which, surrounded by the ring of the Elder Futhark, are used as the symbol of the Rune-Gild today, appear on the Lillbjärs stone (Gotland, ca. 8th-9th century C.E.) next to the walknot and the image of a walkurja bearing drink to a slain hero. The same triple-horn symbol also appears next to the swastika on the Danish Snøildelev stone which memorializes Gunvald, son of Roald, *thulr* on the Sal-mounds. The title *thulr* has received much discussion; but it is generally accepted that it has some relationship to inspired speech and to the cult of Wodan.

Even after the North had been christianized, the need of the Scandinavian folk for their ritual horns was still strong, as shown in *Orkneyinga saga* LXVI: the men had been drinking from cups all evening, but "when they had been drinking for a time, then they went to Nones (evening Mass). But when the men came in, then *minne* (the memorial toasts, given to gods/heroes/ancestors originally but usually to saints after the conversion) was spoken and drunken from horns".

The horn also appears as a magical tool in *Guðrúnarqviða önnor* (Second Lay of Guðrún), in which the heroine says of the enchanted draught her mother Grímhildr gives her: "Every kind of stave was on the horn, / risted and reddened - I could not make them out". Not only is the drink itself brewed of magical/holy things, but the runes graven on it work their might through the draught.

Runic formulae on a horn may either be geared towards a specific end, or generally chosen to enhance whatever is done to the draught in the horn. Some examples are given here:

A couple's horn:

LOVE BE GIVEN LEEK-FAIR SPRINGING / EVER TRUE, ASH AND ELM

For inspiration:

AAA AAA (two ansuz-trefots) SKALD-WOD SEETHES AND SINGS IN HORN / ALLFATHER'S ALU AWE-FULL

For health and happiness:

BORNE WITH BEER BRIGHT LAUKAZ SHINES / FRITH-JOY, FRIEND-JOY, FREE-JOY

For drinking the memory-draughts, or in general to link the drinker with the god/esses and his/her forebears:

KINFOLK CALLED, KIND, FROM OLD HALLS / MINNE KIN MINDS WITH MEAD

For might:

STARK THONAR STANDS STRENGTH BE WITH DRINK / EARTH'S UR-MIGHT, ALU'S DRAUGHT

For symbol:

(bind-rune of Laguz, Perthro, Uruz repeated 3 times): WYRD'S STAVE-WRIT WORDS WELL, TREE, AND HORN / OATHS WREAK ALL HOLY AWE

For rites in general:

HAIL THE HOLY FOLK HIGH ASE AND WAN / BLESSING-DRINK BE SHARED, BLITHE

The futhark can also be graven around a horn, or lines from Eddic poetry (*Sigrdrífumál* is particularly rich in good verses for a horn). A horn used for rites may have the names of the god/esses graven about it instead of or in addition to any other inscriptions.

Choosing your Horn

Nearly all drinking horns come from cattle, usually Longhorns. Horns come in two states, raw (with a thick barklike encrustation) and sanded (with the encrustation peeled off). Both can be bought from Tandy Leather, price range approx. \$10-20 (guesstimate based on last prices available to me). The only advantage to buying a raw horn is that, if you scrape it down yourself, you can probably keep more of the natural thickness. Otherwise cleaning the outside is a waste of time.

Longhorn sizes range from small enough for a cup of wine to large enough to hold two sixpacks or more. Tandy's small horns are roughly 1-beer horns, their large horns are usually 2 1/2 - 3-beer horns. A larger horn can always be cut down if desired. For practical reasons, the smaller horns are best for individual drinking, especially if you prefer wine or mead. For rituals where a full horn is passed around a large circle, however, a big horn is preferred; likewise, if you follow the Norse custom of sharing a horn between pairs of friends at feasting, a larger horn is better - as shown in the passage from *Orkneyinga saga* ch. 66, in which the problem of sharing a horn that is too small serves as an omen to the spae-wise Sveinn Breast-Rope that he and his namesake Sveinn Ásleifarson are doomed to a deadly struggle that night.

To satisfy curiosity - the horn of the aurochs came in sundry sizes: the length ranged from 433-845 millimetres along the outer curvature for bulls (no figure given for cows), the basal (rim) circumference range was 257-395 mm. for bulls, 180-264 mm. for cows. This can be compared with a medium-small longhorn: my own is ca. 510 mm along the outer curvature, rim circumference ca. 244 mm, and contains about a beer and a half. The spectacularly adorned Sutton Hoo drinking horns are thought to have come from a bull aurochs. Like the Taplow horns, they must have been imported from the Continent, as the aurochs was extinct in England by the late Migration Age.

Horns come in a number of colours, the most common being brown-and-white, black-and-white, and brownish-gray. If you plan to decorate your horn, especially with scrimshaw, it is important to ensure that the part you plan to decorate is a white or cream shade, as designs normally do not show up as well on darker horns unless they are painted in with a very bright or metallic colour.

Preparing your Horn

Horns normally do not come clean on the inside, and require not only sterilizing, but coating with a protective surface or curing. The latter is because horns both smell and taste rather strange until they have been treated.

Begin by rinsing the horn and scraping out as much muck, dead bugs, and so forth as you can. Then fill the horn to the brim with boiling water and let sit until it has cooled somewhat. Scrub the inside again, using a brass scouring pad for

the upper parts, a bottle brush or similar implement (such as the "snake" brush for cleaning brass instruments) for the parts beyond your reach. Repeat this process about three times. If your pot is large enough, or your horn small enough, you can simply boil the horn for several hours to ensure that it is thoroughly clean and sterile. A couple of Campden tablets (available at any shop that sells home-brewing supplies) added to the water will ensure total sterilization.

The easiest way to treat the horn after sterilization is to coat the inside with either paraffin or beeswax. Simply melt the wax in a small pot, being careful to watch it at all times as wax is highly flammable. When melted, pour it into the horn and swish it about until the inside is thoroughly coated, then pour the excess back into the pot. DO NOT pour hot wax down your sink, as it will clog the drain. The drawbacks to this method of horn treatment are that you cannot put hot drinks in the horn, and if you leave it in a hot place (near a stove/radiator, in your car during the summer, and so forth), the wax will melt.

Never ever coat the inside of your horn with plastic-based products or anything which might contain harmful chemicals!

Remember that alcohol can be a solvent, and some plastics and enamels can also be softened or dissolved by hot drinks. The only substances which I can recommend for coating the inside of the horn are paraffin and beeswax.

Curing the horn is a lengthier process. The late Anne Harrington recommended beginning with a diluted solution of Lysol or similar heavy-duty cleanser. If you do this, you must be very careful that every last trace of cleanser residue is out of the horn before continuing, as these chemicals are extremely toxic. Gefjon (craftswoman of "Gefjon's Arðr" - see "Organizations and Resources") suggests the use of chlorine bleach instead (hydrogen peroxide will weaken the keratin matrix, as will leaving the horn in the chlorine bleach mixture more than an hour) - 3 parts bleach to 10 parts water, boil the horn for ten minutes and allow to dry for several days out of direct sunlight. A mixture of 3 tablespoons dishwashing detergent per hornfull of boiling water may also be used. In all cases, leave the horn to soak overnight. The next day, rinse it very thoroughly, wash with simple dishwashing soap, and rinse again. When the horn is thoroughly clean and has been purged of whatever you put in it, fill it with a high-alcohol, strongly flavoured ale or stout and let it sit for several days before pouring the beer out. Hopefully this will have gotten rid of the natural aroma and flavour of the horn. If it still smells a little raunchy, fill it with a 50-50 mixture of ale and vodka and let sit for several more days.

III. Finishing

A sanded horn will still be rather rough. For simple finishing, rub the horn down with a fine grade of steel wool. When it is smooth, polish with a cloth impregnated with jeweler's rouge (available at rock-hound/jewelry supply shops and at many jewelry stores) or rub lightly with beeswax and polish with a clean cloth.

There are several methods of decorating a horn. If the horn is relatively thick, very fine results can be achieved with the use of a dremmel tool; many of Gefjon's horns show detailed carving plus the artistic use of the natural colour-layers of the horn to create the design. Dremmel tools should be used with extreme caution or not at all on thinner horns (such as the ones normally supplied by Tandy), as there is always the risk of the bit going through the horn. However, the tips of all horns are solid (see Fig. A, inside/outside of horn; use a piece of wire to determine the inner depth of yours) and may be carved without risk. Gefjon recommends the use of the small stone bits for this carving.

Carving with a chisel or X-Acto knife is a little more delicate on a horn. Straight strokes, such as the upright staves of runes, tend to peel away in long strips. To prevent this, make small cross-cuts at the top and bottom of your staves before graving the upright line. If you are chisel-carving designs, carve all horizontal borders first.

Runes can be carved on a horn with a grooved or straight blade. With a grooved blade, a single cut is enough. With a straight blade, cut in at a slight angle, and then repeat the cut from the other side, cutting out a grooved furrow. Slanted strokes are more easily carved with a straight blade. Here you must be very careful, as the grain of the horn resists cross-carving and the blade will tend to slip from your hand and score a long cut across the horn or fly into the air. It is best to make a little cross-cut where you want the line to end.

The easiest method of decorating a horn is scrimshaw. Draw your design lightly in pencil where you want it. Scribe it into the horn with the point of an X-Acto blade (single straight cuts). Cover in India ink, let dry, and rub the ink off with steel wool. The colour will stay within the lines you have cut. Be very careful when you cut, as the only way to erase an unwanted line is to sand or gouge it out. The advantage of scrimshaw is that it is relatively easy to make very detailed designs. However, they will only show up on a white or cream background. Gefjon mentions that the porous character of the horn will sometimes absorb ink in the wrong places. She suggests using polymer-acrylic paint mixed with water to the consistency of syrup. This will also allow you to use colours that will show up better on a dark background.

Whenever using sharp implements on a horn, the horn should be clamped in a vise and you should cut away from your body. Both the curve of the horn and the stubbornness of the grain make it very difficult and rather dangerous to hold the horn and carve at the same time. Assume that your tool is going to skid free a few times during carving and decide what direction you want it to skid in.

Finally, a woodburning tool can be used to inscribe designs on a horn, with relatively good results. Depending on

how deep and how much you burn, different degrees of horrible odour can be produced. I have heard descriptions ranging from "It hardly smelled at all" to "Do it outside - and make sure the wind is blowing AWAY from your house!"

Fittings

Cæsar's *De Bello Gallicæ* describes how the Germanic tribe-folk adorned their aurochs horns with silver and precious stones at the rims and the tips. Your local jeweler or silversmith can easily put a simple silver band around the lip of the horn (approx. cost \$20-30, depending on the size of the horn and the thickness of the band), or you can do it yourself by soldering a strip of 24 gauge fine silver (.99 pure, softer and easier to work with than sterling, and does not form fire-scale when soldered, thus requiring much less polishing) into a ring. Sand the rim of the horn and the inside of the silver ring, coat with epoxy, and force the ring onto the rim of the horn from the bottom up. If in doubt about the length, make the ring a millimetre or so too small; you can always grind the rim of the horn down to meet it.

The tips of horns were often decorated with metal animal heads. Eagle-headed horns appear in the Sutton Hoo, Taplow, and Loveden Hill burials, as well as one one example from early Migration Age Sweden; cow-headed horns have also been found in heathen Scandinavian burials. A good jeweler can make such fittings - but not cheaply!

For ease of carrying, a leather horn-loop can be made for your belt, using a medium-thick tooling leather. This consists of a wide strip of leather, perhaps tapered slightly to follow the shape of the horn, with a belt-loop sewn onto the back before the strip's ends are sewn together. Measure your horn about halfway up and cut out the basic shape; slide the loop onto your belt and stick the horn in it. This same shape can also be riveted onto a chest strap. Another way to deal with a horn is via a side-strap, permanent or temporary. For a permanent attachment, take a long strip of leather; measure your horn about 1/3 of the way from either end; rivet/sew loops at either end of the strap, and epoxy them to the horn. Otherwise, rivet/sew the strap closed, make the loops separately, rivet/sew them to the strap, sling it over your shoulder, and slide the horn in.

V. Buying a Finished Horn

If all of the above sounds far too complicated/time consuming, beautifully carved horns of all description, with or without silver fittings, can be ordered from Gefjon at Gefjon's Arðr (see "Organizations and Resources"). Renaissance Faires also frequently have drinking horns for sale.

For glass horns, the loveliest currently available are the Harald horns (one sized for beer, one for akavit) produced by the Finnish glassmakers Iitala (pronounced ee-tah-lah). These horns, like most of Iitala's products, are made from a lovely rippling clear glass which gives the effect of melting ice. They also have the advantage of brass "feet" attached so that the horn can be set on the table when not in use. Most Scandinavian stores with a good range of glass/crystal carry Iitala's products; I am not sure which American outlets have them. It may be necessary to write to Iitala and ask.

"Hrist and Mist the horn shall bear me
Skeggjöld and Skögul,
Hildir and Thrúdhir, Hlökk and Herfjötur,
Göll and Geirölul;
Randgríðr and Raðgríðr and Reginleif,
they bear the einherjar ale."
- *Grimnismál* 36

Wood-Carving and Northern Art by KveldúlfR Hagan Gundarsson

Wood-carving was the most highly developed artistic skill of the Northern folk. Unfortunately, because wood rots so easily, only a few of the fine pieces of the old days have lived to this time; but they are enough to show us what our forebears could do. Everything that was done in metal or stone was done better in wood; the Migration/Vendel Age jeweler's technique of chip-carving metal is actually thought to be derived from wood-carving skills. In the chapter "Hof-Building", the special soul-might of wood in the Northern tradition was spoken of; wood-carving is a craft with deep roots in the Northern spirit. It was also, together with spinning, the most commonly done craft of our forebears: just about everyone who carried a knife (that is, everyone!) probably spent more than a few winter evenings carving out the things they needed for household work or chipping away to ornament those same things. The Germanic peoples do not seem to have made a lot of "art for art's sake": our art was mostly adornment of those things we needed anyway - house-walls and doors, chairs, spoons, and so forth. It was meant to make that which was used pleasing and fine in every way, and often to bring holiness, magic, and beauty to the most basic items of existence.

The most famous find of wood-carvings is, of course, the Oseberg ship-burial. As well as the highly adorned ship

itself, the burial included even more highly ornamented sledges and wains, as well as the well-known animal-head posts which appear on the covers of so many books on the Viking Age. Some, if not all, of these items were probably meant for religious use, and give us a good idea of how the Northern folk used wood-carving for ritual purposes. The general impression is of activity - everything is in motion, writhing with gripping beasts and wyrms; in a dimly lit hof or hall with the firelight flickering over it, such items would have seemed to be continuously moving and swirling with might.

The Vikings had all the types of chisel known today except for the V-gouge. Aside from this one tool, any instruction on traditional methods of carving is likely to be perfectly authentic - if you think perfect authenticity needful for your artwork. However, we must not ever forget that our forebears never sought to limit themselves to the tools of their forebears, but instead, used whatever they could find to make their own work better. The Vikings were not a low-tech, but a high-tech people for their age! Some purists have spoken scornfully of the "soulless dremmel tool"; I myself have successfully used a "soulless dremmel tool" for holy and magical metalwork, rune-rising, and horn-carving, among other uses, and am quite sure that my ancestors would have been delighted to get their hands on such a useful item. On the other hand, it is also true that carving or doing other hand-crafts in a traditional manner is a very fine meditation which helps one to get into the mind-set of our ancestors in a way which mere sitting and contemplating cannot achieve.

The range of techniques used by the Germanic peoples in their religious carvings went all the way from the crudest hackings to make a barely human-shaped branch slightly more human to the most ornate masterpieces of relief and full-round carving, as seen in the Oseberg burial. As well as being carved in relief (which takes a fair bit of training, practice, and time to do well), pictures were also drawn as graphic-art designs and the lines simply graven into the wood - again, something anyone with a chisel or knife can do. Simple symbols were used as well as graphic artwork; both a flat plank and a bowl from the Oseberg burial have plain line-drawings of walknots graven into them, for instance.

The general style of much Scandinavian art was based on the "gripping beast" idea - an animal or human with elongated, intertwined limbs grabbing onto parts of itself or another gripping beast. At the end of the Viking Age and in the hundred years following, these designs became more elaborate, with thin tendrils twisting all over the place, giving a generally attenuated and (in my opinion) somewhat weaker impression than the more solid gripping beasts of the Oseberg burial.

Although Scandinavian art shared influences with Celtic knotwork, and knotwork designs also look fitting in a Germanic setting, the art of the North was not as neatly planned as the mathematically precise art of the Celts. Its character is more organic - not chaotic, for there is pattern to it, but it cannot be plotted out on a grid as Celtic knotwork can.

As well as the various intertwining designs, the Viking Age artists also used plain, though stylized figures for representation of naturalistic scenes. These are mostly seen on the Gotlandic picture-stones, which depicted specific images (battles, sacrifice, the hero coming to Valhöll, and so forth). Such images also appear in metalwork, most specifically as the little pendants, brooches, or figurines which may have had some religious import (the walkurja or idis with the drinking horn, the horn-helmed dancer, and the horseman, among other common figures), and in textile art (the Oseberg tapestry). These are particularly well-suited for doing as simple line-carvings.

The basic guidelines I offer here are meant for the simplest sorts of carving: if you want to take up woodcarving on a serious basis, I strongly suggest either finding a teacher or looking for well-illustrated books on the subject. Written descriptions alone are probably the least helpful means of learning such a craft. However...

Choosing your wood is the first thing. This will clearly depend on what you are doing, but there are certain things to avoid. Unless you are using a "soulless dremmel tool", avoid oak like the plague. It is very hard and more than a little prone to break if you try to do small detail work. Alder is another bad wood for carving. Ash is quite good, rather on the hard side, but not too much so, and able to take fine detail without any difficulty. The same is true for cherry and other fruitwoods. The very best wood for carving is linden (basswood), which is soft, but strong enough not to splinter and flake too badly. In general, however, experience is the best teacher.

When carving, especially if you are learning from a book or by trial and error rather than from an experienced teacher, remember the first law of carving:

Always Cut Away From Your Body!

As mentioned in the discussion of carving drinking horns, knives *will* slip. Chisels *will* slip. The most you can do is make sure that when they slip, your flesh is not in the path. I studied traditional Bavarian woodcarving with a Meister Stein-und Holzbildhauer for several years, and I still nick myself once in a while - that is, whenever I forget to stop and think about where the chisel will go when it does get away. Someone who thinks s/he can do woodcarving without slicing him/herself once in a while is either an optimist, or a lot more cautious than I am. Someone who does not plan to avoid or minimize all possible damage that can be done by an accident with a knife or chisel is a fool.

You are best off if you can grip your piece tightly in a vise so that you will have both hands free (be careful to put little pieces of scrap wood between the jaws of the vise and your carving to keep the carving from getting dinged or splintered). You will either have to be able to move from side to side as the direction of your cutting changes with the grain of the wood, or resign yourself to unclamping and reclamping the piece a lot.

When doing relief carving, always work from lowest to highest. Draw your rough design onto the flat wood, then chop away the background area. You will almost certainly need to use a chisel and mallet for this. Save the highest bits (such as human noses) for the very last. Make sure that you never undercut (cutting beneath an edge of wood so that it juts up at an inverse angle from the background), as this will make the protruding edge likely to break off.

Always cut with the grain or slantwise across it, never straight across it. The reason we *know* that runes were first designed for wood rather than stone or metal (in spite of the fact that we do not actually *find* runes on wood until several centuries after the first metal examples) is that all their strokes are either upright or slanted: there are no horizontal strokes or rounded lines because these are much more difficult to do in wood.

Keep your tools *sharp*. A dull edge will make the wood more likely to splinter than to let itself be cut cleanly. Also, if the tool is not sharp, you will have to push harder, and this makes it much more likely that you will lose control and it will slip and gash something you didn't really want gashed.

For simple line-carving, slant the blade slightly and make all your cuts going one direction, then turn the piece around, slant the blade the other way, and cut all of them into V-grooves. This can be done neatly and effectively. If using curves in the design, be very careful, as there will be points along the curve where the wood strongly resists being carved in this manner. This is how woodcarvers get sliced.

With any sort of carving, the ideal is to get clean, sharp cuts which slice away all the little flakes and need no sanding afterwards. But you will need to sand anyway. A medium-grain sandpaper will deal with a lot of flaws in your basic technique, and, when folded into a sharp corner, can sometimes be more useful for defining very small details (such as eyes and mouths) than is the actual tool. After the medium-grain, go down to a very fine-grit, finishing with one that is about 600 for the last smoothing. On a harder wood, such a fine sandpaper will very nearly polish it.

Once you have finished your sanding, you will want to do something else to care for the wood of the piece. Any hobby store or wood-shop will sell various sorts of stains and finishes, ranging from a clear wax which darkens the natural colour just slightly and protects the wood to serious, deep brown stains and various sorts of gildings or silverings. In the old days, linseed oil and beeswax were probably among the favourite finishes. If you plan to have it outdoors, you will want to get a protective finish which is specifically designed for the purpose of waterproofing and so forth. Remember, many of these finishes are fairly toxic, and should not be used in a room without good ventilation - read the warnings on the labels and take them seriously!

Carvings were often painted; the use of painting on wood by itself may also have been fairly common, and this can *really* be done by anyone. To paint wood, you first need a base undercoat; then apply your acrylics. Red, black, white, blue, and yellow were the most popular colours of the Viking Age.

The artistic styles of the North varied considerably over time, and simple descriptions cannot really convey their appearance and feeling. The best I can do is to recommend textbooks for the would-be carver or artist to seek out. Full bibliography on all of these is in this work's "Book-Hoard".

For Migration Age art, the best single source is Karl Hauck's *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit* (7 vols., three of which are simply photographs and line-drawings of bracteate art). Bookstores do not carry this set, and unfortunately, it is prohibitively expensive: those who do not have access to a good university library will probably have to resort to asking for it through inter-library loan. The general character of the bracteate art was spoken of in the chapter on the Migration and Vendel Ages.

The basic text for Viking Art is, big surprise, *Viking Age Art*, by D.M. Wilson and Ole Klindt-Jensen. Shirley Blubok's *The Art of the Vikings* is also recommended. Another book which shows rich details of Viking artwork is Lennart Karlsson's *Nordisk Form om djurornamentik* (Nordic Form of animal-ornamentation), which is in Swedish, but is mainly an art book full of excellent pictures ranging from ca. 400 C.E. to the end of the Viking Age, and also has an English summary. This book can be ordered from Statens Historiska Museum, Box 5405, S-114 84 Stockholm, Sweden (paperback, 115 Swedish kroner).

There are a number of introductory books on the Vikings in general for a popular market which have excellent pictures and short discussions of the different Viking Age styles. Among these are James Graham-Campbell's *The Viking World* and Bertil Almgren's *The Viking* (otherwise known as the "Ugly Viking" book due to the fact that the people in it all look like prunes, and famed for a really unsurpassable 2-page illustration of Ugly Vikings with axes chasing terrified Ugly Monks).

For representational art of the picture-stone style, the best collection of pictures is Sune Lindqvist's *Gotlands Bildsteine*. This is not in print, but the smaller, more popularly-oriented *Stones, Ships, and Symbols* (Erik Nýlen and Jan-Peder Lamm) is.

Although recreations of our forebears' art-styles are an excellent way to get in touch with their thoughts and souls, it is also important for us to show forth our understanding of the might of the god/esses in the best way we can, and to pay attention to other folk of this age who have worked with the images of the North in a modern manner. The beautiful oil-paintings from the Ring Cycle in the *Nibelungensaal* on Drachenfels can be just as spiritually moving as any of the elder pieces of artwork, for instance. David M. Wilson's *The Northern World* shows modern works based on Teutonic Heathen cultural themes. A list of artists who have done work of this type includes August Malmstrom, Constantin Hansen,

Christoffer Ecksberg, Peter Arbo, Erik Werenskiold, Edward Burne-Jones, Daniel Maclise, Thomas Bruun, Johannes Flintoe, Henri Fuseli, Peter Cornelius, Axel Revold, N.A. Abilgaard, M.E. Winge, Arthur Rackham, and Nils Blommer (Chisholm, James. "Art in the Hearth", p. 24). We should also seek to bring forth our own Heathen art, drawing, as best we can, on both traditional and modern techniques to create the mightiest effects we can.

Spinning and Weaving

As spoken of under "Frija", these are the mightiest crafts of the Teutonic woman - though not just limited to women, even in the elder days; Viking men also spun on their long sea-voyages (Carol Patricia Keese, "The Ring of Web", p. 12). Spinning and weaving are the crafts of Wyrð, deeply important to the reborn Troth; indeed, Elder-in-training Carol Keese is currently heading a Troth guild, the Ring of Web, for those interested in seeking out both the practical and spiritual aspects of these arts (those interested should write to the Ring of Web c/o the Troth).

Spinning is the easiest way to get started, calling only for a drop spindle and some wool (available at many craft stores which specialize in yarn and knitting). A traditional soapstone spindle-whorl is easy to make: all you need is a small block of soapstone (perhaps 1.5" square by 1/2" thick) and a Swiss Army knife. The block must then be rounded off; it can be used as a flat disk, or shaped into a wide cone - many variations on the basic shape were used. The important thing is that it be well-balanced. The knife is used for the basic shaping; soapstone can then be ground into shape on a rough stone (or even a slab of concrete) and sanded smooth. A nail or a very thin blade of some sort can be used to pierce the hole in the middle. Again, this must be almost perfectly centered, or the spindle will wobble.

To mount the spindle-whorl, take a thin dowel (about a foot long) and taper one end so that the whorl can be forced 2-3 inches up it. Carve a small ring about a quarter-inch from the other end.

The easiest way for a beginner to start is to take a piece of thick yarn and tie it just above the spindle-whorl. Twist a loop in the yarn and bring it over the tapered end, pulling it tight just below the spindle-whorl. Now twist another loop and pull it tightly into the little ring at the other end of the spindle. The spindle should now be able to dangle freely. Fray the end of the yarn about an inch above the spindle. Sort out several pencil-thick pieces of wool about the length of your arm and lay them over your knee. Splice the end of one into the frayed yarn and begin to spin the spindle, pulling the wool slowly through your fingers. When you have reached the end of that piece, splice in another.

The spun thread must always be kept tight. When this becomes uncomfortable, untwist the original yarn-loops (being sure to still keep the spun thread tight at all times, or it will unravel) and wind the thread around the spindle above the whorl, leaving enough free so that you can loop it below the whorl and at the top of the spindle as you did with the original yarn. Continue until the spindle becomes unwieldy. When that happens, take a stick and wind your spindle-full of yarn onto it, always being sure to keep it tight. Start over.

Hand-spun yarn, especially a beginner's spinning, is not very good to knit with, but it can be woven with. Since there are so many different types of weaving, and most of them require rather more complex equipment than spinning, we will not go into them here.

Corn dollies

Easy to make, the corn dolly has probably been part of Northern religious practice since we started harvesting grain. Also called "tomtegubber" (manly) or "tomtegunna" (womanly).

Take a handful of dry stalks of grain and clip the heads off. Soak in water for an hour or two, until pliable. Fold in the middle and tie string around an inch and a half or so beneath the fold. The bulbous bit thus formed is the head. Separate out two small bunches for arms and tie them off at the shoulders. Tie another string tightly where you want the waist. If you are making a tomtegunna, you can simply trim the stalks below at the desired point and they will be her skirt. If making a tomtegubber, separate the remaining stalks into two bunches for his legs and tie them off. Then criss-cross two more small bundles over his shoulders and tie another string around his waist. Trim the loose stalks at about mid-thigh height to form the skirt of a tunic. Tie the arms along their length and trim them where you want them. You may want to have the corn dolly holding something (like a staff or a bundle of grain); in this case, leave extra length which you can wrap around the item and tie tightly back to the arm.

For hair and beard, heads of grain can be stuck into the corn dolly's head. A tomtegunna will want a little cap or such so that she does not look bald. Corn dollies can be adorned with cloaks and hats or other wear. In Sweden, I (Kveldúlfur Gundarsson) once saw a beautiful tomtegunna who had a red pointed hat and a red bodice sewn onto her, while stalks of grain had been stuck head-down all about the edge of her skirt.

Corn dollies are great fun for the whole Hearth or Garth, including the children, to make together at harvest-time. They can also be used as god-images for a small home harrow.

Chapter LVI

Things, Signs, and their Meanings

Alcohol

The preferred, though not a necessary, substance for ritual drinking, in whatever form. Traditional beverages were beer or ale, cider, mead, wine (common in Germany, rare in Scandinavia), and various mixtures of fruits, honey, herbs, and malt. Modern practice has added several sorts of strong liquor to the Teutonic drink-list as well.

For those who do not wish or are unable to use alcohol in their rites, for whatever reason, there are several alternatives. Non-alcoholic beers and wines are now available in most large stores, and these are perfectly acceptable, as is non-alcoholic cider or apple juice. Many of the goddesses, and all of the wights, can be blessed with and offered whole milk. The chapter on "Crafts" offers a recipe for a non-alcoholic mead-type beverage which is suitable for designated drivers, children, and other non-drinkers.

Ale

(strong beer (4-8%))

May originally have referred to a rather bitter malt beverage with herbs in it. The runic inscription ALU ("ale") was one of the most often-used; it seems to have generally meant "luck, power", which went together with having a plentiful supply of the stuff. In Troth rituals, many folk prefer ales to lighter beers because their strength, dark colour, and richness are probably more like those of the special "strong ales" that were brewed for holy feasts. Ale is used especially for the Wans and at the harvest-rites such as Loaf-Feast and Winternights, but it can be used for almost any Teutonic religious purpose whatsoever.

Amber

(petrified tree sap)

In the old days, amber was cast up on the Baltic coast by the sea; now most of it is mined. Holy since the Stone Age, amber is especially associated with the Frowe and Thonar. Also used as a sign of one's riches, both in the old days and now. A great holder of fiery might, and a very fine amulet against all ill.

The sorts of amber that can be found today are Baltic, Dominican (from South America), and Africa (not actually amber - resin in the process of forming amber). Because of its lightness of weight, amber fakes are also very common. A reputable dealer will be able to tell the origin of the amber.

Amber comes in a range of colours from deep cherry-red to palest yellow. The colour is a sign of its age: the oldest ambers are the darkest.

Apples

The word "epli" in Old Norse, literally our "apple", was used to mean any round fruit; the specialization of the word in German and English shows that the apple was seen as the greatest of fruits. The apple is the sign of life through death, fruitfulness springing forth from the grave. In *Völsunga saga*, when the Wodan-descended king Rerir is unable to get a child with his wife, he sits on a burial mound in search of rede, and Wodan sends a walkurja to him there with an apple that Rerir and his wife eat to become fruitful. Here, the apple is the embodiment of the Völsungs' kin-soul springing to life again. This is also borne out by the name of the apple tree that grows through Völsi's hall: Barnstokkr, the "bairn-stock".

Wild apples have been found in Scandinavian graves since the Bronze Age - three crab-apples were set in the coffin of the child in Guldhøj, perhaps "to give the little child a longer life in the next world than the brief one it had had here on earth" (Gløb, *The Mound People*, p. 92). There were a great many apples set in the Oseberg burial as well, at least one bucket and one chest were filled with them.

Today, apples (and fermented cider) are used especially at Winternights (as harvest signs), Yule (as a sign of the oneness of the living and their dead kin), and at Ostara, when our golden apples mirror the apples of Iðunn (see "Frija and other Goddesses").

Ash-tree

The World-Tree is most often thought to be an Ash (though words have been spoken for the yew). Ash was the wood out of which spear-shafts were made; it is thus tied closely to Wodan. The first human male, Askr ("Ash") was shaped from this tree.

Axe

Thought of as the most typical weapon of the Vikings, but sources do not really support this. Battle-axes were used, but swords and spears seem to have been more important. The Franks took their tribal name from a particular type of throwing-axe.

In the eldest days, the axe was a very holy sign (see "Stone Age"). It appears as a warding amulet from the Bronze Age to the Viking Age; it is often thought that the Hammer of Thonar may have developed from the elder thunder-axe.

Bee

The bee gives us honey, which is used both for healing (it is an excellent antiseptic and preservative, and was utilized for both purposes in the old days) and mead-brewing, and beeswax, which is used for candles and often for sealing the insides of horns. In the *Kalevala*, the bee brings Lemminkäinen's mother the drop of life-bearing honey she needs to bring her slain son to life again. The Anglo-Saxon charm to bring down a swarm of bees addresses them as "sig-wives". There are also two bees at the Well of Wyrd, according to Snorri. Though there is no clear tie between the bees and any goddesses (their might is obviously womanly), they are very holy wights and their gifts among the most blessed and luck-bringing elements of our rites. Among the Frisians, a child that had had milk and/or honey on its mouth could not be exposed; the Russians made offerings of honey to the gods and the dead. See Ransome's book, *The Sacred Bee*.

Beer

See "Ale".

Beech

The name comes from the same root as "book". The beech is a womanly tree, thought in modern times to be tied closely to the Norns and Frija.

Bells

Worn by priests of Fro Ing.

Birch

The birch is a womanly tree, closely tied to Frija, Eir, and Hella. It is a tree of cleansing and birth-blessing, but also of hiding. It is used most in sauna and in rites of springing fruitfulness.

Bread

The basic food, a midpoint between raw grain and ale. A source of life and might in all realms: our word "lord" stems from "hlaford" (loaf-giver); "lady" comes from "hlafdiga" (loaf-kneader). Since most of us are no longer able to bless a winter-slaughtering to the god/esses, bread is the best form for our holy gifts to take.

Caraway seeds

Caraway seeds were used in old days, not only to flavour bread, but to keep various sorts of huldfolk from stealing it, as they dislike caraway very much. Those who wish to share food with alfs, land-wights, or any other such beings should be careful to avoid bread or cakes with caraway in them, which includes most commercial rye-breads.

Cat

See "The Frowe". Associated with seiðr and fruitfulness; may also be a house-ghost in disguise.

Cattle

Cattle are very holy beasts; there are several references to cattle with gilded horns (as in *Drymskviða* and *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*), and others to magical cattle (as in *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*). They are generally associated with the Vanir, but are acceptable gifts for all the god/esses and wights.

Cauldron

The cauldron, or kettle, played a very important part in Norse religion. The name or name-element Ketill or Katla (kettle) was very common in the Viking Age and almost certainly first had a ritual meaning. In *Grimnismál*, Óðinn mentions, "when kettles are heaved off the fire". Grønbech argues strongly for the cauldrons seething the sacrificial feast as embodiments of the might of the three great Wells of Wyrd, Mímir, and Hvergelmir (II, 290-97).

Cider

Fermented apple juice. See "Apples". In the States, non-fermented apple juice is often sold under the name of "cider". If real cider cannot be gotten, this can either be fermented as if it were a sparkling wine or beer (most brewer's supply stores will have books or instructions for making such things - look in your Yellow Pages), or, as a last resort, a shot of vodka can be added to give it some extra might.

Colour

The basic three are white (birth/bringing forth), red (life/active being), and black (death/concealment). Gold falls into the class of red, dark blue and dark green into the class of black, and so forth. Different colours are associated with the god/esses - sometimes this is traditional, as with "Red Þórr" and Wodan's blue-black cape; sometimes it is a modern creation. We have tried very hard to note the difference between the two in this book.

Copper

Used for the blessing-bowl in *Kjalnesinga saga*. One ON word for it is homonymic with, though likely not related to, the goddess-name Eir, so that folk-etymology or von List-like magical association may associate it with her. Not thought of as a precious metal and thus not fitting for oath-rings.

Crystal

Rock crystal was often used by our forebears as a holy stone. The Continental Germans of the Migration Age sometimes hung large hex-shaped crystal beads from the hilts of their swords. The rock-crystal spheres of late Migration Age/early Vendel Age women are spoken of under "Frija". Rock crystal in its raw form is sometimes thought of as a stone of the etins, especially Skaði.

In Old High German, crystal was called "ice-stone" and it is well suited to all icy might. The "hrímkalkr" spoken of in *Svipdagismál* may have been a glass cup or, as befitted the etin-maid who bore it, a cup made of ice.

Crystal was a common stone in Germanic jewelry, both as beads and as a gem set in silver. An eleventh-century Swedish piece shows a necklace made of hemispherical rock crystals edged in silver: reproductions of this piece have been found to act as perfect magnifying glasses.

Eagle

The mightiest of all birds. Its shape is taken by etins (Hræsvelgr, Þjazi) and by Óðinn. An eagle sits at the top of the World-Tree. We do not know its name; it is possible that it is the same as Hræsvelgr, who is spoken of in *Vafþrúðnismál* as sitting in the east and beating forth the winds of the worlds with his wings. There is also an eagle on top of Valhöll. The possible tie between the eagle and Thonar is spoken of in "Thonar".

Elder

A tree of the Frowe. A traditional wine can be made from its flowers for her brighter side, from its berries for her darker side. Do not try to make Elderberry mead, as the berries are too acid to blend with the honey.

Elm

The first woman, Embla (Elm) was shaped from this tree.

Falcon

The falcon is the womanly match to the eagle. Both Frija and the Frowe have falcon-cloaks.

Fire

Divided into "need-fire" (kindled by friction - discussed under "Waluburg's Night") and "struck-fire" (sparked by flint and steel - discussed under "Thonar"). See the chapter on "Practice".

Glass

In the old days, having a glass cup was a major status symbol; a few such pieces made their way up to Scandinavia as early as the third century. Slightly later in the Migration Age, it became common for glassmakers along the Rhine to make glass horns for Germanic folk, who found the material very fair, but were unwilling to give up the traditional horn-shape.

Goat

The Goat is the beast of Thonar, and perhaps also of Skaði. As a mighty wight, the "Yule-buck", it is seen during the Wih-Nights (see "Yule").

Gold

Always spoken of as "fire" in skaldic kennings (the "fire of the hawks'- land" is a gold ring on someone's arm, for instance). Especially dear to the Frowe, Sif, and Fro Ing, though Wodan is also spoken of as a giver of gold in *Hyndluljóð*.

Grain

The source of bread and ale; the very life of our forebears. Although most of us have no actual fields to bless, in our rites, we speak of grain and use sheaves as signs of all that our souls bring forth.

Hair

Hair is a sign of life-might and holiness, the chief marker of beauty in Northern thought. The name "Odinkaur" may well mean "the one with hair hallowed to Óðinn" - that is to say, someone who grew his hair long as a sign of his dedication. The rule-might of the Merovingian kings was all embodied in their hair. It could also be the special emblem of a vow: Haraldr inn hárfagri vowed never to cut nor comb his hair until he had brought all Norway under his rule. Someone who really wanted to might be able to make a case for overriding a short-hair dress code rule on religious grounds.

Hammer

The Hammer is the symbol of Thonar, and also the general sign of hallowing, worn by true folk as a sign that they hold to the Elder Troth and used as a saining- gesture.

Harrow

ON *hörgr*; probably originally a heap of stones. Used by folk today to mean an altar. Those who have outdoor steads prefer to use a heap of stones or a single great boulder; those who do not often have wooden harrows. A small cabinet in which the holy tools can be kept while not in use is very good for this purpose.

Hawthorn

The hawthorn embodies the might that wards the wih-stead. Its connection with Hagen ("Hawthorn") may also hint at a tie with the darker shapes of Wodan.

Head

The head was seen as the embodiment of the whole being, the seat of the soul. Small staves carved with heads at one end are often found in Rus settlements and are thought to be god-images of the sort described by ibn Fadlan. The Oseberg sledges and wagon were decorated with heads at the four corners (one has human heads, another has rather stylized cat-heads), and the burial also included ornate beast-head posts, which may have been used in processions. Masks are also very common in Northern art, especially on Danish runestones of the late tenth/early eleventh centuries and worked into the bird-shaped (eagles and ravens) brooches of the late Vendel and early Viking Ages.

Heart

Seen in modern times as a symbol of the Frowe's might of love and lust (see "The Frowe").

Heart of the Home

The point from which all might springs, where the high-seat pillars should be set up and all rites should be carried out. If the house has a fireplace, the heart of the Home will be the hearth. Otherwise, you should choose a place, hallow it, and use it for worship thereafter.

Helm of Awe

Used for warding; gives its wearer might and fills those who come against its wearer with terror. Traditional Icelandic sign. The dragon Fáfñir was said to have the Helm of Awe between his eyes.

Herbs

Plants, most often used for medicinal, magical, or holy plants. Our forebears had a wide range of herb-lore, some of which is preserved in the Anglo-Saxon charm spells (see Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*) and in folklore. The best general guide to both the medicinal and folkloric uses of herbs is Mrs. M. Grievess' *A Modern Herbal*.

Hex-sign

A sign of hallowing and warding, traditionally put on the walls of houses or barns. One of the most common designs in Germanic folk-art.

- Holly
Traditional as a Yule decoration. In modern times, thought to be especially a tree of the Mound-Alfs.
- Honey
See "Bee"
- Horn
The best vessel for ritual use.
- Horses
The Horse is the holiest of beasts. In old days, eating horseflesh was the specific sign of a Heathen, which is why it was made illegal after the conversion and why such a strong prejudice against it still lingers in English-speaking lands. Next to human beings, horses were the best of all gifts that could be given to the god/esses. Their sacrifice was not practical, as was that of cattle, since they were usually worth more as riding and draught animals than as meat.
According to Tacitus, the early Germanic folk thought Horses to have prophetic powers. A great many bracteates show the image of a man on a horse, which seems to have been thought a particular sign of power.
The Horse is particularly associated with the Wans and with Wodan. It is a beast of both fruitfulness and death. In the latter aspect, its head was used on nothing poles. Horse heads were also buried in Alamannic cemeteries during the Migration Age, probably as protections, and carved on gables for the same purpose.
- House-Pillars
The great pillars that stood on either side of the high seat, in which the luck of the household lived. In old days they were structural supports of the hall's roof, but that is not usually workable now. Instead wooden pillars or long planks, carved or painted fittingly with images of god/esses, heroes, and forebears, may be set up in whatever place the heart of the home is deemed to be.
- Howe
The howe, or burial mound, is the meeting point between the world of the living and the world of the dead. Kings and thuls (see below) sat on the mound to speak with the wisdom of their forebears; spell-workers of sundry sorts also sat out on mounds. Helgi Hjörvarðsson was sitting on a mound when he saw the spae-idis who gave him his name, wyrd, and reason for being. In Sweden, offerings were still made to holy howes at Yuletime in this century. The howe is especially ruled by Fro Ing and Wodan.
- Iron
Sunwynn Ravenwood has pointed out that the word "iron" originally meant "holy metal", which may tell us something of why iron nails were hammered into the pillars of Heathen hofs. Iron is a good ward against evil spells and wights of ill, especially iron knives.
- Leek
The leek is the embodiment of new-springing might, particularly manly might. Given to Helgi Hunding's-Bane at birth by his father Sigmundr; also, the first herb to grow after the making of the worlds. Especially fitting for Ostara, birth-rites, and weddings. Paired with the womanly linen in a bracteate inscription and in *Völsa þáttr*.
- Linen
Cloth spun from flax, the finest native cloth available to our forebears and the best for ritual gear and use in sauna. Embodies womanly might and fruitfulness. Especially holy to Frija and her related goddesses or German shapes, Berchta and Holda.
- Mead
The mightiest traditional drink of the Teutonic folk, both spiritually and, at an alcoholic level ranging from 13-18%, physically. Technically, an alcoholic drink made with only honey, water, and yeast (see chapter on Mead-making). The term is generally used for any honey-based homebrew, though, including those made with the addition of fruit (properly "melomel") or with herbs and/or spices ("metheglin"). Among the god/esses, especially associated with Wodan, the winner of the mead of poetry.
- Milk

Traditionally given to house-ghosts; can also be given to Frija and the other house-goddesses. As a gift, it should always be whole milk or even half-and-half, never semi-skimmed or skimmed. Milk can also be blessed as a special draught of healing or might for a human; in this case, semi-skimmed or skimmed is all right.

Necklace

The necklace is the sign of the Frowe, Nerthus, and perhaps Earth. The four-ringed necklace may be thought of as especially the Frowe's sign.

Oak

The holiest of trees. Oak is the tree of Thonar; a lightning-struck oak is mightiest of all. Oak is a very good wood to make a harrow from, ritually speaking; but it is a very hard wood, and is not easy to carve.

Oaths

There were none mightier than the one who swore a great oath and kept it, none more loathed and looked down on than the one who broke an oath, and none thought more foolish than those who swore an oath beyond their strength to uphold. The oath-swearing itself is an act by which one steps into the garth of the god/esses, and they all hear and witness the words spoken. All should hold back from swearing oaths before they have thought well on them, or before they understand what oath-making truly is. The oath you speak is your very soul, all your life and luck and might together.

Recels

Incense; may have been used in elder times, though we are not sure. Some like to use it, some do not. It can be used as a means of cleansing the gathered folk by carrying the burner about and fanning with-smoke over them, or of hallowing a stead and filling it with a might that is fitting to the work being done. To be strictly traditional, Northern herbs should be used rather than any of the Southern gums (such as frankincense). In modern times, essential oil burners are also sometimes used.

Rings

The holy oaths were sworn on an unbroken ring weighing at least two ounces and made of precious metal. Grønbech mentions that "This treasure was as far beyond ordinary possession as the great holiness was beyond the ordinary blessing of everyday" (II, p. 140). Rings were used on the hilts of swords in the Migration and Vendel ages, possibly for oath-swearing or as the sign of the troth between sword-bearer and sword-giver. The very might of the god/esses was embodied in the holy ring used in the hof.

Armrings are also given as a sign of friendship or oaths; one kenning for a ruler was "ring-breaker", for as a sign of favour the ruler would break coils from the gold or silver wires that he wore spiraled about his arms.

Images of the gods are often seen with holy rings, as on the "three-god bracteates" (see "Balder") and the Gotlandic picture-stones. Small figurines of Scandinavian origin which show the ring or wreath have been found in an Eastern Baltic fortress and a grave on the upper Dnepr: a bearded man with a sword at his side holds a huge twisted ring or wreath in his right hand and stretches his left out. This may represent a god as holy ring-giver.

Wodan holds the great gold ring Draupnir (dripper), which gives birth to eight rings matching its weight every ninth night.

Runes

The writing of the early Germanic folk, still used by Heathens - especially for magical and religious purposes, though sometimes for ordinary communication as well. See Gundarsson's *Teutonic Magic*, Aswynn's *Leaves of Yggdrasil*, and Thorsson's *Futhark* and *Runelore* in the Hearth reading list.

Shield-knot

A sign of warding, used on a bracteate, a picture-stone, and Scandinavian signs which designate historical or natural monuments.

Ship

Sign of death and fruitfulness since at least the Bronze Age, most closely tied to the Wanic processions and to Wodan.

Spear

The weapon of Wodan, used to hallow something that is given to him and may well soon be destroyed in the Middle-Garth.

Spiral

Suggested in modern times as a hallowing sign for Frija.

Spindle

Frija's emblem; sign of Wyrð and of womanly might.

Stag

The stag was thought of as the noblest of beasts; both Sigurðr and Helgi Hunding's-Bane are compared to high-antlered stags by their grieving widows. Because Fro Ing fights with an antler at Ragnarök, it is usually thought to be his beast.

Stones

Grimm thought that stone-lore was not typical of the Teutonic folk, but since then archaeology has found that our forebears often used various stones as amulets, and the Icelandic laws also mention the use of magical stones. Little work has yet been done to recover the stone-lore of our forebears.

Stones are holy in and of themselves, and fit for blessing or using as focal points of a rite, either as the body of an outdoor harrow or as something set on an indoor one. Vésteinn - Wih-stone - was a common Old Norse name, as was Þórsteinn - Þórr-stone.

Sun-Wheel

Generally used today as a hallowing sign for the Wans.

Swan

Always a womanly bird (and used as a first element in women's names); sometimes becomes a swan-maiden, who may speak spae-words. Snorri tells of two swans at the Well of Urðr.

In the *Kalevala*, there is a black swan that swims in the river of Tuonela (the realm of death). There is no evidence for this in the Norse sources, but one might perhaps think that Hella could have just such a black swan to match the white ones of the Norns.

The spae-idis Kára became a swan to defend her Helgi in battle: as the embodiment of the soul's shining bride, the swan is often seen as the sign of the soul's striving towards the god/esses and of blessing from them.

Swastika

Often thought to be associated with Thonar (see chapter) or else a sun-symbol. Should not be shown in public, for obvious reasons. A "kinder, gentler" swirling form was also used by our forebears, and may be used by those who cannot get over the recent misuse of the sign by the Nazis. Deosil and widdershins forms were used indiscriminately by our forebears.

Swine

Holy to Fro Ing and the Frowe; see chapters for further discussion.

Sword

The basic weapon of the well-born Germanic warrior. Most magical of weapons, most frequently named (by a very high factor indeed), most often seen as the embodiment of the family soul. Original weapon of Fro Ing, but used by followers of all the god/esses, with the exception of Anglo-Saxon godmen, who were not allowed to bear weapons (as described in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*).

Thule

A thule is a speaker of some sort; the word is related to the ON verb *thylja* (to speak or mumble). Wodan is called Fimbulþulr; Unferth, who challenges Beowulf to a single combat of words and wit in Hrothgar's hall, is also given the title *pyle*, and the AS word *pyl-cræft* is glossed as *rhethorica* (rhetoric). The Danish Snøldlev stone memorializes a man called Gunnvaldr, who was "thule on the Sal-howes" with the inscription of his name and office beside a swastika and a triskelion made of three interlocked drinking horns (now used as the emblem of the Rune-Gild) which some think may have been the sign of the three cauldrons from which Óðinn drank the mead of skaldcraft, Óðroerir (Wod-Stirrer).

Trefot

Also called triskelion (swirling form). Might whirling from the three great realms of being. The emblem of the Island of Man and the Celtic Manannan mac Lir; also suggested as a possible sign for Heimdalr in modern usage.

Völva

A seeress. The word comes from ON *völfr* (staff) and seems to mean "womanly staff-bearer" (cf. the walkurja-name Göndull/Wodan-name Göndlir, and also the early German seeress "Waluburg", whose name stems from the same root as *völfr*). Wodan himself calls *völvur* up to tell him of what shall become in *Völuspá* (the Völva's spæ) and *Baldrs draumar*; in both cases, they seem to be etin-wives, and the völva of the latter has lain dead in her howe for some while. There is likely some relationship between the völva and the thule; the titles might even have originally been womanly and manly descriptions of the same sort of gifted seer on the mound, though the title of "thule" seems, at least among the English, to have developed into the more earthly role of hall-speaker or word-champion, while the *völvur* of Eddic poetry speak (in *Baldrs draumar*, unwillingly) at Óðinn's behest.

Wain

The wain, or wagon, together with the ship, was the chief vehicle of the Wans' holy processions. Among the many names for the Big Dipper was "the Wain"; in Holland, it was known as "Woenswaghen" (Wodan's Wagon) as late as 1470 (Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology* I, p. 151). Thonar also fares in a wain drawn by two goats.

Walknot

"Knot of the slain", sign of Wodan, used both in a triple and a unicursal form, though only by those given to Wodan.

Water

Landnamabók (*Hauksbók* 146) mentions places in Iceland called both "Helgavatn" (Holy Water) and "Urðarvatn" (Wyrd's Water). In *Teutonic Mythology*, Grimm cites a number of customs having to do with the use of hallowed water - that is, water drawn from a running spring or holy well, usually done just before sunrise in total silence. Water embodies life-force; a deep body of water can also embody the Well of Wyrd. Gifts to the god/esses were often sunk into water in the old days.

Wreath

The wreath is the living form of the ring. It is a sign of both troth and hallowing. Holy wreaths can be made to be hung up in your house or hall, or used as garlands to bless folk with. Wreaths of evergreen, nuts, and apples are most fitting at Yule-time, birch and pussy willow at Ostara, spring flowers and rowan on Waluburg's Night and May Day, elder at Midsummer's, grain and rowan berries at Loaf-Feast, and grain, nuts, and straw at Winternights.

Wurm

Sign of hidden might. Runes were carved inside wurm-ribbons in the last part of the Viking Age and the first part of the christian era; wurm-prows were used on ships, and "Ormr" was a ship-name as well as a personal name. Very often used in Northern art.

Yew

A tree of death, still planted in burial grounds. Perhaps the World-Tree. Closely tied to Wulþur, who dwells in "Yew-Dales", and to Wodan; also to the Yule-time.

Yew is a very poisonous tree. Do not eat any part of it, do not burn any part of it and breathe the smoke or vapours, do not bring it into a house with small children or plant-eating pets. One British occultist in recent times deliberately killed himself by eating yew-berries; an American member of the Rune-Gild accidentally almost killed himself by burning the berries and inhaling their smoke.

Chapter LVII

The Banner of the Troth

The Banner of the Troth is a ring of four golden apples (at the cardinal points) and four raven-heads (at the cross-points) linked by a ring of twisted gold wire with three twists between each apple/raven pair. In the middle of the ring is a golden-white Hammer with the Troth bind-rune in red upon the haft. The background is deep blue.

The eight elements of the ring show the ætt of the winds; they also show the eight worlds ringed around the Middle-Garth (Miðgarðr) - four shining, four dark. In this reading, the Hammer shows the might of their holiness brought forth into the Middle-Garth.

The apples are the golden apples of Iðunn, which give new life to the god/esses. In a larger sense, they are that life-might embodied by all the goddesses (Iðunn, Freyja, Sif) whom the etins keep trying to steal from the Ases' Garth (Ásgarðr). They are also the apples placed in the howe (as with the Oseberg ship-burial) as a sign of rebirth.

The ravens are Wodan's birds, Huginn (Thoughtful) and Muninn (Mindful); they are the sign of the wisdom and memory which shape the Troth. They are also the sign of the faring between the worlds which brings lore, life, and might into the Middle-Garth from the hidden realms - the faring of the thul and the vólva, and the folk-leader who sits on the mound to speak rede.

The Troth of our folk is grounded on this matching of brightness and darkness: we, the living, draw all that we are from our dead kin - from the hidden roots of the World-Tree - and in turn, strengthen them with our life, the blessings that we pour to them and the toasts that we drink to their memory. Among the Northern peoples, there is no sundering between those who still dwell alive in the Middle-Garth and their kin who have fared to the halls of the god/esses before them

Together, the apples and the ravens also refer to the key scene from *Völsunga saga*, chapter I, in which Óðinn's grandson Rerir and his wife, who have had no children, pray to become fruitful. "That is now said, that Frigg heard their prayer and told Óðinn what they asked for. He was not confounded, and took his wish-maid...and put an apple (or "fruit" - KHG) in her hand and bade her go to the king with it. She took the apple and drew her crow-hide (the birds "kráka" and "hrafni" are not distinguished in Icelandic - a big black corvid is a big black corvid - KHG) upon herself and flew until she came there where the king sat upon a howe. She let the apple fall onto the king's knee. He took that apple and it seemed to him that he knew what must be done. He now went home from the howe and to his men and found the queen, and they ate that apple together", whereupon the queen became pregnant with the son who became the hero Völsi, the father of Sigmundur and Signy, after whom the Völsung line was named. For the Troth, this stands as a sign that, though the ways of our folk seemed to be barren and our god/esses gone from the earth, they heeded us when we raised our call to them again, and the heroes and heroines of our folk shall be born again, mightier for the many years of hiding and the need that has called the souls of the North to life once more.

The ring of wound gold that binds the apples and the ravens is the holy oath-ring, which is also the sign of the ring of our fellowship - truly the Ring of Troth. Three windings show between each apple/raven pair; three are hidden behind each apple and raven, so that there are twenty-four shining coils and twenty-four mirky coils. These show forth the might of the runes, both bright and dark - of that wisdom which was brought up from Yggdrasill's roots in elder days. The pattern of the thrice-wound oath-ring also calls on those three great oath-gods, Wulþur (Ullr), Tiw (Týr), and Thunar (Þórr), or, as another reading may show it, the triad of "Freyr, Njörðr, and the almighty Ase". In either case, these holy ones keep the words and deeds of the Troth true to the ways of our forebears and our own honour.

The Hammer itself was the sign of the elder Troth among the Norsemen, when our folk strove to keep their own ways whole. It is the sigil of all who follow the god/esses of the North, marked for us by the Troth's bind-rune.

The bind-rune of the Troth is formed of eihwaz, the yew-tree which has kept the fire of our folk ever-green through the long winter; nauthiz, the need-rune which has kindled that fire forth again; wunjo, which binds us all as a single clan in joy and love; and raidho, the rune of right measure, by which we are held true and following which we keep the round of the seasons and the blessings of the Troth.

The deep blue background is both the night sky and the sea - the might both of the Ases and of the Wans, who stand matched in strength, in wisdom, and in the love we bear them.

Designed by

- KveldúlfR Gundarsson

Drawn by:

- Gefjon

Chapter LVIII

Organizations and Resources

Ring of Troth - P.O. Box 25637, Tempe, AZ 85285-5637. Membership is \$24/year and includes a quarterly subscription to *Idunna*, as well as access to all of the Troth's spiritual resources, networking groups (Rune Ring, Ring of Web), and training programmes.

International Sauna Society

General Secretariat

Vaskiniemi

SF - 00200 Helsinki 20

Finland

Rakennuskirja Oy (Publisher for the Building Information Institute's RT sheets on sauna planning and construction

P.O.B. 1004

SF - 00101

Helsinki, Finland.

(The pamphlets Konya recommends are RT513.14 [Sauna stove, Top Burning Heating Capacity 18,000...48,000 kcal], RT 513.15 [Sauna stove, Top Burning Heating Capacity 35,000...100,000 kcal], RT913.501 [Sauna Planning], RT913.516 [Sauna Platforms, Wood Frames], RT913.517 [Sauna Platforms, Steel Frames], and RT913.521 [Sauna, Elements of Construction])

Raven Kindred - a small, active, independent group, which puts out the *Raven Kindred Ritual Book*. Strongly non-racist, otherwise tending to a slightly conservative form of Ásatrú. Copies of *Raven Kindred Ritual Book* can be ordered from the Raven Kindred, 11160 Veirs Mill Rd. 115-175, Wheaton, MD 20902. \$5.

Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA) - A large international group devoted to the furthering of mediæval crafts, skills, and general re-creation, with some study of history - their stated ideal is to revive the best aspects of the Middle Ages, while leaving the miserable parts of that period behind. As the name suggests, they are not really an historical reconstruction group and allow considerable latitude in regard to details, though individual members may sometimes keep up quite a high standard of personal historical consistency. They are not to be compared to the strict reconstruction groups of Britain and Europe, who are advised to check every detail of their costumes and gear carefully, as real archaeologists often wander through events and will know if something is out of period (and who even go so far as to light their campfires with flint and steel).

The SCA is a very valuable resource in terms of buying weapons, handcrafts, jewelry, and other such items. They are also extremely valuable as a source of advice for planning bigger feasts, as they have been doing large-scale mediæval events successfully for over twenty-five years now. There are differing opinions on the value of their fighting techniques (rattan weapons wrapped with duct tape), but they are certainly more realistic than those of the British/European groups who use blunted steel and must therefore be immensely careful (head shots are not allowed, for instance).

The SCA must, however, be approached with great caution by Heathens. Many of its folk are Heathen or Pagan, but many are Christians or non-believers playing at being Heathen or Pagan during the time they are in persona. Just because an SCAer wears a Þórr's Hammer or shouts, "Hail Odin!" at a feast does **not** mean that s/he will not freak out when s/he discovers that you take Heathenism seriously. This has happened a number of times, sometimes with serious trauma to both sides. As any very large and diverse organization does, the SCA includes groups and individuals that are very fine and helpful, and also groups and individuals with whom one would not wish to associate. Care is called for.

Ordering information for various things:

Asatru News Service - general newsletter detailing goings-on in the *whole* Asatru community. Can be ordered from 1630 30th St. #266, Boulder, Colorado 80301. Ed. by Will von Dauster, of the late lamented *Mountain Thunder*.

Gefjon's Arðr (drinking horns, clothing of natural fibres and leather, deer and elk antler points and staves, icons in oil or acrylics, on wood or canvas, skull and bone mandalas, hand-carved wooden blót-bowls, staffs, and staves). P.O. Box 85, Silver City, NM 88062.

Germanic Costume from the Early Iron Age to the Viking Age (Greyhaven Costume Series #3), by Diana L. Paxson. Full

treatise, with documentation and directions on making. Greyhaven, Box 472, Berkeley, CA 94701, U.S.A. \$10.

Hvað er svo glatt - book of Icelandic folksongs, arr. for voice and piano. Tónlistarbandalag Íslands, Pósthólf 5421, 125 Reykjavík, Iceland. Telephone 91-678255.

Mountain Thunder, back issues and reprinted articles - see "Asatru News Service".

Ragnarok - Metaphysical book/gift store specializing in Asatru and Celtic books, jewelry, and sundry things, mail-order catalogue available for \$3. 7162 Melrose, Los Angeles, CA 90046, (213) 965-1726.

Runa-Raven - Books, audio-tapes, manuscripts, tools for rune-galdor (staves, knives, tines). For catalogue, send SASE to Runa-Raven, P.O. Box 180931, Austin, TX 78718.

Théod - journal of Anglo-Saxon Theodish Belief. Quarterly, \$15.00/year. Theod, dept i, P.O. Box 8062, Watertown, NY 13601

Yggdrasil - small journal put out by Steerswoman Prudence Priest. Quarterly; year's subscription \$6 in States & Canada, \$8 abroad. Checks to Freya's Folk, 537 Jones St. #165, San Francisco, CA 94102.

Trothline

The Troth/Ásatrú computer/e-mail network, modulated by Grendel Grettison and open to all interested folk. The address is sometimes subject to change, but information can always be gotten from Grendel, c/o Barnstokker Hearth, P.O. Box 1972, Seattle, Washington 98111. Grendel is also the Washington area Steward.

Stewards

The list of Stewards is ever-growing, so it was thought rather pointless to include it in this book. New Steward-candidates are always printed in *Idunna*. For the contact address of the Steward in your area, write to the Wordsmith c/o the Ring of Troth.

Chapter LIX

Word-Hoard

*

shows that a word is a philologically reconstructed form which does not appear in any actual texts. Usually shows a Proto-Indo-European, Proto-Germanic, or Primitive Norse form.

airt

the eight winds or directions of the compass.

alf

álfr (Old Norse), elf (mod. English - most Troth folk avoid the word because of its association with cute little flower fairies and/or the elves of heroic fantasy, who normally bear little or no resemblance to the elves our forebears knew).

amber slut

anyone who buys more amber than s/he can hang on his/her body at any given time. Also, someone who owns more amber than you do. We would love to say that the term is archaic and preserves mysteries of Freyja, but actually, we just made it up not all that long ago. Don't laugh, this is the way traditions get started.

ard

an early form of plough.

are

Saxon English, honour

AS

Anglo-Saxon

Ásatrú (modern Old Norse formation)

"true to the Æsir", but often used as a general term for the Teutonic religion. Cf. "Vanatrú", "Troth".

Ase

Áss (ON), *ese (AS), ansus (Gothic), *ansuz (Proto-Germanic). A god (pl. Æsir), perhaps originally an ancestor-ghost; Jordanes mentions that the fore-gone heroes of the Goths were called "anses", which he, perhaps thinking as a christian, translates "half-gods".

atheling

Saxon English, noble

aye

forever

bede

Saxon English, "prayer"

Bjarni Herjólfsson Icelandic Navigation Memorial Award

a herring, given to those who have directions to the ritual, but get so lost anyway that they never do show up. Despite Leifr Eiríksson's claim to fame, Bjarni Herjólfsson was the first European to find America, though Leifr and his folk were the first European settlers there.

blót

ON, "blessing" or "sacrifice". Despite the frequency of this false etymology, the word is not related to any words for blood. "Blót" can either be a noun speaking of the rite itself (and sometimes used in modern times specifically for the ale or mead sacrificed), or a verb, "to blót".

blótbolli

ON, "blessing-bowl"

blotorc

AS, "blessing-bowl"

bracteate

a thin disk-shaped pendant, usually made of gold, with a stamped design and often a runic inscription. The first were modeled on Roman coins; but the images used reflect different aspects of Germanic religion. See Karl Hauck's *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit* (7-vol. catalogue with pictures and descriptions of all known bracteates); also, Hauck's many articles in the journal *Frühmittelalterlichen Studien* which explore bracteate iconography, especially that which deals specifically with aspects of the cult of Wodan.

bog people

corpses found in peat bogs (especially in Denmark, Southern Sweden, and Northern Germany), beautifully preserved by the tannic water and anaerobic environment. A particular group from Denmark, dating from ca. 200 B.C.E. - 500 C.E., are thought to have mostly been sacrifices of some sort. The bog people were written up in the book *The Bog People* by a Danish archaeologist with the unlikely, but eerily appropriate, name of P.V. Gløb. We are not making this up.

breloque

a specific type of amber bead used in Gotlandic burials, shaped like an axe for men, a loom-weight (probably) for women.

deosil

clockwise. The usual direction for ritual movement; drawing down might from the heavens.

dern

Saxon English, "secret" (adj.).

dragon

see Wyrn under 'Things and their Meanings'. Otherwise, Germanic art historianese for, 'We don't know what it is' (such as the Maeshowe 'dragon' and the flat-beaked 'dragon' heads on the Vendel Age Anglo-Swedish helmets).

drihten/drihtine (or drihtning)

Saxon English; generally, "ruler"; specifically, leader of a warband or other group bound to a single purpose. Cf. "fro/frowe".

Ð, ð - "edh"

soft dh, as in "the". A Germanic sound (now, like Þ [look at the end of the glossary], preserved only in English and Icelandic) which there was no Roman letter to express, written in Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse.

Egill Skalla-Gr%iacute;msson Drekk-til-at-Spýja ("Drink till you Barf") Memorial Award

asprin or equivalent and Alka-Selzer, given the morning after to those who imitate one of Egill's less overwhelmingly glorious activities at Ásatrú feasts.

einherjar (ON)

"Single-Harriers"; Wodan's chosen heroes. Singular einheri.

elhaz stance

hands and head upraised. Root-elhaz - hands at sides, feet spread; full elhaz or tree-stance - hands raised, feet spread.

Calls might respectively from above, below, or both.

etin

Saxon English (ON jötunn); a giant, usually one of great wisdom and magical might.

euemerization

the nasty practise of claiming that god/esses were originally human beings, who, through clever swindling or the gullibility of their descendants, came to be worshipped as deities.

Fenrir

the great Wolf, son of Loki and Angrboda, who is bound and will be freed at Ragnarök. Despite popular opinion, Fenrir is the proper Old Norse form; "Fenris" is the genitive, used in the formulaic phrase "Úlfr Fenris" (cf. the like formula "askr Yggdrasils").

ferth

non-physical part of the human being.

fetch

animal-shaped half-free part of the soul. ON fylgja, AS fæcce.

flyting

a duel of insults, usually obscene

Fold

another name for Earth

Fosite

Foseti, Forseti (ON)

Freyr

Fro Ing, Old Norse

Freyja

the Frowe, Old Norse

Frija

Frigg (Old Norse), *Frijjo (Proto-Germanic), Fricka (Wagner). Not to be confused with the Frowe (Freyja)

frith

Saxon English, "fruitful peace and happiness".

frithgarth

"peace-enclosure" - an enclosure in which weapons cannot be drawn nor blood shed. Especially connected with the Wans.

Fro/frowe

'lord'/'lady', implies judicial/peacetime function.

Fro Ing

*Fraujaz Ingwaz (Proto-Germanic), Frea Ing (Anglo-Saxon), also called Yngvi or Yngvi-Freyr (Old Norse), Froh (Wagner), Frauja Engus (Gothic). Sometimes called 'Fricco' (Old High German), but this is probably erroneous; see discussion in chapter.

Frowe, the

Freyja (Old Norse), Freo (Anglo-Saxon), *Fraujon (Proto-Germanic). 'The Lady'; no other name known. See chapter.

Futhark

a runic "alphabet", so called from the first six runestaves - f,u,þ,a, r, k/c. The Elder Futhark has 24 runes; the Younger (Viking Age) Futhark has roughly sixteen; the Anglo-Frisian Futhork varies from 28 to 32; the Armanen (early 20th century) has 18.

fylgja

see fetch.

galdr (ON)

a magical song; also "galdr-magic". Used in modern times for runic magic, to contrast with "seiðr". Also Galdor.

Gamla Uppsala

"Old Uppsala" - the site of the great assembly mounds and (probably) the great Heathen hof described by Adam of Bremen.

garth

"enclosure", used in a general term for a dwelling. Cf. Ases' Garth, the Middle-Garth.

Germanic English

see Saxon English

glóðker (ON)

incense burner. Also AS recelbuc.

goði (ON)

godman

godwo/man

Old Norse goði (manly)/gyðja (womanly). A priest or priestess.

greet

as well as the usual meaning of welcome, can also mean "to weep" (Scots dialect)

grith

Old Norse griðr, friendship

gyðja (ON)

godwoman

harrow

an "altar". Stalli or hörgr (ON); weofed (AS).

heill (ON)

holy/lucky/blessed/whole. Heill is the manly adjective, heil womanly, heilt neuter. heilir manly plural, heilar womanly pl., heil neuter or mixed pl.

heiti (ON)

a by-name. The singular and plural forms of the word are the same.

high

Saxon English; see hug.

holt

a woodland

howe

burial mound

hug (soul/heart/thought)

huge, hugr (ON), hyge (AS), high (Saxon English)

idis

dís (ON). Generally, "atheling-frowe", also "goddess", and specifically used for the womanly clan-ghosts who still ward and care for their living kin.

interpretatio Germanica

"Germanic interpretation"; the practice of translating Roman names, concepts, or images into their nearest equivalent in the existing Germanic cultural framework

interpretatio Romana

"Roman interpretation"; the practice of translating "barbarian" deities or beliefs with Roman names and Roman equivalents.

Irminsul

"great pillar", destroyed by Charlemagne in 772 C.E. *Eormensyll (AS).

kenning

a poetic circumlocution particularly characteristic of skaldic poetry. For instance, because gold is reddish and bright, and the dragon Fáfnir's hoard came out of the Rhine, a skald might say that his patron (who, as a warrior, could be called "Óþinn of helmets" or something similar) gave him "the fire of the Rhine".

lour

Scots dialect, "to threaten; threatening, ominous".

Loyal Order of the Water-Buffalo Helm

the cow-horned helmets worn by Vikings in cartoons and on tacky souvenirs from Scandinavia.

main

strength, ON megin

meed

reward

minne

memory-toast, often drunk at sýmbel.

mod

ON móðr - mood, bravery; see "Soul, Death, and Rebirth"

neat

an animal of the cattle-type

Nerd-Alf

from Old English neord-ælf. A sub-race of the Swart-Alfs, little known to our forebears but growing more and more common today. Ruled by their leader Nerd-Alberich, Nerd-Alfs are particularly concerned with the workings of computers. They dwell in Nerd-Alfhome, otherwise known as the Internet. The feminine equivalent, Nerd-Idises (Old English neord-ides), also exist, though they seem to be slightly rarer.

Nerthus

probably a Latinized form of Proto-Germanic Nerthuz. 'Mother Earth'; see discussion under chapter on Njörðr-

Nerthus.

nibel

mist/darkness. Cf. Nibel-Home, Nibelungen.

Nibel-Home

ON Niflheimr, "World of Mist/Darkness". The ur-world of ice, lying down and to the north.

Nibelungen

"Folk of Mist/Darkness". Probably originally some sort of alfs; the name was later given to the Burgundian royal house of the Gibichungs (German)/Gjúkings (Norse). The connection may have originally been via the person of Hagen, whom *Þiðreks saga* and probably the *Ältre Not* (lost ur-source for it and *Nibelungenlied*) describe as the son of an alf. Wagner, surprisingly, seems to have come rather closer to the root-conception by making his Nibelungen into Svartálfar, or dwarves.

nicor

water-wight

Njörðr

Old Norse, often Anglicized to Njord. From Proto-Germanic Nerþuz.

norn

female being who lays *ørlög* and shapes *wyrd*. The *wyrd* of the worlds is shaped by the three great Norns, *Wyrd* (*Urðlr*), *Verðandi*, and *Skuld*. There are also many lesser norns who come to children at birth; see the chapter on "Idises".

nytt

ON *nýta*, AS *nytte* - to enjoy and benefit from.

Oden

Wodan, modern Danish/Swedish/Norwegian

Óþinn

Wodan, Old Norse.

Odin

Wodan, Anglicized Norse

Óláfr inn digri

Óláfr the Fat or Big-Mouthed (also known today as Óláfr the Lawbreaker or Óláfr the Asshole). This is how "St. Óláfr" was known before his canonization. Died 1030. Not to be confused with his equally wretched predecessor, Óláfr Tryggvasonr (known today as Óláfr the Traitor), despite the fact that the actions and attitudes of the two great christian tyrants of Norway make it almost impossible to keep them separate.

ON

Old Norse

Picture stones

a type of free-standing memorial stone, nearly all of which were made on the Swedish island Gotland. They begin to be carved ca. 400 C.E., but the art reached its height in 700-900. The most common motif on them is the image of a horse and rider. The best-known ones are those of Tjängvide and Ardre, which show the rider on an eight-legged horse with a woman (probably a *walkurja*) offering him a horn, but others show scenes of sacrifice, battle, and ship-farings. See Lamm/Nylen's *Stones, Ships, and Symbols* and Lindqvist's *Gotlands Bildsteine*.

-R

found in Old Norse names such as FreyR, ÞórR, and KveldúlfR (more usually appears in lower-case, except in

transliterations of runic inscriptions where it shows the elder elzaz or younger _r stave). Derived from Proto-Germanic final -z (*Þonaraz > ÞórR); normally denotes a strong masculine nominative. ON masculines ending in -nn, -ll (Óþinn, Egill) also show an original -z, which became the reduplicated final letter of the stem (*Wo_anaz > Óþinn; *Agilaz > Egill). In all these cases, the last letter of the nominative disappears in the genitive, so that "Wodan's spear" would be "Óþins geirr". Confusingly, some names such as Baldr which look as though they ought to have a final -R do not; this is because the -r is part of the stem (cf. Old English bealdor).

recelbuc (AS)

incense burner.

recels

incense. Also called wih-smoke.

Rock-carvings

pictorial records of Bronze Age magic/religion, usually carved on large slabs of bedrock, though free-standing ones have also been found. See Gløb's *The Mound People*.

Rune-stones

free-standing memorial stones (usually) with runic inscriptions, found all through continental Scandinavia. Ca. 300 - 1200 C.E. See Moltke's *Runes and their Origins*.

Sain

to make a sign of blessing over; saining-gesture - gesture of blessing.

Saxon English

modern English using only words grounded in the Northern speeches. Such English calls for many words which have been lost in time to be found anew: drighthen, thane, thew, sig, wod, and so forth. Many Troth folk try to use only Saxon English for ritual work; Hollander's *Poetic Edda* shows how this may be done. However, the best writing which has yet been done in Saxon English is Poul Anderson's "Uncleftish Beholding".

seiðr (ON)

a type of magic, generally considered feminine, although men worked it as well. The precise character is difficult to tell: in modern times, it has been opposed to the runic "galdr-magic", although both seiðr and galdr were characterized especially by singing. Among the workings classed as seiðr were shamanic practices, particularly soul-faring in a different shape; fore-seeing; dealing with spirits; and spells cast on the mind to delude or cause hallucinations. Seiðr got a particularly nasty reputation after the conversion.

shild

debt

skald

strictly speaking, a writer of poetry in the Old Norse skaldic formats (detailed in the "Skáldskaparm%aaacute;l" section of the *Prose Edda*), which are known for their rigorous syllable-counts, rules of stave-rhyme (alliteration), and frequent use of kennings (see above). In modern times, used for anyone writing Germanic poetry, especially those who use traditional stave-rhyme rather than non-Germanic end-rhyme.

skyr

a yoghurt-like Icelandic milk product. Usually served with sugar and berries as dessert, but can be drunk on its own, though if one trusts the words of Egill Skalla-Grímsson, it is much inferior to beer. The Warder of the Lore concurs.

Stave-rhyme

alliteration. Germanic poetry only very rarely used end-rhyme, and the few exceptions to this (such as Egill Skalla-Grímsson's *Höfudlausn*, late 10th century) were probably influenced by foreign models.

stalli (ON)

harrow.

Sumbel

alternate form of Symbel.

Symbel

also sumbel. A rite at which toasts are drunk to god/esses, hero/ines, forebears, and whoever or whatever else is worthy of honour. See rite.

taufr (ON)

magical talisman, esp. one with runes carved on it.

thew

Saxon English; a virtue.

Thing

Germanic judicial assembly

thurse

an elemental giant. Different sorts are mentioned, such as rime-thurses (ice giants) and berg-thurses (mountain giants). In ON poetry, the terms "thurse" and "etin" are fairly interchangeable, but modern usage tries to keep them separate.

Tiw (Anglo-Saxon)

Týr (Old Norse), *Tiwaz (Proto-Germanic), Tius (Gothic), Ziw/Ziu (Old High German)

tree-stance (also called "full elhaz")

hands and head raised to draw down might from the heavens, feet spread to draw might up from the earth. The ur-shape from which both the Elder Futhark's upward-pointing elhaz-stave (appears as "maðr" in the Younger Futhark) and the Younger Futhark's downward-pointing ýr-stave sprang.

troll

smaller than etins/thurses, but of the same kin. The word is also used for any unpleasant magical wight; magic is still called "trolldom" in modern Scandinavian dialects.

Troth

Trú (ON) - honour, pledge, belief. Used specifically for the Germanic religion, to describe our relationship with the god/esses. Effectively synonymous with Ásatrú/Vanatrú, with the signal advantage that it does not specify either of the godly tribes.

Týr

Tiw, Old Norse

Thonar (generic Germanic)

Þórr (Old Norse), Thunar (Anglo-Saxon), Donar (Old High German), Donner (mod. German, Wagner), *Þonaraz (Proto-Germanic), Tor (mod. Continental Scandinavian), Thor (Anglicized Norse)

Ullr

Wulður, Old Norse

ur-

a prefix meaning "primeval, root" (mod. German). One might say that Ymir was the ur-etin and Auðumla the ur-cow, for instance.

u.s.w.

(modern German) abbreviation of und so weiter - "and so forth".

Valhöll

Walhall, Old Norse

valknútr

walknot, Old Norse.

valkyrja

walkurja, Old Norse

Vanatrú (modern Old Norse formation)

"true to the Vanir". Used for those who are given to one or more of the Wanic god/esses and therefore choose not to call themselves Ásatrú.

vé (ON)

wih-stead

vingull (ON)

phallus, esp. horse-phallus.

vitki (ON)

wizard, magician. Often used for runesters. AS witega

W-

Before O or U, initial W- disappears at the transition from Primitive Norse to Old Norse (ca. 700 C.E.), so that *WoðanaR became Óðinn, Anglo-Saxon Wyrð is the same word as Old Norse Urðr, and so forth.

waelcyrige

walkurja, Anglo-Saxon.

Walhall

Valhöll (ON), Valhalla (Anglicized Norse). "Hall of the Slain".

walknot

*valknútr (ON). A sign of three interlaced triangles, appearing both in a unicursal "knot" form and as three separate triangles overlapping each other. Found on the Gotlandic picture stones, an early English ring, and on the woodcarvings and tapestry of the Oseberg ship burial. The sign of those given to Wodan.

walkurja

*walkurjon (Proto-Germanic), valkyrja (ON), waelcyrige (AS), valkyrie (Anglicized Norse). "Chooser of the Slain" (womanly form); compare with the Wodan-name Valkjósandi, "Chooser of the Slain".

warg - (ON vargr)

outlaw. Comes from a root meaning "restless one"; implies the unholy out-dweller. Grendel's mother is called grund-wyrgen - she-warg of the depths; in the Old High German "Muspilli", the Antichrist is called a warg, that being the closest Germanic term with which the poet could translate the general idea of horror and antithesis. In Old Norse, also used for the wolf as a natural animal.

Weihnachten (mod. German)

"Wih-Nights"; the Yule season.

weofed (AS)

altar; see harrow

Werðende

"becoming"; the middle Norn. AS Weorðende; ON Verðandi.

wight

any sort of being. You, Wodan, and the Thing that goes Bump in your yard at night, can all be called "wights", though in "Trothspeak" the word is most often applied to beings in the class of the Thing that goes Bump (as in "What the Hel is that wight out there?") or used as a wide generalization ("all holy wights" means god/esses, ghosts, land-wights, humans, and well-meaning etins or other creatures). ON vættr

wih

"holy", as in "wih-stead"; "Wih-Nights", and so forth. "Holiness" in the sense that it is set apart from the usual world, as set against the usual word holy, which means the oneness of the worlds beyond with this world.

wih-smoke

recels, or incense.

wih-stead

a holy area which is set apart from the world of daily life, usually by enclosure. Old Norse vǫ.

wod

poetic inspiration/fury/madness; sometimes used especially for the various sorts of inspiration rising from alcohol (as in that often-heard phrase, "The wod was really flowing at that ritual last night"). Pronounced to rhyme with "flowed".

Wodan

Óðinn (ON), *Woðanaz (Proto-Germanic), Woden (AS), Odin (Anglicized Norse), Oden (mod. Danish/Swedish), Wotan (mod. German, Wagner), *Wodans (Gothic). See chapter.

*Woðanaz

Wodan, Proto-Germanic

Woden

Wodan, Anglo-Saxon.

Wotan

Wodan, modern German, Wagner.

Wulþur (Primitive Norse)

Ullr (ON), Wuldor (OE), Wulþus (Gothic)

wynn (AS)

joy

wyrd (AS)

fate. Also the proper name Wyrð (ON Urðr), for the eldest Norn who embodies that-which-is and thus determines that which becomes and shall be.

yare

ready, prepared, skilled (ON görr).

yeme

to care for, to look attentively upon.

Þ, þ

"thorn" (derived from the rune *thurisaz). Shows the hard "th" sound, as in "thorn", for which there was no corresponding Roman letter. Current convention places it after "z", though in older dictionaries, it may be found after "t" or in place of "th". See Ð (after "d").

þátrr

a section of a saga. Thus, to look up "Gunnars þátrr helmings", you must also know that it is located within Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar, in the version of that saga which appears in *Flateyjarbók* (as opposed to the one in *Heimskringla*).

Þing

the judgement-meeting of the Germanic peoples. The most famous and regularly held of these was the Icelandic Alþing, to which all the important folk in the land had to come to settle their cases, deem over the law, and set the year's calendar.

Þingvellir

the stead where the Icelandic Alþing was held.

Þórr

Thonar, Old Norse

ørlög (ON)

"primal layer/law"; the basic grounding which sets the shape of wyrd.

Contributors

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- Eric Wodening

Chapter LX

Book-Hoard

All groups from the level of Hearth upward should have at least a few basic texts. The ones which are most important for beginning study are marked with an * (just as if they were reconstructed Proto-Germanic forms...).

Note that Icelandic writers and those who have taken traditional Germanic patronymics are listed by first name, according to Icelandic convention.

- *Aswynn, Freya. *Leaves of Yggdrasil*. Llewellyn: P.O. Box 64383, St. Paul, MN 55164-0383, telephone (800) THE-MOON. Runic, magical, religious, and very fine.
- Bede, the Venerable. *History of the English Church and People*. Penguin paperback (see below). Our major written source on Anglo-Saxon paganism.
- Byock, Jesse (tr.). *Saga of the Volsungs*. University of California Press, 2120 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, CA 94720, telephone (800) 822-6657. Perhaps the greatest saga of our folk and for some reason not published by Viking-Penguin.
- Dauster, Will von (ed.). *Mountain Thunder*; a beautifully produced Heathen magazine which always had excellent articles and artwork. No longer printing, but back issues and articles can still be ordered. Get them now. All correspondence to *Mountain Thunder*, 1630 30th St. #266, Boulder, Colorado 80301.
- - *Asatru News Service*, a small publication/newsletter, same address as above for information/ordering.
- Edred Thorsson. *FUTHARK* (runic practise), *Runelore* (runic theory), *At the Well of Wyrð* (divination). All published by Samuel Weiser, Box 612, York Beach, ME 03910. Also *Northern Magic* (brief synopsis), *9 Doors of Midgard* (Rune-Gild's initiatory course), and **A Book of Troth* (brief outline of Troth practise, though somewhat dated as the organization has evolved since its publication), all from Llewellyn. Look for the upcoming **Wicca of the True* as well: a fine work which ably collects the scattered material on the Vanic cults, though prone to excessive leaps of imaginative theory at times.
- *Ellis-Davidson, H.R. *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe*. Viking-Penguin, 375 Hudson St., New York, New York 10014-3657, telephone (800) 331-4624. Basic description of the religion. All of Hilda's works are extremely highly recommended, though you have to watch her on the smaller details sometimes. *Myths and Symbols in Pagan Europe*, which discusses both Germanic and Celtic materials, is also still in print in paperback. University of Syracuse Press, 1600 Jamesville Ave., Syracuse, New York 13244 (800) 365-8929. *Lost Beliefs of Northern Europe* was just released (1993). Routledge Inc. 29 West 35th St., New York, NY 10001.
- *Gamlinginn. *Orðasafn of Gamlinginn*. Can be ordered through *Idunna* or *Mountain Thunder*. Dictionary of Norse words, religious/magical terms, place-names, persons, events - a vital work.
- Grönbech, Vilhelm. *Culture of the Teutons* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931). Unfortunately out of print, but can be obtained at your library or through inter-library loan. A huge and immensely detailed tome, explaining the very roots of our ancestral thoughts and beliefs in the beautiful prose of a scholar with true spiritual understanding.
- Hagen, Ann. *A Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Food: Processing and Consumption* (Anglo-Saxon Books, 25 Malpas Drive. Pinner, Middlesex, England. 1992). This is a handy and accessible paperback reference work for those who want to serve authentic Migration or Viking Age style feasts. You will be surprised at the wide range of foods our forebears had!
- *Hillcourt, William Bill. *Official Boy Scout Handbook*. This book is a must for any person or group who plans to do any sort of outdoor ritual, teaching both practical techniques for firestarting, camping, and so forth and a responsible, aware attitude towards the environment and one's own actions.
- *Hollander, Lee. *The Poetic Edda*. University of Texas Press, P.O. Box 7819, Austin, TX 78713-7819, telephone (512) 471-7233. Collection of the religious poems of our ancestors, on which the Prose Edda was more or less based. A new translation by Patricia Terry (1990) is also available, but is just as seriously inaccurate as Hollander's and lacks the beauty of his Germanic-poetic language. University of Pennsylvania Press, Blockley Hall, 418 Service Drive, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104. (800) 445-9880.
- *Kveldulf Gundarsson. *Teutonic Magic*. (Llewellyn) Magic, culture, religion. A good introduction to the runes.

- *Kveldulf Gundarsson. *Teutonic Religion* (Llewellyn, summer of 1993). Religion, culture, rituals.
- Simek, Rudolf; Angela Hall, tr. *Dictionary of Northern Mythology* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1993). A brilliant reference work, the most accessible source for reliable etymology in English, which also gives further bibliography for most entries.
- Simpson, Jacqueline (ed., tr.). *Scandinavian Folktales*. Viking Penguin, Inc. 40 West 23rd St., New York, NY 10010. 1988. ISBN 0-14-059505-8.
- *Snorri Sturluson; Anthony Faulkes (tr.). *Edda*. Everyman's Press, Charles E. Tuttle Co, P.O. Box 410, Rutland VT 05207-0410, telephone (800) 526-2778. The Prose Edda, our basic collection of stories.
- Snorri Sturluson; Erling Mosen, A.H. Smith (trs., eds). *Heimskringla*. Dover Publications, Inc. 180 Varick St., New York, NY 10014.
- *Turville-Petre, E.O.G. *Myth and Religion of the North*. \$66. Basic reference work on the subject in English. Greenwood Publishing Group, P.O. Box 5007, Westport, Connecticut 06881, telephone (203) 226-3571.
- Viking Penguin also publishes translations of the major sagas. The most important ones are *Egil's Saga*, *Grettir's Saga*, *Eyrbyggja Saga*, *Njal's Saga*.

I am grateful to Lavrans Reimer-Møller for his work in researching the contact addresses/phone numbers of these publishers, his two-part article on the subject in *Mountain Thunder* issues 7 and 10, and his permission for allowing me to reproduce this small selection of his materials here. I am also grateful to Will von Dauster, the publisher of *Mountain Thunder*, for his permission for same and in general for continuing to put out a first-rate magazine (see reference above), and to Gamlinginn for the use of his recommended booklist and contact addresses.

Three books to avoid at all costs are: Ralph Blum's *Book of Runes* (and anything else by Blum), Ed Fitch's *Rites of Odin*, D.J. Conway's *Norse Magic*. These works are filled with gross misinformation, and have nothing whatsoever to recommend them except that there are real nice pictures in *Rites of Odin*.

The library of a Garth should include a few basic primary texts in the original languages, plus necessary supplementary works such as dictionaries. These are:

- Bosworth, Joseph; T.Northcote Toller. *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* and *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary: Supplement*. Oxford University Press. Extremely expensive (150 pounds for the dictionary, 95 pounds for the supplement, which is necessary), really only for those seriously focusing on Anglo-Saxon materials. For more casual use, get Clark Hall's *Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, University of Toronto Press, 5201 Dufferin St., Downsview M3H5T8, Canada, ISBN 0-8020-6548-1.
- Braune, Wilhelm. *Althochdeutsches Lesebuch* and *Althochdeutsches Grammatik*. The former is a collection of all the major Old High German texts, including some interesting charms; the latter is the grammar. You need pretty good German to tackle these books. Max Niemeyer Verlag, Pfrondorfer Str., Postf. 2140, D-7400 Tübingen, Germany.
- Cleasby, Richard; Gudbrand Vigfusson, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*. 125 pounds (about \$185 at current exchange rate). If necessary, Zoega's *Concise Icelandic Dictionary* (also from Oxford, 45 pounds) can be used instead, although it is seriously inferior. C-V gives all occurrences of each word, usually with context, and makes an attempt (though not always reliable) at etymologizing; Zoega gives only usual meanings. Oxford University Press: 2001 Evans Road, Cary, North Carolina 27513, (916) 677-0977. ISBN 0-19-863103-0.
- *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar* (3 vols). The best available, containing much textual material not to be found elsewhere, such as 'Skáldatal'. At 500 DM (approx. \$375), grossly expensive, but worth it, especially if your Garth is expected to expand into a Hof within the foreseeable future. Otto Zeller, Jahnstr. 15, Postf. 1949, D-4500 Osnabrück, Germany. ISBN 3-535-00101-3
 - More reasonably, Anthony Faulkes' *Prologue and Gylfaginning* and *Hattatal* (Oxford University Press, 30 pounds each). Clear, useful editions with full glossary and discussion. The third part of the Prose Edda, *Skáldskaparmál*, is still in production and should be appearing reasonably soon. Warning: Do Not confuse this with Faulkes' *Two Versions of Snorra Edda*, which is a presentation of a very corrupt early modern manuscript and basically useless unless one actually is a textual scholar focusing on the Prose Edda.
- Klaeber. *Beowulf*, 3rd ed. Contains good discussion and own glossary. D.C. Heath and Company, 125 Spring St., Lexington, MA 02173. (617) 862-6650. ISBN 066921212-1.
- Mitchell, Bruce; Fred C. Robinson. *A Guide to Old English*, 5th ed. Contains the major short poems as well as a grammar and some commentary. Blackwell Publishers, 238 Main St., Suite 501, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02142. ISBN 0-631-16657-2
- Neckel, Gustav; Hans Kühn. *Die Lieder der Codex Regius*, 5th ed (1983). Carl Winter, Lutherstr. 59, Postf.

106140, D-6900, Heidelberg, Germany. ISBN 3-533-03081-4.

- A glossary to this work is also available, ISBN 3-533-00559-3, but non-German speakers will want the Beatrice La Farge/John Tucker's *Glossary to the Poetic Edda*. 75 DM (approx. \$50) in hardback, 48 DM in paperback. More extensive than Neckel-Kühn, in any case. Also published by Carl Winter, ISBN 3-533-04540-4 (paperback), 3-533-04541-2 (hardback).
- Tacitus, Cornelius. *Agricola, Germania, Dialogus*. Loeb Classics Library ed., facing-page translation with discussion. Harvard University Press, 79 Garden St., Cambridge, Mass 02138. (617) 495-2600. ISBN 0-674-99039-0
- Valfells and Cathey, *Old Icelandic: An Introductory Course*. Better than Gordon, who is pretty inferior in every way. Oxford University Press, in association with the American-Scandinavian Foundation. The address for the latter is P.O. Box 26305, Minneapolis, Minnesota. (612) 545-7669. British ISBN 0-19-811173-8.
- de Vries, Jan. *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. Best generally available in a commonly-read language. There is no worthwhile etymological dictionary of Old Norse in English, but your Elder-in-training should know or be learning German in any case. E.J. Brill, Oude Rijn 331, NL-2312, HB Leiden, Netherlands.

Secondary Sources

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- Dumézil, Georges; Einar Haugen (tr.). *Gods of the Ancient Northmen*. Beware of taking Dumézil too seriously, as his desire to prove his theories often leads him to twist data or ignore it altogether. Nevertheless, an important scholar with whom all serious researchers of the Northern way should be familiar, whether you agree with him or not. University of California Press, 2120 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, CA 94720. (800) 822-6657.
- Eliade, Mircea. *Rites and Symbols of Initiation* (paperback, \$11). Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 10 East 53rd St., New York, NY, 10022. ISBN 0-06-131236-3.
- Flowers, Stephen. *Sigurdhr: Rebirth and Initiation*. Dr. Flowers' M.A. thesis, a major work on Germanic soul/rebirth concepts. Can be ordered through the Troth or the Rune-Gild.
- Graham-Campbell, James. *The Viking World*. Windward (under W.H. Smith & Son, Ltd.), St. John's House, East Street, Leicester LE1 6NE. ISBN 0-7112-0571-X. Probably has an American printing as well.
- Grimm, Jacob; James Stallybrass (tr.) *Teutonic Mythology* (4 vols). Peter Smith Publishing, 5 Lexington Ave., Magnolia, MA 01930, (508) 525-3562. Unfortunately, for reasons unknown to gods or humans, the publisher sold out of volume IV first. 1-3 are still worth having, but keep a keen eye out in used bookstores for number 4. The Dover paperback ed. is out of print. This is the book for folklore and general correlations between folklore & myth. Many of Grimm's interpretations are way out of date, but this collection is massively full of material that you just won't find elsewhere.
- Jónas Kristjánsson; Peter Foote (tr.). *Eddas and Sagas*. Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1988. This book discusses the origins and dating of the Eddas and Sagas, in general and in particular, and the process of their development. An important reference.
- Jones, Gwyn. *A History of the Vikings*. Oxford University Press.
- Nýlen, Erik; Jan-Peder Lamm. *Stones, Ships, and Symbols*. Basic commentary and photos of the major Gotlandic picture stones (see ref. to *Gotlands Bildsteine* below). Gidlunds Bokförläg, Karlsviksgt. 16, Box 12016, S-112 41 Stockholm. ISBN 91-7844-116-1.
- Ström, Åke; Haralds Biezais. *Germanische und Baltische Religion*. Verlag W. Kohlhammer. Heßbrühl Str. 69, Postf. 800430, D-7000, Stuttgart 80, Germany. ISBN 3-17-001157-X.
- Steinsland, Gro. *Det hellige Bryllup og norrøn kongeideologi*. Dano-Norwegian. Solum Forlag, Åsun 5, N-1324, Lysaker, Norway. ISBN 82-560-0764-8. Also, *Words and Objects*, in English, distributed worldwide by Oxford University Press. ISBN 82-00-007751-9.
- de Vries, Jan. *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* (2 vols). Best overall view of the religion. Walter deGruyter, Gerthiner Str. 13, 1 Postf. 110240, D-1000 Berlin 30. Be apprised that Walter deGruyter also has a branch in America, which may be easier to contact (ask at your local bookstore).
- Wilson, David. *Anglo-Saxon Paganism* (1992). Routledge: 29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001. A really brilliant collection, mostly of archaeological evidence, which tries to present Anglo-Saxon Heathendom without

relying too heavily on an Old Norse interpretation.

Finally, at Garth level, you should be thinking about collecting Old Norse editions of the sagas in addition to your extensive Penguin collection of translations. The recommended eds are published by Hið íslenska fornfritafélag as the "Íslensk fornfrit" series. These books are available through Schoenhof's Foreign Books, Inc., 76A Mount Auburn St., Cambridge, MA 02138, U.S.A. They can also be ordered from Eymundsson, Austurstræti 18, Reykjavík, Iceland. The most important ones for our purposes are #4, *Eyrbyggja saga* (contains much religious and spooky material), #1, *Landnámabók*, and the first volume of *Heimskringla* which contains *Ynglinga saga*. From reading in translation, you should already have a pretty good idea of which others are most important to your garth.

Out of Print

Sadly, some of the books your Garth is likely to need are no longer in print. Life is tough...If you don't have good book-search opportunities, order them through inter-library loan, remembering that photocopying of whole books is illegal even if they are out of print and doing so will not rip off either the publisher or the author - and don't do anything Óðinn wouldn't do.

- *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* (eds. Vigfusson & Powell). Collection of skaldic poetry. The edition and translation are less than the best, but the translation is into English. The favourite collection is Finnur Jónsson's *Den Norske-islandske skjaldedigtning* (4 vols), which is the standard edition used by all scholars, with both semi-diplomatic and normalized texts, and good translations - into Danish. The 1973 photographic reprint from Rosenkilde & Bagger may possibly still be in print. Rosenkilde & Bagger, Kronprinseng. 3, POB 2184, DK 1017, København.
- Branston, Brian. *Gods of the North* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1955). A far-reaching, though rather over-imaginative, discussion of Norse mythology.
- Ellis, H.R. *The Road to Hel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1943; rep. Greenwood Press, 1977). Major work on Germanic afterlife concepts.
- Finnur Jónsson. *Lexicon Poeticum* (Copenhagen: Atlas Bogtryck, 1966). Glossary of poetic Old Norse, with all occurrences of every word, including names. In Danish.
- Flowers, Stephen. *Runes and Magic*. Flowers' Ph.D. thesis, probably the best work ever written by him. The Peter Lang Publishing, Inc. 1986 edition is out of print, but the original thesis is currently available from University Microfilms (\$55 soft-bound, \$66.50 hard-bound: 300 Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106 1346 (1-800-521-3042). May be republished by Runa-Raven Press within the next couple of years.
- Helm, Karl. *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* (Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung: Heidelberg, 1953). Slightly dated, but respectable. Particularly useful in that it separates the religions of Germanic peoples by their three main branches (North, East, and West).
- Lindqvist, Sune. *Gotlands Bildsteine* (Uppsala: Almqvists & Wicksells Bogtryckeri, 1941) 2 vol. collection of pictures and extensive commentary on the picture-stones of Gotland, one of our major sources on Viking Age religion. The grown-up version of *Stones, Ships, and Symbols*.
- Meissner, Rudolf. *Die Kenningar der Skalden* (Bonn: Kurt Schroeder, 1921). A collection and categorization of all skaldic kennings, with commentary.
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- Owen, Gale R. *Rites and Religions of the Anglo-Saxons* (Dorset Press, 1985) Not overwhelmingly wonderful, but does collect all the major evidence in a single place.
- Philpotts, Bertha S. *The Elder Edda and Ancient Scandinavian Drama* (Cambridge: University Press, 1920). An excellent reference work on the possible use of Eddic poems as bases for holy folk-dramas. Some of her examples are less convincing than others in regards to historical usage, but the whole provides a good guide for modern practise.
- Saxo Grammaticus. *History of the Danes (Gesta Danorum, also called The Danish History of Saxo Grammaticus)*. Several translations have been made into English, none of which is outstandingly better than the others; Oliver Elton's 1894 (London: David Nutt) is as good as any. Long-winded and often heavily christian, but contains a great deal of material which cannot be found elsewhere, as well as important variants on Eddic myths.
- Storms, Dr. G. *Anglo-Saxon Magic* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1948). Complete texts of charm spells, facing-

page translation, extensive discussion.

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At the same time, it is also time for you to begin collecting articles from periodicals. None of us can yet afford to buy whole collections. However, it is legal to copy no more than 1 article from any given issue - see above caution.

A few of the major periodicals to look out for are:

- *Folklore*
- *Saga-Book of the Viking Society*
- *Fornvännen* (archaeological, much religious material, often with English articles as well as Scandinavian)
- FFC (Folklore Fellowship Communications)
- *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*
- *Scandinavian Studies*.
- *Viking* (be warned - most articles in Scandinavian languages, though often with English summaries)

Our Troth Book-Hoard

Those books which are only listed by writer and title here have full bibliography given in one of the lists above.

This is not a reading-list, so do not be daunted. This is a list of all the works that are referred to in this book, for those who have a need to check references or do further research in a particular area. Those who do not have such needs may safely ignore this list.

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