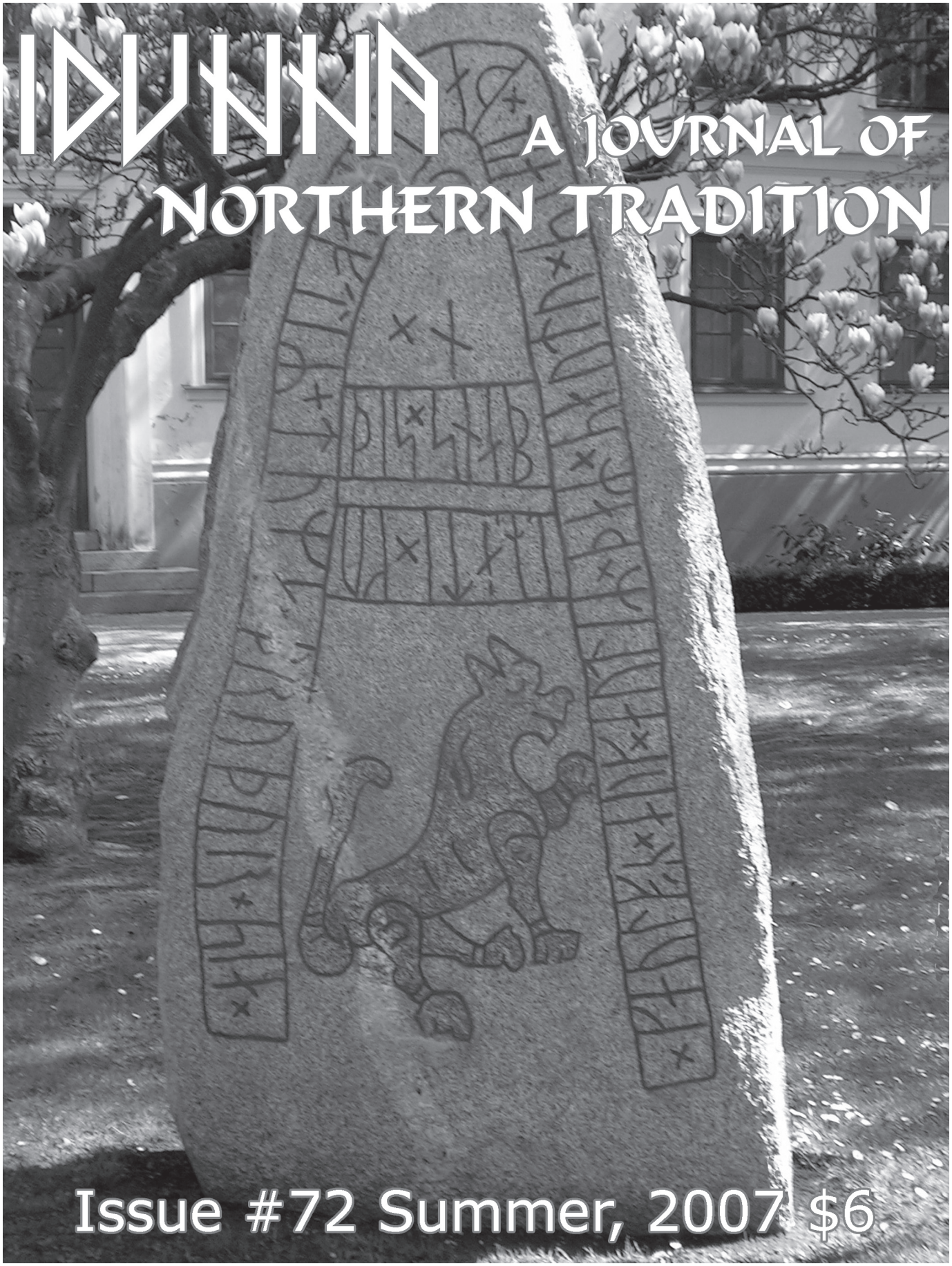
IDUNNA

A Journal of Northern Tradition



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THE TROTH * PO Box 1369 * Oldsmar, FL 34677-1369

Idunna, the name of this journal, is taken from the Germanic Goddess whose golden apples are the food of the Gods. By eating of this fruit, the Gods and Goddesses remain ever vibrant. By once again partaking of this divine food of the spirit, we revivify these Gods and Goddesses, and restore them to their vital role in our world and our lives.

The time has come once again to gather together those folk called to the land and the sky, who are awed by the majesty of the mountains and the deep beauty of the forest. The time has come to sink deep the roots of those folk, noble and true, that our branches may again brush the heavens. This is the time of the Elder Troth, time for this faith and this way to rise again from the hearts of all men and women in and of the folk. Come together now to forge again the Hammer of the North, that steadfast Hammer which is our own Troth.

The ways of true men and women are many. The Troth promotes a multiplicity of approaches to the gods and goddesses, for the realities of these wights are many and have many true levels. We ask, then, that those who join with us do so for religious and cultural reasons, and respect others who have done the same. The use of the Troth, its publications, or its activities as platforms for political or racial propaganda will not be tolerated.

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We warmly welcome essays, research writings, short stories, poetry, artwork, and letters to the Editor on topics of general religious and announced themes. We prefer to receive material is by e-mail (in RTF, DOC, or text format) to **greyhavn@earthlink.net**, followed by hard copy via snailmail (for reference)or as hard copy along with a computer file on 3.5" diskette in text format, or a very clear double spaced manuscript. We try to acknowledge receipt and indicate whether submissions have been accepted for publication, but cannot always guarantee this. Submitted materials will be returned if you enclose a self addressed stamped envelope. Send photos or other images as computer files, preferably in TIFF format at 300 dpi resolution or greater. Images in other formats and at lower resolutions will not be as good. Make sure your image will look good in grayscale. We can also scan hard copy.

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AT THE TILLER

Demarus

Hail the Members!

"Should I stay or should I go to Trothmoot?"

"Ya ' gotta go. Can't decide? OK, I'll help--
On the down side:
It'll probably be hot.
There will be ticks.
The liquor store is, well, not close enough.
But there is always plenty of mead and beer. Food too. If you plan well, your tick checker will be, ahh, never mind. Anyway there are plenty of reasons to attend Trothmoot.
Here are some of them—

It's a chance for all of you to meet the folks who do the work and make the big money decisions about the Troth, its growth and direction. It's a chance for you to volunteer and share ideas and concerns with the officers and other members. I hope this year that some of our esteemed elders and various authors will be able to attend. Books! Blots and vendors, Oh my!

We get to honor the Gods. We get to do that on a large scale which in my opinion makes things much more powerful and interesting. When we gather like this we build frith, something we just cannot do without.

Oh yeah, and you get to have the Rede serve you dinner on feast night. So there you go. Get there.

The Troth is growing. I believe that it's time to make some strong changes within the organization to better enhance our luck, word fame and function. For instance, we have already taken on Mike Hicks in a public relations capacity to help us get our words and deeds out to both the Heathen community and the general public. By now all of you who are on the members' list know that the new version of Project Yggdrasil has been implemented at last. This will go a long way toward making the Troth truly user-friendly and member-driven.

Other long term projects are coming to fruition. We will need funds to make them viable. We still need input from you on several subjects. At the business meeting I'd like to discuss our clergy program. I want to talk about making some changes to the Rede structure also.

As always, there will be personnel changes at this moot, as newly-elected Rede members replace those who have completed their terms and the Rede appoints new officers.

I am very much in favor of establishing stronger and more formal kindred ties and affiliations to the Troth while still maintaining the value of individual membership. While it's true we are not involved in growth competition with other organizations (we actively encourage cross organizational membership), it makes sense for us to appeal to members of other organizations by offering a membership structure that will encourage further growth.

We'll be discussing a lot of other important topics at Trothmoot as well. As far as I'm concerned, discussion online is not the best way to make changes. It can work, to be sure—the Rede has been holding meetings on-line for some time and will continue to do so, and the members' list has seen some very productive discussions. However it is much more satisfying to share opinions, accomplish goals, make progress, and achieve success, by working with others in person.

So I'll hope to see you there. If you can't make it, don't worry, we won't talk about you.... much. Hold down the fort while I smoke a stogie will ya"?

RUNE POEMS by Valerie Cattaneo

ᚨ ANSUZ

Ancestor, deity, speech, thought,
Ansuz inspires us,
Ansuz ridicules us.
A thought well spoken gives honour
to the deities and ancestors,
Boasting of wisdom speaks of ignorance
one is eager to hide.
Knowledge is acquired with humility and
curiosity,
Idiocy does not require a lot of effort to
acquire.
Ansuz unites us with the Divine and to
its wisdom,
It is in our power to use it well.

ᚱ RAIDHO

Journey, experience, movement, change,
Raidho carries us,
Raidho loses us.
It is through experience and discovery,
That we learn the most.
Adaptation to change and acceptation
of difference,
Uplifts us in new places,
Even one who does not travel any further
than the limits of his own house,
Travels to the furthest lands when he opens
himself to the immensity of
the universe that surrounds him.

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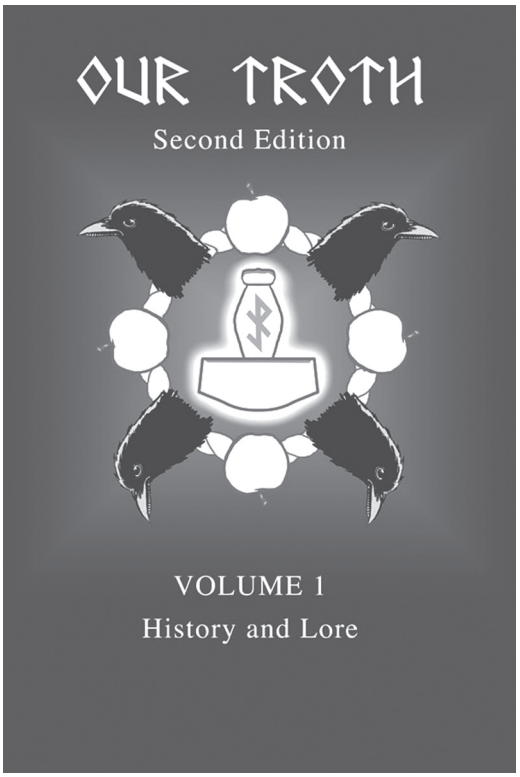

Our Troth II: Living the Troth, will be available this summer. For details, see the Troth website.

THE SHOPE SPEAKS

Diana L. Paxson

I once had the dubious honor of being introduced as a convention speaker by a sleep-deprived emcee who proudly presented me as the author of *Taking up the Ruins.*

When I stopped laughing, I had to explain that far from being "ruins", the Runes have recently experienced a rebirth. In fact, more people may be studying them now than ever before. The enthusiastic response to my request for submissions on the subject is certainly proof that runic studies are alive and well in the Troth. We received too many pieces to fit in this issue.

It has always seemed to me that one of the great advantages of being heathen is that we have our very own secret alphabet. The runes are useful in so many ways. We can use them for communication—and some believe that was their only use. But others find in them a key to understanding the nine worlds—both perspectives are represented here. Some believe that through divination the runes connect us to ørlög. Others inscribe or chant them to focus their powers for use in healing and other kinds of magic. In my opinion, to truly understand the runes we must use the tools both of scholarship and meditation—both UPG and the lore.

Each rune acts as a doorway to some aspect of northern culture, and to learn them is to gain an overview of our religion. In addition, the runes are marvellously decorative, lending themselves easily to painting or carving, knitting or embroidery. Like our ancestors, modern heathens put runic inscriptions on clothing, weapons and ritual tools. Whether you have worked with the runes for years or are just getting interested, I think that in this issue you will find something you did not know before.

We begin with an excellent overview of runic evolution by Patricia Lafayllve. Next, Mike Smith discusses his experiential approach to runic research. Dan Campbell offers a skeptic's view of rune magic, balanced by Ulf Asgardson's insights on contemplation of the runes as a path to spiritual gnosis. Returning to the lore, Steve Pollington provides valuable information on the development of the Anglo-Saxon runes. And lest we think that using the runes is only for serious scholars, David Thomas tells us how he created Runesticks for his grandchildren in a very unlikely setting to pass a rainy afternoon. Nor are rune-poems a thing of the past, as we see in the examples written by Mike Smith, Valerie Cattaneo, and Cynthia Wallin.

But our other interests are not forgotten. Just in time for Trothmoot, Melanie Rowand-White explores the meaning of "Troth". Ben Waggoner discusses more brands of mead and Teresa Luedke reveals the many uses of the herb, plantain. There are reviews of music for the meadhall and the metal fans, and more volumes for the book hoard with reviews of Kveldulf Gundarsson's, *Elves, Wights and Trolls*, John Lindow's *Norse Mythology*, and *Rudiments of Runelore* by Stephen Pollington.

Themes for Upcoming Issues:

#73	Fall	the Land	8/15/07
#74	Winter	Yule fires	11/15/07
#75	Spring	Beowulf	2/15/08
#76	Summer	Heimdall	4/15/08

Do you have an idea for an article? A column? A review?
Contact the Shope at
greyhavn@earthlink.net

Toasts & Boasts:

To Fred Twombly and Anja Mueller,
Married April 7 in Kennebunkport, ME

To Matthias and Teresa Luedke,
who proudly welcome a grandson to the family!
Daughter Cristina brought 10 1/2 lb.Will Nathanial
Martinez Jr.into the world on April 16th, as husband
Will Sr. stood by her side. Hail Frigg!

To the memory of ProfessorLiviu Lebrescu,
killed while barring the door with his body
to protect his students
during the Virginia Tech massacre,
April 16th , 2007.

ᚠᚢᚦᚨᚱᚲ
A Descriptive Approach to Runic Origins

by Patricia Lafayllve

The runic scripts—known initially as "futhark" for the first runes ᚠ(F), ᚢ (U), ᚦ (TH), ᚨ (A), ᚱ (R), and ᚲ (K)—are alphabetic and phonological symbols appearing in Northern Europe as early as 200 CE. They quickly spread throughout the continent and diverged to suit language variation. Scholars debate runic origins. It should be stated that any item dating to early antiquity remains, to some degree, shrouded in mystery. Examining the functions of the futhark provides some clarity to the long-standing arguments surrounding the runic alphabet. This paper examines the etymological and historical theories regarding the runes and discusses their use in language, culture, religion, and magic. I propose that, indeed, their function should determine any decisions regarding their origins.

A cursory examination reveals a series of overlapping theories regarding runic origins. It is clear that the so-called barbarian tribes—Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Franks, Frisans, Goths, Vandals, Lombards, Teutons and the Scandinavians—each had a distinct culture and spoke languages derived from early Germanic. As R.I. Page points out, "[a]ll these spoke Germanic languages. … Germanic had distinctive characteristics of structure and pronunciation which are reflected in its descendants" (*Runes* 6). This suggests that we can draw similarities between these tribes through their use of runic forms. Nielsen states:

> A great majority of the over 120 inscriptions written with the 24-letter futhark date back to the period A.D. 200-500, and they are written in a language which is surprisingly uniform and which is even more conservative than Gothic. Unaccented vowels, e.g., show less tendency to disappear here than they do in any other early Germanic language… (5)

It can be argued that by understanding the underpinnings of the futhark one can understand the language origins of Northern European tribal peoples. Therefore, an etymological examination of root words leading to the word "rune" should prove illuminating.

The Modern English word "Rune" can be traced back to its Indo-European root. Indeed, Edred Thorsson tells us: "The word 'rune' is indigenous to the Germanic group of languages, and it is found in all ancient Germanic dialects" (*Futhark* 1). The Indo-European root, **reu-*, 'to roar' (Thorsson, *Futhark* 1), in and of itself gives a clue to what the ancient Germanics meant by the use of the term. In her book *The Old English Rune Poem: a Critical Edition*, Maureen Halsall provides a detailed examination of the etymology of the word "rune":

> The root *run-* appears throughout the recorded Germanic languages, not merely in words for 'runic character' (such as Old English *runstoef*, Danish *rune*, Swedish *runa*, and the Old Norse plural *runar*), but also in nouns meaning "secret, private consultation (such as Old English *run*, Old High German *runa*, Old Icelandic *runar*, and Gothic *garuni*) and in cognate verbs meaning 'to whisper' (such as Old English *runian*, Old Saxon *runon*, and Old High German *runen*) (7).

An initial examination of the etymological meanings provides an understanding of how the Germanic tribes viewed the runic alphabet. From the Indo-European "roar," to "whisper," through "runic character" to "secret, private consultation," interpretations abound. Two major theories have developed. The first, a practical approach, suggests that the runes were used for purely mundane purposes and only later used sacrally. The second approach emphasizes the cultic and magical significance, the argument being that the runic alphabets were, first and foremost, seen as sacred. These theories will be developed further as this paper progresses. However, based on etymology, the runes held more than simply a mundane meaning for the tribes of northern Europe.

For now, let us examine the runic alphabet's historical origins. Investigating the historical documentation leaves more questions than answers. Three preferred theories of runic origins have been offered by runologists. The first, suggested

by Danish scientist L.F.A Wimmer, claims the runes are an offspring of the Latin alphabet. Evidence for this theory stems from the similarity of the letters F, R, H, and B to their runic equivalents ᚠ, ᚱ, ᚺ, and ᛒ. Wimmer suggested that the runic alphabet first appeared approximately 300 CE, but Freya Aswynn points out: "[t]his assumption has been shown to be mistaken, because the first runic archeological finds have been dated earlier" (5).

The second theory, that the runes were developed from the Greek cursive and then carried north by the Goths, also has its problems. This theory, developed by "S. Bugge (in *Norges Indskrifter med de aeldre Runer, Inledning*, 1905-13) and O. von Friesen (in Hoop's *Reallexicon der germanischen Altertumskunde*, vol. iv, 1919)" (Gordon 181) places the origin of the runic alphabet among the Goths living on the Black Sea's north coast. "The symbols were taken mainly from the Greek alphabet, though certain letters, namely f, u, r, and h are clearly forms of Latin letters" (Gordon 181). Again, though, this theory suggests that the runes appeared circa 300 CE, which other scholars argue is too late to be accurate.

The third theory is the one currently held by most prominent runologists and runic scholars. Put forth by C. G. S. Marstrander and M. Hammarstrom (Aswynn 6), it suggests:

> ...the best formal parallels are provided by a group of letter-series based on the Etruscan alphabet that were in use among sub-alpine tribes in Northern Italy from the fifth century BC until the first century AD, when they were engulfed by the Roman alphabet and became extinct (Halsall 5-6).

Many others agree. E. V. Gordon argues: "the actual symbols used correspond most closely to those of the North Italian alphabets," although he takes care to point out that "so far no such alphabet has been discovered which contains all the runic symbols" (Gordon 181). Although the precise means by which the runes spread from northern Italy and into the Baltic regions remain obscure, in her 1981 work Maureen Halsall confidently states: "[s]uffice it to say, however, that little doubt now remains regarding the runes' place of origin" (6).

However, the debate continues. In the 1987 work *Runes: Reading the Past*, R. I. Page, citing the work of the Danish scholar Erik Moltke, points to another runic theory. Moltke's argument is that the runes were a "creation of one of the Germanic tribes of Denmark, perhaps of southern Jutland where Scandinavia was nearest to Rome" (Page, *Runes* 9). Page admits that many of the earliest runic inscriptions continue to be found in Denmark, which "make[s] this the most attractive theory so far published" (*Runes* 9).

Whatever their origin, by 200-300 CE the runes were in wide use in northern Europe. The oldest example of a complete futhark is seen on the Kylfver stone, discovered on the island of Gotland and dating to the fourth century CE (Gordon 181). R. I. Page argues for an earlier probable date for the runic alphabet, stating:

> Our earliest inscriptions in runes date perhaps from the late second century AD. Already they show mastery of the script and some variety of technique recording it. They are on metal as well as on wood. So mature are they that probably a century or so of runic history lies behind them. This would bring the invention of the runic alphabet back to near the beginning of the Christian era, which is as close as we can get at present (*Rune*s 9).

The oldest futhark—also called the "elder" futhark– consists of 24 runic symbols. Each rune corresponds to a letter of the alphabet and to a phonological sound. Two major variants of the elder futhark are prevalent in the archeological and manuscript record—a Scandinavian or "younger" futhark comprising only 16 symbols, and the Anglo-Saxon futhorc (the A rune, in the elder futhark was replaced in position by the Anglo Saxon O). Freya Asywnn states that "the Anglo-Saxon futhark arose from an earlier Anglo-Frisian futhark" (8) as a result of the "migration of the Saxons, Angles, Jutes and Frisians to England" (8-9). Here she is on shaky ground—typically futhorcs in general are referred to as Anglo-Frisian, from their development along the North Sea. No complete Anglo-Frisian futhorc exists, although there is some evidence for certain runes specific to Old Frisian phonology being used.

While a careful and detailed examination of the phonological shifts between futharks is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to note that in every case the letters added to or removed from the elder futhark represented development of sounds. This happened fairly rapidly, as language changes go. In the case of the "younger" or 16-character Scandinavian runic alphabet, René Derolez maintains:

> By the end of the eighth century, the original runic alphabet common to a number of Germanic tribes, if not to all, was being subjected to a radical renovation in the Scandinavian area. The result of this renovation was

> an alphabet of only sixteen characters, which replaced the old twenty-four character alphabet all over Scandinavia after what seems to have been a very short transition period (31).

The Anglo-Saxon futhorc began its shift away from its "elder" beginning roughly in the middle of the fifth century (Aswynn 9). Maureen Halsall suggests that the anonymous poet who first recorded the Anglo-Saxon rune poem invented some of the twenty-nine runes. She argues further that:

> Although some of the twenty-nine runes defined by the poet appear to have been invented in England after the Anglo-Saxon invasions, the majority boast a more ancient lineage and can be traced back in relatively unaltered form to the continental Germanic homeland (3).

Indeed, Derolez's study of *De Inventione Litterarum*, an eighth-century manuscript discussing the conquest of the Saxon tribes by Charlemagne proves that "under its German garb—the names of the runes, and some of the sound values assigned to the characters, show unmistakable German influence" (31). Aspects of the Anglo-Saxon futhorc, particularly the use of the "th" rune (ᚦ) existed into the Middle Ages and was only replaced with the advent of the printing press. Studying the languages expressed by the futhorc, then, provides a link to the reconstruction of Indo-European and other, later Germanic tongues. As always this is problematic, as Hans Nielsen clearly illuminates:

> When we attempt to determine the relationship between the Germanic languages, we are hampered by the difficulty of defining the language of the older runic inscriptions—not least because of the relative scarcity and limited geographical distribution of the inscriptions (11).

Hans Nielsen goes on to point out that early runic scripts show close parallels with Old English, Old Frisian, and what he refers to as Old Saxon. He argues that these parallels are "shared by Old Norse, but not by Old High German" (11). Nielsen's argument is that we must reject a "(pre-) Old High German" (11) or "North-West Germanic" (11) term for the early runic language.

This concept can be challenged, however, by examining the *Abecedarium Nordmannicum.* Derolez refers to the *Abecedarium* as "a poem, or rather, a poor piece of doggerel, enumerating the runes of the shorter Scandinavian alphabet, and their names" (32). He points out that the text is a mix of Low and High German while the runes themselves date to the ninth-century and are most likely Danish (32). Clearly, the Roman writer of the *Abecedarium Nordmannicum* (roughly translated: the ABC's of the Northman) did not understand the runic alphabet but wanted to see the language form preserved. What is notable is his use of both Low and High German languages in his manuscript.

Despite their frequent errors, it is to scribes such as the author of the *Abecedarium Nordmannicum* that we owe our knowledge of the runes. As Halsall points out, a "welcoming attitude" toward Germanic culture resulted in:

> ...the Christian monasteries of England to introduc[ing] the futhorc into the new environment of books, thus establishing a tradition that was to make Old English Rune part of the minor scholarly apparatus of all the European monasteries that either directly or indirectly came into contact with English scholarship. Scribes copied down the traditional futhorc sequence in manuscripts, recorded for the first time the names by which the individual runes were known and memorized, and also set Latin alphabet equivalents against each runic symbol (17).

Somewhat more stoically, Derolez reminds us that "[a]ny missionary contemplating working in Scandinavia would have found some knowledge of the runes a useful asset" (32). Regardless of their intent, it is clear that scribes preserved the runic alphabets as best they could. At this point I must leave aside theories regarding the historical origins of the futhark and enter the next series of debates.

R.I. Page points out that the runes may, or may not, have been used originally in a manuscript culture. Page examines the etymology of our modern verb "to write" and explains:

> Runes were not designed for writing in our sense of the word. The Old English equivalent of this verb, *writan*, means 'to inscribe, engrave,' and the cognates of our verb 'to read,' Old English *raedan*, Old Norse *rada*, can mean among other things 'to interpret,' used of an inscribed text. Thus, the earliest form of reading and writing known to the Germanic people involved incised letters. Runic script was designed for inscribing, at first on wood, and it had appropriate characteristics (*Runes* 6).

R. I. Page also points out that the runes had meaning beyond their phonetic value. As an example, in the Anglo-Saxon poem called "The Ruin", "the poet laments the decay of *meodoheall monig, mondreama full*, "Many a mead-hall, full of human pleasures.' Instead of writing *mon-* ('man, human being'), the scribe puts the *m*-rune, whose name this is" (*Runes* 16). Clearly, then, the runes were used to inscribe phonetic sounds and meanings. Maureen Halsall agrees and points out that the futharks themselves were mnemonic devices "recited to assist in their memorization" (3). I suggest that even the *Abecedarium Nordmannicum* can be seen as a mnemonic device. This might go far toward explaining why it was written as doggerel in the first place. Rudolf Simek tells us:

> ...[t]he length, type, and purpose of the runic inscriptions are very varied and encompass single concept runes on weapons and amulets as well as extensive inscriptions, such as on the Swedish runestone at Rok which contains over 750 signs (268).

These records can be examined in terms of their function. Indeed, we see a great deal of memorial stones throughout Northern Europe. From these we can extrapolate a great deal about the culture which produced these alphabetical symbols as we consider the runes themselves. An inscription found on a stone in Tune, Norway, reads:

> *Ek Wiwar after Woduride*
> *Witandahalaiban worahto r(unor)*
>
> 'I, Wiwar, in memory of Wodurid, guardian of the bread, made (these) runes.' (Page, *Runes* 31)

Once we realize that the modern word "lord" comes from the Old English *hlaford*—which in its turn came from **half-ward*, the title "guardian of the bread" becomes more clear. **Hlaf-ward* translates roughly to "loaf-ward" (Page, *Runes* 31). We can therefore determine that Wiwar was in some sort of relationship—kinship or otherwise—with a man of higher status, his lord Wodruid. This can allow us to deduce that a form of hierarchical status existed in the tribes of Norway. We cannot argue in further detail without a fuller examination of the historical and archeological record, but certainly the existence of memorial stones is a clear pointer that enhances our cultural understanding.

Not every inscription was set into poetic form. We find a simple statement of ownership: "Domnal Seal's-Head owns this sword" (Gordon 186) inscribed on a sword-hilt found in a grave mound in Ireland dating to the twelfth century. Memorial stones were often raised to commemorate the dead, as seen above and also with this inscription, carved into a stone at Hallestad, Skane circa 985:

> Askel raised this stone in memory of Toki Gorm's son, his true lord, who fled not at Upsala. The warriors set, in memory of their brother, a stone standing fast with runes upon the rock—those who were nearest to Toki, Gorm's son (Gordon 191).

There are numerous - and often humorous—examples of graffiti found in all the areas the so-called "Vikings" traveled in. H. R. Ellis Davidson notes that the explorers and raiders "had the effrontery to cut runic inscriptions on ancient tombs like Maeshowe in Orkney, and on classical monuments like the marble lion of the Piraeus" (*Gods and Myths* 13). This is certainly one indication that human society has not changed much over the centuries. And yet, one of the most important runic inscriptions comes from a cross found in a church at Ruthwell, Dumfries, and Galloway. R. I. Page describes it as:

> ...one of the greatest pieces of stone sculpture from early times in the United Kingdom. … East and west faces have plant scrolls with birds and beasts, and in the margins a series of lines of runes, set two, three or four to the line. They reproduce part of an early version of a poem on the cross which is also known in a later, written, text, usually called "The Dream of the Rood" (*Runes* 39).

This poem is considered to be one of the most important Anglo-Saxon period poems, and is studied as a form of early literature even into modern times. One could argue that "The Dream of the Rood" shows the side of human nature which balances the "graffiti urge." As I have shown, a study of the rune-stones in the Anglo-Saxon era is as much fascinating for its cultural content as it is for what it reveals about dialect. While R. I. Page thinks that the stones are "not very exciting in content" (*Runes* 34), they preserve local dialects and, as Page does admit, "their geographical distribution is clear and they can often be dated on the basis of their sculptural decoration" (*Runes* 34).

A closer look at the rune-stones, runic inscriptions, and their translations can lead to a number of cultural constructions which have little to do with language but are, despite R. I. Page's claims, fascinating to examine. Judith Jesch and Jenny Jochens, among others, have applied

feminist theory to the archeological record of runic inscriptions and shown how the lives of women are recorded using the runic alphabet. Judith Jesch states:

> ...the runic evidence can often be more informative about the lives of women than the mute objects that come out of archeological investigations about which we can only guess whether, how, and when they were used by women…the inscriptions are superior to the archeological evidence in that they enable us to identify real people and learn something about them: their names, their family relationships and, occasionally, some of the facts about their lives and deaths (42).

Women often commissioned memorial stones; some women commissioned more than one. This implies a degree of independent wealth and a high degree of social standing (Jesch 50). Judith Jesch examined the roughly 220 memorial stones in Sweden and found that "approximately 45 mention women in one way or another (the number cannot be calculated exactly because some of the names could be either male or female and many of the inscriptions are fragmentary)" (49). She further notes: "on a surprisingly high proportion of the stones mentioning the names of women (about half of them), the woman is the sole commissioner of the monument" (49). Judith Jesch points out that many women were focused on the military and social status of their deceased husbands (52), which argues that women attained a large degree of their social status through their husbands. She argues that "[t]he runic inscriptions of the late Viking Age, particularly in Sweden, show how women could come into a new prominence where previously they had been invisible" (175).

In contrast, Jenny Jochens studied rune-stones and noted that in Iceland:

> …[a]mong the so-called owners markers written in runes and recently found in Trondheim and Bergen are a number of names of Icelandic men and women. Since these markers, most likely, were attached to merchandise coming from Iceland, they indicate an important Icelandic share in the North Atlantic trade—in which, intriguingly, women were involved (155).

It seems clear that women in Sweden attained a status through their husbands, and it is reasonable to suggest that this is a cultural characteristic common to northern European societies in the Viking Age generally. That women were also involved in trade points to a higher degree of independence for women than is usually assumed—at least in Iceland. One thing is clear: relationships between men and women, as with human society, have not changed all that much over the centuries. An inscription carved in bone and found in Trondheim reads: "I loved her as a maiden; I will not trouble Erlend's detestable wife. When she is a widow it is the better" (Gordon 185).

Evidence abounds regarding the use of runes as inscriptions, and later as manuscript symbols. Clearly as seen above they were used to record the "everyday," what was important to members of the culture at the time. R. I. Page argues that the runes never had a "magical" or "mythic" origin, and their use in cult symbology is purely incidental. Yet, scholars such as C. L. Wrenn have made a detailed study of magical usage. C. L. Wrenn suggests: "[t]he Christian use of runes throughout the Anglo-Saxon period frequently shows traces of magic and cult symbolism" (41). E. V. Gordon concurs, pointing out that in "the four Scandinavian lands the use of runes for charms and memorial inscriptions lasted into the sixteenth century" (Gordon 184). H. R. Ellis Davidson makes the point explicitly:

> Runic letters could be employed for simple statements on wood, stone or metal, and also for magical purposes, and they were well suited for the kind of divination described by Tacitus, since each sign had its own name and signified a definite object… (*Myths and Symbols* 153)

It is worth repeating here that etymologically the root *run-* appeared in nouns meaning "secret," or "private knowledge." This suggests a mystical aspect to the runic alphabet existed. We certainly know that the runes were used for many magical purposes. The chapter from Tacitus' work *Germania* which Ellis Davidson cites above reads in full:

> For omens and the casting of lots they have the highest regard. Their procedure in casting lots is always the same. They cut off a branch of a nut-bearing tree and slice it into strips; these they mark with different signs and throw them completely at random onto a white cloth. Then the priest of the state, if the consultation is a public one, or the father of the family if it is private, offers a prayer to the gods, and looking up at the sky picks up three strips, one

> at a time, and reads their meaning from the signs previously scored on them (Tacitus, 109).

Many scholars use this as a reference to divination with runes and/or lot casting. However, many other historically analogous descriptions and cultic/magical rune-items have been discovered. The saga literature has repeated citations of the use of runes for magical effect, including *Gretti's saga* (chapter 79), *Vatnsdoela saga* (chapter 34) where Jokul cut runes on a *niðstöng*…[and also that] Egil did likewise when he raised a *niðstöng* against Eirik Bloodaxe" (Gordon 183). We also have this: "The young hero Sigurd the Volsung in the poem Sigdrifumal is taught battle-spells and runic lore by a valkyrie" (Ellis Davidson, *Myths and Symbols* 85). Further, in *Egil's Saga*, Egil Skallagrimsson cut and reddened runes on a drinking horn full of poison, which then exploded. Among other things, this led E. V. Gordon to point out:

> The uses of runes were specialized, and most of the inscriptions fall into clearly defined conventional types. The most varied and interesting are those cut for magical effect…An event might be brought to pass if it were cut in runes which were inlaid with blood while charms were recited (183).

Mythologically speaking, the god Odin, known by many names, took up the runes in an experience often likened to that of shamanic initiation. The *Hávamál*, a poem found in the Poetic (or Elder) Edda, is often translated as "The Sayings of Hár." Hár is a by-name for Odin. R. I. Page describes the *Hávamál* as follows:

> Some would have it this is a chance selection of ancient verses linked by the personality of the great god Odin, the High One himself. Others interpret it as a learned compilation and edition from perhaps the twelfth century. In either case most scholars accept that *Hávamál* incorporates matter of great antiquity, probably from the Viking Age: it tells something of the Viking world-picture (*Norse Myths* 15).

Indeed, the *Hávamál* spends a great deal of time expressing such things as manners, the way guests should be treated, and provides a sound expression of the cultural mores in which it was written. Curiously, the *Hávamál* shifts from wise counsel to what is often categorized as a shamanic-style initiatory experience. Odin hangs from Yggdrasil, the World Tree, and relates:

> Neither horn they upheld
> nor handed me bread;
> I looked below me-
> aloud I cried-
> caught up the runes,
> caught them up wailing,
> thence to the ground fell again
>
> *Hávamál* (36),
> trans. Hollander .

This leads C. L. Wrenn to speculate about a link between Odin and the Christian God, referred to by a tenth-century Irish poet "as *Ri ruine* 'king of mysteries.'" (41). C. L. Wrenn notes that the Irish word, *run*, was also used in ecclesiastical writings, and states "it is clearly the same word as the Germanic, whether we regard it as a loan from Germanic to Celtic or vice versa" (41).

In magical usage, runes were often carved and then either painted or smeared with blood (Ellis Davidson, *Myths and Symbols* 148). This is seen in the example from *Egil's Saga* mentioned above, where Egil carved runes into the poison-filled horn, and as H. R. Ellis Davidson points out: "The right question had to be put, and the reply provided by the runes interpreted" (*Myths and Symbols* 148). The origin of this notion also stems from the *Hávamál*. Later in the poem, after Odin has had his initiatory experience and taken up the runes, he boasts of knowing runes to use for various magical purposes. These include the fettering (binding) of enemies, speaking to the dead, and a host of other uses. The *Hávamál* also reads:

> Know'st how to write,
> know'st how to read,
> know'st how to stain,
> how to understand,
> know'st how to ask,
> know'st how to offer,
> know'st how to supplicate,
> know´st how to
> sacrifice?
>
> (*Hávamál,* trans. Hollander 37)

It is this stanza which is often perceived as indicating the use of blood in the runes. "Stain" is often translated as "redden," and this is taken to mean reddening by one's one blood. Indeed, the blood itself becomes sacred, like the blood offered in animal sacrifices. H. R. Ellis Davidson tells us "[s]uch blood [*hlaut*] was frequently said to have been used to redden runes in order to discover the will of the gods" (*Myths and Symbols* 58).

It must be pointed out that the names of the gods themselves seldom appear in runic inscriptions. R. I. Page, despite skepticism on the sacred usage of runes, relates:

> It may be significant here that Thor is the only god

invoked in Viking memorial inscriptions, where such phrases as 'Thor hallow these runes' and 'Thor hallow these monuments display him as a protecting deity (*Norse Myths* 41).

This is the final key to understanding the function of the runes. Clearly they were used for sacred purposes. Even something as simple as asking the god Thor to hallow (roughly "make sacred") the runes carved on a memorial stone reveals ancient Germanic religious belief. Rudolf Simek points this out, stating: "[e]ven if gods' names do not occur frequently…the runic inscriptions are nevertheless of prime importance for the study of Germanic religion" (269).

As we have seen, the origin of the runic alphabets collectively known as futhark or futhorc remains a controversial subject. Additionally, scholars seem to divide themselves into two camps—one stoutly maintaining that the runes were used initially solely for mundane purposes and that magical inscription came later in their development, the other arguing the precise opposite.

A practical approach, as I have attempted in this paper, is to examine the functions of the runic alphabet. This leads to a decision that arguing over the origin of the runic alphabet is in many ways an academic exercise. Clearly the runes were used throughout their history for both mundane and sacred purposes. Their function clearly had an impact on their form, as many northern European tribal peoples adopted the phonology and meanings of the symbols for their own dialects. They then put their own futhorc into action, using them for everything from cult burial blessings to graffiti. Then as now language forms a concrete means of cultural expression.

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Offering, sharing, exchange, sacrifice,
Gebo can be offered, Gebo can be taken.
Gifts that are shared, bring love and friendship.
One who likes to be given gifts,
Must be able to give some in return.
Generosity is very much appreciated,
But humility is essential.

Valerie Cattaneo

Root Knowledge and Researching the Runes

by Mike Smith

I have studied the runes for many years. From time to time, after they have discovered how knowledgeable I may be, a person or two will bug me enough that I will take them as students. I've never yet had anyone last long enough to even get through the exercises and teaching that I've outlined for the first month. Often enough the excuse is, "I'm sorry, but I don't have the time." Later, of course, one finds this same former student engrossed in various rune books by a variety of authors.

I am in no way minimizing the work of the authors of the various books out there. Some I've read, some I have not, some I liked, and some I did not. That's to be expected. Due to publishers' demands and "input", I'm sure not everything the author would appreciate having in the book ends up there. But there is still an important missing piece in the way most people study the runes, and it affects people's expectations and how they plan their time. That piece is the acknowledgement that the runes do not exist in a cultural vacuum.

We are not just studying or relearning the runes themselves, their wisdom, and their mysteries. We are researching them at the same time. Seeking them out by themselves presents a mystery which must be unraveled just in order to learn them. Too often, people seem to assume that they have all the knowledge they need by reading a book or two that is specifically about the runes. This is a farce. Certainly the literary evidence is there (rune poems, translations of texts, manuscripts, runestones, etc.), the archeological evidence is there (rune stones, bracteates, inscriptions on hundreds of objects, etc.), and the historical evidence is there (accounts by others, etc.), but most of us lack the "common knowledge" that someone in those times had as a background.

When we utilize the learning tools that we have before us, it is clear that the runes do not exist in a cultural vacuum or void. They cannot be learned without viewing them within their cultural context. This means that one must become familiar with Germanic cultural norms in order to understand the point of view of those who left those precious clues (poems, objects, etc.) for us to find. We must first know and understand the Germanic concepts of time and the worldview among many other things. This helps us put the puzzle pieces together. We must know the references that those who created the learning tools are referring to in order to recognize the pieces. We must read and understand the myths, sagas, legends, and folklore as much as possible. That is the daunting and seemingly never-ending charge that it appears to me that my few students could not find the time to do. Yet it is so essential. Why is it so difficult to learn the sagas, myths, and legends of the culture that developed the runes in their current forms? Often I have heard later that, "Really, I stopped because I asked you to teach me about the runes, but you were teaching me about Ásatrú or Norse Mythology." No, I was teaching them the runes. They just couldn't see that at the time.

I'll give two of the easiest examples, although many rune seekers still seem amazed at these two simple "revelations" and assure me that they are not so simple. I'll leave you to judge. I only contend that it is the lack of familiarity with the sources that cause these otherwise intelligent peole to not see the connections. Or it is that some people have been stuck in the perception that they need to get direction from an outside source?

The first example I'll give is the very first rune of all the futharks, *Fehu* (ᚠ). Pick up any rune book and it will give you the words wealth and some warnings against greed, cattle, *hamingja*, and gold-fire as ways of describing the essence of the power that is represented by the rune. But where did these authors get these interpretations? (Well, other than from UPG[1]) We have the rune poems, and some authors include these now, as a way of showing us where they got those words. Here are the translations of three known ones[2];

Old English (10th cent manuscript):

> [Wealth] is the comfort to everyone
> although everyone ought to deal it out freely
> if he wants to get approval from the lord.

Old Norwegian (roughly 12th century.)

> [Wealth] causes strife among

kinsmen;
the wolf grows up in the woods.

Old Icelandic (roughly 15th cen.):

[Wealth] causes strife among kinsmen,
and the fire of the flood-tide,
and the path of the wrym.

We can see here a common thread that spans both years and distance. I have seen others use this common description to illustrate that idea that the meaning had a solid basis or to use it as a source of legitimacy. This seems to range from merely stating it was proof that the runes were well established by the time of the Migrations Period to theories of well-organized, pan-Germanic guilds.

But none that I have come across, have looked at it as simply pointing to a deeper root or reference in the research. This is where having a strong background in Germanic culture comes in. Could these poems be giving us a summary or "Cliff's Notes" to point to a better source for understanding what "Fehu" is? Of course!

Dear reader, have you read the *Volsung Saga*? Not a re-telling of a portion of it, but the whole thing from the heroic lays of the Elder Edda to the saga manuscript that dates from the 13th century?[3] These lays are specifically talking about the legend of the Volsungs! But if you have not read the Volsung Saga and know it very well, you would not think of it in reference to Fehu, because you wouldn't know the cultural background--thetales and stories that the people who wrote the rune poems would know as a basis for their understanding of the effect of wealth on people's relationships.

The true mysteries of Fehu can be found within that legend. The first rune is literally pointing to a reference that holds a wealth of runic and magical knowledge that could be studied for a lifetime and still continue to unlock doors for the student of the runes. This, incidentally, is the focus of the first project I gave each person who has ever convinced me to teach them the runes. It is also the project that as yet has never been finished before they would "drop the course".

Yet not a single author that I know of mentions this as plainly as I have just given to you. Here's another;

Old Norwegian:

Ar [Good Harvest] is the profit of men;
I say that Frodhi was generous.

King Frodhi is an obvious clue to the meaning of Ar in the younger futhark. His reign is mentioned in several texts, from the Poetic Edda to Heimskringla to Saxo's History of the Danes. Thus, researching King Frodhi would be a very important element in the study of those runes.

Please understand that I don't claim that every single rune's poem points to a literary (or formerly oral) source. Some may encompass or incorporate wisdom from other sources. Some may reference lost tales that we will possibly never know. The thing I want to point out is the concept that the poems are also directions to find other clues to knowing the essences and powers that the runes reflect and that this search is a multifaceted research project in itself. They could be pointing to multiple places to find that hidden knowledge and understanding. From legend source to the herbology, or arborism4 of the time, there is a wide range of knowledge that could be referred to. Some of it may have been "common" to everyone, but due to cultural changes, technology changes, medicinal changes, etc. is no longer.

After attending one of my rune workshops someone once said to me, "But Mike, according to you that would mean I'd have to study for years and years, in order to learn them." My reply (after noting the gentleman's age) came to something like, "Looks like you have plenty of time to me." This illustrates another problem of the Information Age that makes runic study difficult. People are so used to instant gratification and almost instant retrieval of information, that anything that can't be automatically grasped in a fast food line seems almost impossible to them.

When we seek the mysteries of the runes, we are attempting to seek out something much, much larger than ourselves. Is this so shocking that it will take literally forever to learn what we can of them? Is not that what we should be expecting when we search for such things? This commentary may seem small, but it has great consequences when one ponders it. Think of it as a basic assummption before your study starts and you will do well.

Footnotes:

[1] Unsubstantiated Personal Gnosis: An unsupported personal feeling or theory that cannot be proven using conventional, scientific methodology.

[2] Transl and approximate dates; *Runelore* by Edred Thorson

[3] *The Saga of the Volsungs*, translated by Jesse L. Byock.

[4] More than one rune talks of the properties of various types of wood. (Birch, Yew, etc.)

Some Modern Rune Poems

by Mike Smith

ᚠ *Fehu*

Fortune flares fertile with fair sacrifice.
For it is the lost lamentations of the Lady,
and the ravenous riches of Ran.
But everyone with it, must evade excessive envy.

ᚢ *Uruz*

Undeniably, the mighty aurochs understands
the power under the primal plains.
And the hearty healing earth hails its swift, hoofed herd.
But supernatural strength certainly comes with suspicious secrets.

ᚦ *Þurisaz*

When thunderous thursar cheer the rainbow's throes...
Controlled force fights his frenzied foes,
and brings back the beneficial bairns.
But, the three thorns unchained threaten all.

ᚨ *Ansuz*

Allfather answers the ancient call.
The whispering winds grant the seeker wisdom,
and the roaring steed raves to the righteous rider.
But önd, the breath-of-life bounds too briefly.

ᚱ *Raiðo*

Riding and raiding the rich worlds reap much fortune,
as the mighty chariot marches on the mainlands.
But, the ridden are often wrongly ruined by the regality (royalty?).

ᚲ Kenaz

Controlled, creative fire burns the canvas into colors,
and the temperate torch tames the tedious darkness.
But, the cankerous sore can cause serious afflictions.

ᚷ *Gebo*

Gifts graciously given make good friendships greater,
and equal exchange by lovers escalates emotional encounters.
But, sacrifice given for greed and guile, the gods only give grief.

ᚹ *Wunjo*

Joy and Harmony are the heart of the happy home,
as toddlers track the tiny tomten tirelessly.
But, hallowed happiness is impossible to harness haphazardly.

ᚺ *Hagalaz*

Hail, the harshest of grains, holds haven for holy Helheim,
as Hel shields the souls of the sanctified dead.
It defends the deep earth from detrimental destruction.

ᚾ *Nauþiz*

Need powerfully pushes the body past perceptions,
as the fire of life lovingly lights the lands of the lucid.
But never confuse natural need with notorious want.

ᛁ *Isa*

Ice freezes the ignorant into infamous stasis,
to break free from the frozen fetters it takes need-fire flame.
It also protects the plentiful plains from winter's painful punctures.

ᛃ *Jera*

Year brings the yearning youth of the yard,
and the sowing cycles reap for the conscientious caretaker.
But harvest heralds heavy only for the hard-working.

ᛇ *Eihwaz*

Yew bears the most beneficial of bows,
and from Ydal yields Ullr's yawning winter hunt.
But wolf-hook warrior wields his angled weapon

ᛈ *Perþro*

Lot-box orders the ørlög of others,
and úrð upholds the ultimate outcomes.
But luck is not lavished on the lazy.

ᛉ *Elhaz*

Elk's ancient antlers adorn its able crown,
and it is the favorite fist of Frey's fury.
Protection comes charging to the courageous and kind.

ᛊ *Sowilo*

Sunna shines brightly with shimmering sun rays,
and the wagon whirls wearily from the wolf.
But over-venerated victory by the volk, invents vulnerability.

ᛏ *Tiwaz*

Tyr of the Aesir accepts the amputation,
the wolf-joint justly given to the jaws.
But the loss of loyalty and virtue is longly lamented.

ᛒ *Berkano*

Birch and willow heated, heals the head.
The winds whisper, unwinding the white bark
and benefits the beautiful bounty of birth.

ᛖ *Ehwaz*

Horse hastens the honorable hero.
Such a constant companion compares to none.
But the uncaring undo the ultimate charger.

ᛗ *Mannaz*

Man can make Miðgarð mighty and strong,
And many a friend was made with mead.
But the quarrelsome quickly finds his quiver empty.

ᛚ *Laguz*

Leek wards off woesome wights,
like white mud and waxing waters from the well.
Law must flow fluidly to further the folk soul.

ᛜ *Ingwaz*

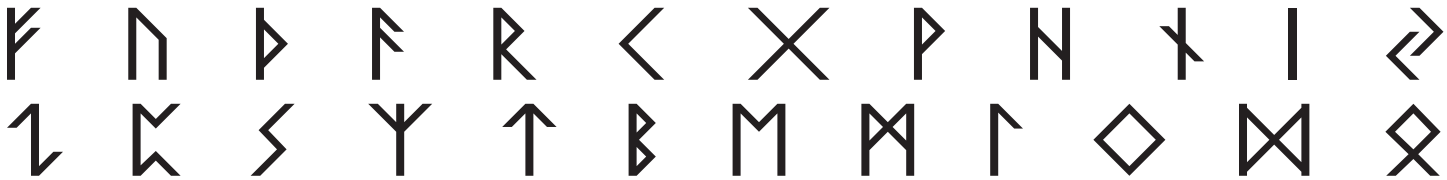
Ingvi brought bounty and boon for the brave Swedes.
The gestating seed germinates and grows greatly.
To the Lord, special sacred sacrifices must be sent.

ᛞ *Dagaz*

Day destroys the darkness of deep despair.
The gods gaze gently, grants gifts upon goodfolk:
giving wisdom, gracious lore, and generous healing hands.

ᛟ *Oþila*

Odal ancestors strengthen the searching soul,
and the folk soul feeds the fire of the heart.
Heritage holistically heals health with harmony.



MAGIC AND THE RUNES
A Skeptical View

by Dan Campbell

Most of us Heathens who study the runes believe that they were used magically during the period of the Elder Fuþark. In particular, some of us believe the runes were originally developed in Germanic culture primarily for magical and sacral use rather than for utilitarian usage, like other alphabets. Our beliefs are supported by virtually all of the books on runes that we regard as reliable; for instance, those by Thorsson, Gundarsson, and Aswynn—particularly those by Thorsson, whose academic credentials are well-known in the Heathen community. But how well are our beliefs supported by the surviving evidence of how our ancestors used the runes? Are we reading too much into the evidence, out of a desire to find authentic roots that support our contemporary magical runic practices?

Reading academic runological literature provides some interesting perspectives on these questions. I do not say "answers", because the questions on whether, and how, the runes were used magically provoke a wide range of opinions among academics. R.I. Page described the spectrum as being between "imaginative" runologists who are more willing to accept, or look for, magical interpretations of inscriptions; and "skeptical" runologists who favor limited interpretations of the evidence and only resort to magical interpretations where the evidence is unambiguous.

The work of Thorsson and those who followed him is founded on the work of the imaginative runologists. Magical interpretations of Elder Fuþark inscriptions—and the belief that the runes, as an alphabet, were devised primarily for magical or sacred use—were favored early in the study of runes, from the 19th century up through the mid-20th century. The first introductory text on Runes in English, R.W.V. Elliot's *Runes: An Introduction* (1959) dates to this time and is an epitome of the "imaginative" perspective. More skeptical approaches began in the mid-20th century and continue to be prevalent. In particular, linguistics was used to interpret inscriptions that previously could not be interpretated or were regarded (incorrectly) as magical. The shift in perspectives, though not wholesale, nonetheless led Elliot to revise some of his opinions towards a more skeptical viewpoint when preparing the 2nd edition of *Runes: An Introduction* (1989).

Despite this development in the academic study of runes, the authors we most often read tend to disregard the skeptical runologists' perspectives. As a result, we as Heathen readers tend not to be aware of the ambiguous evidence for use of the Elder Fuþark runes or of the varied interpretations that are possible. In the interests of raising such awareness, I would like to present a skeptical runological perspective on magical inscriptions and magical use of the runes in the pre-Christian period. In the process, I hope this presentation will lead others to seek answers in their rune studies from all quarters, whether esoteric or academic, skeptical or imaginative.

> …on that tree of which no one knows from what root it runs.
>
> *Hávamál* strophe 138

A Comment on the Nature of the Evidence

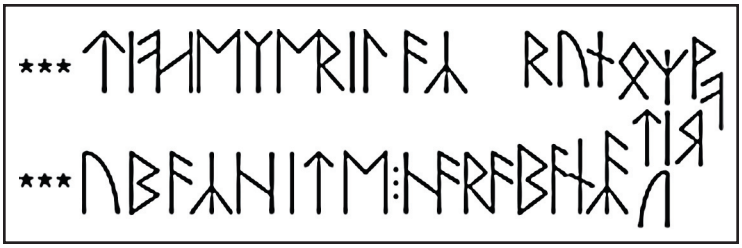
When considering the earliest period of runic use, it is worth bearing in mind the following about the evidence with which we have to work. Runes were devised for carving in wood, as can be seen from the uncommonness of rounded shapes and the usual lack of horizontal lines (the latter of which would be hard to distinguish from the grain of the wood if one were carving a runic message along the length of a flattened stick). The vast majority of surviving inscriptions, however, is *not* in wood, but is in stone or metal. Of these, the former are predominantly memorial stones, while the latter are prone to errors and badly copied runes. In particular, inscriptions from bracteates that seem magical or else difficult to interpret are usually better "explained as the attempt of an illiterate diecutter to copy an incomprehensible Vorlage" for the purposes of using the runes on the bracteates as a selling point (Antonsen, 2002, pg. 178). The corpus of surviving inscriptions has been estimated by R. Derolez to "represent no more than one per-

cent of all inscriptions carved, and hence may very well not be representative or typical of the total output" (Derolez R. "The runic system and its cultural context", Michigan Germanic Studies, 1981; 7: 19-20 - as quoted in Page, 1991, pgs. 16-17). This point is underscored by the archaeological discovery at Bergen of hundreds of runic inscriptions in the Younger Fuþark—all on wood and many of a most mundane character—which increased the catalogue of Norwegian inscriptions in the Younger period from ~600 to over 1000 (Antonsen, 2002, pgs. 320-321; see also the Runes in Bergen website:
http://www.nb.no/baser/runer/ribwww/english/runeindex.html

"Magical" Inscriptions: A Representative Example

One of the prime examples of Elder Fuþark magical inscriptions that Thorsson gives in *Runelore* (1987) is the Järsberg stone, of which he writes:

> Any nonmagical interpretation of the many runemaster formulas seems absurd. … Runemaster formulas represent documents of transformative magical acts in which the rune magician assumed his divine aspect for the performance of some working. It is quite possible that with runemaster inscriptions we are dealing with the remains of but one fraction of a more elaborate ritual process. A runemaster formula could give force to a rite working together with the formula, or it could be the whole of an operant working in itself. In the latter case one will usually find that the runemaster designates himself with various magical names (which are often very similar to some of the holy names of Ódhinn). One of the most famous examples of this is provided by the Järsberg stone in central Sweden. … This stone, not attached to any grave and probably originally part of a ritual stone arrangement, is then charged by the force of the runemaster in this threatening aspect of "the malicious one" and "the raven". Through the linkage of these foreboding aspects with the site, he is able both to fill it with magical force and protect it from desecrators.
> (Thorsson, 1987, pg. 76)



The "runemaster formulas" Thorsson refers to are those inscriptions which feature "ek erilaz", most often translated as "I, the runemaster" by imaginative runologists. I will come back to the matter of "erilaz" shortly, but first let us have a look at the inscription.

It is visually challenging at first, as may be seen by the following illustration, which is a close (though regularized) facsimile of the inscription in figure 1 (above, this page).

Where *** appears in the illustration, the stone is broken off on that end of the inscription. Thus, the first word of the second line is incomplete. For a picture of the stone, see Arild Hauge's Swedish Runic Inscriptions website:
http://www.arild-hauge.com/sweden.htm

Usual interpretation of this inscription among runologists is that the first 4 runes **tiah** on the start of the first line should be read as **hait…**, from right-to-left. Then the inscription is read from the fifth rune, left-to-right, **ek erilaz**. Different scholars then debate whether to continue with the smaller **ru…** sequence that seems to be on the same level as the first line or to jump down to the second line's **ub…** Within the second line, nonetheless, the fragement **…ubaz** is the next word, followed by **hite**, and then **harabanaz**. Some scholars have trouble interpreting the rest of the inscription, but the smaller **ru…** sequence on the right most likely wraps around, boustrophedon fashion, as these words: **runoz waritu**.

Thorsson (seemingly ignoring the break in the stone) transliterates the inscription as (1987, pg. 76):

ek erilaz rūnōz wrītu. Ūbaz haite, Hrabanaz haite.

and translates it:

> "I the Erulian carve the runes. I am called the Malicious-one (= *Ūbaz*), I am called the Raven."

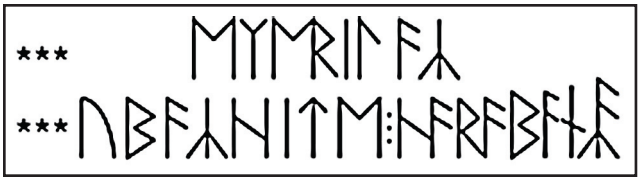
In contrast, E.H.Antonsen, who takes a linguistic-based approach to runic inscriptions, transliterates the inscription (2002, pgs. 120-124):

> ek erilaz | ...ūbaz hite : H^{a}rab^{a}naz | hait… | runoz waritu

and translates it:

> "I, (the) erilaz | …ubaz am called : H^{a}rab^{a}naz (raven) | (is/am) called… | runes (I) write"

Antonsen highlights that Erik Moltke "points out…that when



the smaller runes are removed, the right line is centered over the left one". In other words, if the initial right-to-left **hait…** on the top line and the boustrophedon sequence **runoz waritu** are removed, then the inscription would have appeared as the inscription in figure 2 (above, this page).

Antonsen later (page 148) suggests that the smaller runes (plus **hait…**on line 1) were added to a prior inscription and that "it is utterly futile to attempt to integrate them into a single original text". If treated as two separate texts, then we would have:

"original":
ek erilaz ...ūbaz hite : H^{a}rab^{a}naz
"I, (the) erilaz | …ubaz am called : H^{a}rab^{a}naz (raven)"

"later":
hait… | runoz waritu
"(is/am) called… | runes (I) write"

It is difficult to say whether the proposed 'later' inscription should be read as trying to incorporate the proposed 'original' or not. On its own, it certainly seems incomplete; and it is doubtful there was sufficient room to the left of **hait…** for a name, which would make more sense of the 'later' inscription by itself.

But the 'original' inscription alone is complete enough to read, with the fragment "…ubaz" most likely another proper name like H^{a}rab^{a}naz. In this form it also is a very typical inscription, in which the following formula is used: "I, (the) [office or social position], am called [proper name]." This formula is a variation on the usual formulae for memorial stones, in which the carver or stone-raiser names himself, names the person being memorialized, and ends with a statement such as "wrought (this)" or "carved (these) runes"—which brings us back to the matter of "erilaz".

Thorsson, as quoted earlier, asserts that formulae using "erilaz" are clear evidence for magical workings involving the runes, where the inscription is all that remains of the magical activity. But on what basis does he translate "erilaz" as "Erulian" and treat "Erulian" as equivalent to "rune magician"? I am not sure of the origin of Thorsson's "Erulian", but I suspect it is related to an interpretation that connects "erilaz" to a purported tribal name "Heruli". The tribe presumably gained a reputation for runic mastery, thus conferring this connotation on their name, which went on to become a byword for "rune magician" (Elliot, 1959, pg. 13). The theory has not proved convincing among runologists, however. On the matter of "erilaz", Antonsen states:

Inscriptions that contain the word **erilaz** are supposedly particularly powerful in regard to magic. We have 10 such, of which 2 occur on bracteates that were pressed with the same stamp, therefore 9 different inscriptions in all. … All of these stone inscriptions are, however, variants of very common dedicatory formulas without special magical content. The meaning of **erilaz** has not yet been firmly established, but it is important to note that it can be replaced in otherwise identical formulae by words like **þewaz** 'servant' on Valsfjord…and **gudija** 'priest' on Nordhuglo… It seems certain that **erilaz** designates a particular office in the society of the time. (Antonsen, 2002, pgs. 185-186).

The most likely social role designated by "erilaz" seems to have been military in nature. The name "Heruli", whether a tribal designation or not, refers to warbands (both large and small). And a study of later Germanic languages suggests "erilaz" is related to words meaning "warrior, noble"—eg. Old Saxon "erl", Old English "eorl", Old Norse "jarl" (Plowright, 2006, pgs. 144-148). If "warrior, noble" has a connotation with the runes, it would seem to be one less mystical and magical than that conveyed by translating "erilaz" as "rune magician". At most, it suggests a figure like the later Egil Skallagrimson, equally quick with sword, poetry, and runes alike—certainly someone skilled in magic, but not the kind of occult specialist conjured by Thorsson's interpretation of the Järsberg stone.

Given that "erilaz" is not specifically a magical designation, does the Järsberg stone inscription offer any other evidence of "a more elaborate ritual process" as Thorsson claims? I am inclined to think not. Interpretation of the inscription is problematic, as shown by Moltke's suggestion that the stone holds not one, but two inscriptions. Yet Thorsson's transliteration of the stone ignores these problems, including the broken end of the stone, which undermines his translation of the name fragment **...ūbaz** as "the Malicious One". The other name, **Hrabanaz**, may seem to have associations with Odin, by way of Hugin and Munin, but in essence it is a name drawn from the animal kingdom (much like the later Old Norse Úlfr or Björn). Ultimately, if we take a skeptical approach to the Järsberg stone inscription, it most resembles inscriptions on memorial stones, where (1) the emphasis was on the social position of the carver and the person being commemorated and where (2) the inscription served to preserve the memory of

both in the local community (along with the prestige of the carver and/or commissioner of the stone).

Magical Use of the Runes as Depicted in the Literature

Among the sources cited for evidence of magical use of the runes, primary importance is often given to episodes in the *Poetic Edda* and the Icelandic sagas. These instances either describe runes in terms that emphasize their inherent magical power or show them being used in magical spells and acts. But not every occurrence of 'rune' or 'runes' in the literature is magical. In some cases, the same word **rúnar**—given magical connotations elsewhere—is used to denote secret, private or intimate conversations. On other occasions, the word seems only to refer to runes as letters with neither magical nor mundane connotations.

Thus, in searching for evidence for magical use of runes from the Old Norse literature, it seems best to look at all instances of 'rune' or 'runes' in the texts. Finding all instances of the use of runes depicted in the *Poetic Edda* and the Sagas is, however, not as simple as looking up 'rune' in the Index of one of these books. The published editions of the *Edda* and the sagas usually have, at most, an index of Names. Thus, to identify excerpts from the literature where runes are mentioned, I have relied on a selection of secondary works plus the *Glossary to the Poetic Edda* (which effectively serves as an index of the *Edda*).

Certain excerpts from the literature are repeatedly mentioned in secondary sources as examples of magical use of runes. These were the secondary works that I used to find the most commonly cited excerpts:

Davidson, H.R.E. *Myths and Symbols in Pagan Europe: Early Scandinavian and Celtic Religions*. Syracuse University Press, Syracuse. 1988.

_____. *The Lost Beliefs of Northern Europe*. Barnes & Noble Press, New York. 1999.

Simpson, J. *Everyday Life in the Viking Age*. Dorset Press, New York. 1967.

Thorsson, E. *Runelore*. Weiser Books, Boston. 1987.

The references cited by these secondary sources are the following:

"Voluspá", strophe 20
"Hávamál", strophes 138-163
"Skírnismál", strophe 36
"Sigrdrífumál", strophes 5-19
Egil's Saga, chapter 44, 57, 72
Grettir's Saga, chapter 79
Vatnsdæla Saga, chapter. 34

La Farge's and Tucker's *Glossary to the Poetic Edda* (Carl Winter Universtätsverlag, Heidelberg, 1992) cites the following poems from the *Poetic Edda* as containing the word **rúnar**, with one of three meanings:

1. *secrets* ("Voluspá", strophe 60; "Vafþrúðnismál", str. 42-43; perhaps also "Hávamál", str. 111)
2. *secret or confidential conversation* ("Sigurðarkviða in skamma", str. 14 & 44; "Guðrúnarkviða in þriðia", str. 4; "Guðrúnarhvot", str. 12)
3. *runes* (as magic symbols and letters: "Hávamál", str. 80, etc.; "Grípisspá", str. 17; "Dráp Niflunga"; "Atlamál", str. 4, etc.; "Rígsþula", str. 36, etc.; "Fiolsvinnsmál", str. 26 conjectural)

The third entry also cites these compound words, elsewhere defined (and with examples) in the *Glossary* as follows:

aldr-rúnar - *life-runes* (**"**Rígsþula", str. 43)

biarg-rúnar - *'birth-runes', runes for aiding women in childbirth* ("Sigrdrífumál", str. 9 and 19); c.f. **biarga** *to save, protect, rescue; salvage* (used of ships); esp. *to bring corpses to safety (through burial); to save children from the perils of birth*

bók-rúnar - *book-runes*, probably an error for **bót-rúnar** *healing runes* ("Sigrdrífumál", str. 19)

brim-rúnar - *'surf-runes', runes which calm the sea* or *runes which protect a ship endangered by waves* ("Sigrdrífumál", str. 10)

gaman-rúnar - 1. *pleasure-bringing runes* ("Sigrdrífumál", str. 5); 2. *pleasurable intimacy, closeness* ("Hávamál", str. 120 & 130)

hug-rúnar - *'mind-runes', magical runes which bestow wisdom* ("Sigrdrífumál", str. 13)

lim-rúnar - *limb-runes* ("Sigrdrífumál", str. 11)

mál-rúnar - *speech- or negotiation-runes* ("Sigrdrífumál", str. 12); **gefa…mál-rúnar** *to cause someone to talk* ("Guðrúnarkviða in fyrsta", str. 23)

megin-rúnar - *mighty or powerful runes* ("Sigrdrífumál", str. 6)

sak-rúnar - *strife-runes, runes which cause strife* ("Helgakviða Hundingsbana onnur", str. 34)

sig-rúnar - *battle-runes* ("Sigrdrífumál", str. 6)

val-rúnar - *'battle-runes', riddling or obscure expression for killing* ("Helgakviða Hundingsbana onnur", str. 12)

ævin-rúnar - *life-runes* or *eternal runes* ("Rígsþula", str. 43)

öl-rúnar - *ale runes* ("Sigrdrífumál", str. 7 & 19)

Combining the excerpts cited by the secondary sources with those cited in the *Glossary* produces the following list (ignoring the conjectural citation of "Fiolsvinnsmál", str. 26, as an example of runes as magic symbols and letters):

"Atlamál", str. 4, etc.
"Dráp Niflunga
"Grípisspá", str. 17
"Guðrúnarhvot", str. 12
"Guðrúnarkviða in þriðia" str. 4
"Hávamál", str. 80, 111 & 138-163
"Helgakviða Hundingsbana-onnur," str. 12 & 34
"Rígsþula", str. 36, etc. & 43
"Sigrdrífumál", str. 5-19
"Sigurðarkviða in skamma", str. 14 & 44
"Skírnismál", str. 36
Vafþrúðnismál, str. 42-43
Voluspá, str. 20 & 60
Egil's Saga, ch. 44, 57, & 72
Grettir's Saga, ch. 79
Vatnsdæla Saga, ch. 34

All told, there are:

2 instances of runes used for **Communication** ("Atlamál" + "Dráp Niflunga" referring to "Atlamál", and "Helgakviða Hundingsbana onnur" 12)

4 instances of **rúnum** meaning **'Counsel'** ("Guðrúnarhvot", "Guðrúnarkviða in þriðia", and twice in "Sigurðarkviða" in skamma)

1 instance of runes referred to in the sense of **Communication** and/or **Counsel** ("Hávamál" 111)

1 instance of **rúnum** meaning **'Secrets'** ("Vafþrúðnismál")

9 instances where **Knowing** the runes is mentioned, 8 of which have magical connotations ("Grípisspá", "Hávamál" 80, 139, 142, 144-145, "Rígsþula" 36, 43, 45, and "Sigrdrífumál" 14—of which, only "Rígsþula" 36 lacks a clear magical connotation)

20 instances (at least) of **Magical** use of the runes, where:

16 involve the runes as the primary, active component of the magic performed (*Egil's Saga* ch. 44, ch. 72, "Hávamál" 157, "Helgakviða Hundingsbana onnur" 34, "Sigrdrífumál" 6, 7-8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 19, "Skírnismál" 36)

4 involve the runes as a secondary or supporting component (*Egil's Saga* ch. 58, *Grettir's Saga* ch. 79, "Sigrdrífumál" 5, *Vatnsdæla Saga* ch. 34)

Many of the above examples do indicate magical use of the runes. Most of those present the cutting of runes as the active component of the magical act. And unlike the interpretation of sparse inscriptions, this evidence from the literature seems unequivocal. Not only are runes magical, but some passages describe specifically how the runes were used magically.

But can we take the literature at face value? R.I. Page addresses this problem in his *An Introduction to English Runes* (1999, pgs. 108-110), in which he points out: "Medieval Scandinavia supplies a mass of information on rune magic, but the difficulty is in sifting it, in deciding how much is genuine, how much literary convention."

The *Poetic Edda* was recorded in the 13th century A.D. *Egil's Saga* and *Grettir's Saga* were recorded in the 13th and 14th centuries, respectively (Sturluson, S. *Edda*. Faulkes, A. transl. Everyman, London. 1996. pg. ix). Yet, the sagas (as a whole) depict events from the 9th–12th centuries, and their original oral tradition is presumed to begin in the first centuries of the Icelandic settlement (10th–11th c.). Similarly, the *Poetic Edda* is thought to originate in oral tradition from the Viking Age, if not before. We might reasonably say that these recorded tales of rune magic are a fair representation of how runes were actually used during the pagan Viking period, if we allow for literary conventions (eg. Rígsþula 43 seems modeled on Sigrdrífumál). The magical practices in the Eddas and Sagas, after all, are depicted *not* as they were practiced in the Viking Age (9th—12th centuries A.D.), but as they *were understood to have been practiced* in the Viking Age, from the later perspective of early Medieval Iceland when the literature was recorded.

We must recognize that comparing these literary descriptions of rune magic with potentially magical runic inscriptions of the Elder Fuþark (pre-500 A.D.) is tenuous. Germanic society underwent tremendous change and upheaval during the 3rd—6th centuries A.D. (the Migration Age). Among other events:

- Entire peoples were on the move, such as the Goths and the Vandals.
- Warlords (who maintained their position through conflict and the redistribution of spoils) increasingly seem to have become the social as well as military leaders of the time.
- The earliest language changes that later lead to the differentiation of Old Norse and Old English—and correspondingly, the changes in the Elder Fuþark that lead to the development of the Younger Fuþark and Anglo-Saxon Fuþorc—occurred during this time.

Given this disruption in the cultural continuity from the period of the Elder Fuþark into the Viking Age and the lack of corroborating evidence for magical use of runes in the Elder period, it is highly unlikely that the Eddas and sagas could be used, with any certainty, as a guide to the magical uses of runes prior to the Viking Age. The only conclusion supported by the evidence *as we have it* is that, as Page points out, "[n]o doubt some medieval Norsemen believed that cutting runes gave a man access to supernatural powers. But this does not prove that runic magic existed in Germanic times" (Page, 1999, page 110).

Before leaving the literature and drawing this article to a close, I

would like to give strophes 146-163 of the "Hávamál" special attention, still from a skeptical viewpoint. Multiple writers have assumed that this section of the "Hávamál" refers to rune magic, with each of the eighteen spells described being either individual runes or specific combinations of runes. This doesn't seem correct, however, as strophe 146 begins with "I know those spells…" and then the other stanzas' counting (eg. "I know a third…") refers back to 'spells'. The ON word for 'spell' here is 'lióð': 'song, magic spell, incantation'. Runes, in contrast, are always referred to as either 'rúnar' or 'stafr' (eg. "Hávamál" 142, where 'letters' is 'stafi').

All of the eighteen spells in strophes 146-163 (with one exception) thus seem more accurately understood as sung incantations. This interpretation is echoed by the following passages (where quotes are taken from Larrington's translation of *The Poetic Edda* and inserted word definitions are taken from *Glossary to the Poetic Edda*):

- "Hávamál" 140: "Nine mighty spells {=**Fimbullióð**: powerful incantation or spell} I learnt…"
- "Hávamál" 152: "I know the spells {=**galdr**: magic spell, charm} to chant."
- "Hávamál" 156: "…under the shields I chant {=**gel**; as in 'gella': 'to yell, roar, bellow'}…"
- "Hávamál" 160: "…the dwarf Thiodrerir / chanted {=**gól**; as in 'gella': 'to yell, roar, bellow'} before Delling's doors: powerfully he sang {= **gól**; as in 'gella'}…"
- "Hávamál" 162: "Of these spells…"; and "Hávamál" 163: "…at the end of the spells…"; {in which 'spells' =**lióða**: songs, magic spells, incantations}
- "Sigrdrífumál" 5: "…it is full of spells {=**lióða**: songs, magic spells, incantations} and favorourable letters {=**líkn-stafa**: healing or beneficial runes}, / good charms {=**góðra galdra**: good magic spell, good charm} and joyful runes {=**gaman-rúna**: pleasure-bringing runes}."

Further, "Hávamál" 157 has the only spell which specifically involves the use of runes:

> I know a twelfth one if I see,
> up in a tree,
> a dangling corpse in a noose:
> I can so carve and colour the runes
> that the man walks
> and talks with me.
> (Larrington, 1996, pg. 37)

In fact, this strophe, along with "Sigrdrífumál" 5-19, "Skírnismál" 36, and the examples from the sagas emphasize the distinction between the magic of sung spells ('lióð', 'galdr', etc.) and the magic of runes ('rúnar', 'stafir'). The latter are always described in terms of being cut, sometimes also colored, with the magical action deriving from the cutting of the runes. Where runes and incantations are used together (c.f., *Egil's Saga, Grettir's Saga, Vatnsdæla Saga*), one of the two always seems to support the other, but there is no description of runes being chanted. It leaves one with the impression that, to the Norse, the idea of 'chanting runes' would have been as bizarre as 'cutting songs'.

As further support for this point, strophes 142-145 of the "Hávamál"—which are often cited as critical for anyone wishing to understand how to use runes magically—all emphasize (1) the runes as letters {=**stafir**}, (2) the cutting or carving of runes, and (3) the staining of runes, without any reference to singing or chanting as being part of the magical process.

In Summary

Given the minimal evidence for magical use of the runes during the Elder Fuþark period, and the difficulties inherent in its interpretation, it seems to me that caution is warranted when drawing conclusions about magical use of the runes in pre-Christian times. Our beliefs about our ancestors' runic use thus seem more informed by our own magical practices than by what we know, with reasonable certainty, about our ancestors' usage. Even where magical usage seems clearly indicated—such as during the Viking Age—a careful reading of the evidence sometimes, as in "Hávamál"146-163, shows that the desire to find magical runes lies more in the eyes of the beholder than in what is beheld.

Taking a skeptical viewpoint on the runes need not undermine our own use of runes in magical or sacral practice, however. I use the runes for divination, for instance, and find Tacitus' description of divination among the Germans (using signs cut in wooden slips) very interesting and highly suggestive of the use of runes for divination or casting lots. But I do not consider Tacitus' passage as evidence for runic divination or as support for the "validity" of how I divine with runes: it may be that signs other than runes were used. If that is true—and so far we do not really know, either way—it would mean that contemporary runic divination is based on a modern misinterpretation of Tacitus' passage. In the end, though, using runes cut in wood for divination works just fine, regardless of where we got the idea for doing so.

But when it comes to understanding what our pre-Christian ancestors did (and why), careful treatment of the evidence is critical. As Antonsen demonstrates repeatedly in his book *Runes and Germanic*

Linguistics, failure to understand the evidence in context, using all the scientific and scholarly tools available to us, results in conclusions that say more about the interpreters, and their beliefs, than they do about the peoples who left the evidence. As we work to revive our ancestors' religious and magical practices, we may find that a skeptical viewpoint is more of a help than a hindrance in understanding those we wish to emulate.

Book Hoard

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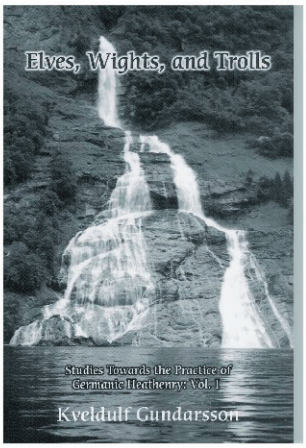
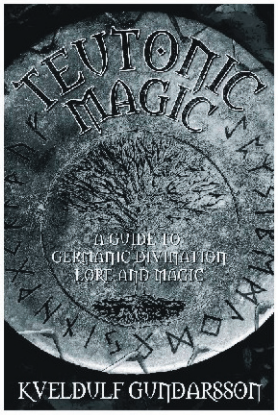
Kveldulf Gundarsson

New work just published: 'Elves, Wights, and Trolls'
Also republished: 'Teutonic Magic'.





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RUNIC HAIKU

by Cynthia Wallin

ᚠ Fehu; Feoh—Frey's prosperity-
Rich is he with more than three
Cattle, the true wealth

ᚢ Uruz; Ur—Aurochs, primal urge
Strength of man—untam'd power
Gift of soul-healing

ᚦ Thurisaz; Thurs—Wielder of Mjollnir
Mighty friend of common man
Thorn in Odin's side

ᚨ Ansuz; Os—Odin's sacrifice
Brings wisdom from Mimir's Well
Inspires poetry

ᚱ Raido; Rad—The journey is key
Choices made ordain our wyrd
The skein has been tied

ᚲ Kenaz; Ken-- Fire to light our way
Illuminates dark places
Expands man's knowledge

ᚷ Gebo; Gyfu—Generosity
An act of grace and honour
Return gift for gift

ᚹ Wunjo; Wynn—Victory is mine!
Savor the joy of winning
Glory to the Gods

ᚺ Hagalaz; Hagall—Sudden destruction
Clears out the old for new growth
Clue-by-four from Gods

ᚾ Nauthiz; Nyd—The empty cauldron
Need which cries out to be filled
Look for fulfillment.

ᛁ Isa; Is—Hard ice stops the flow
But can you cross it safely?
Watch for treachery.

ᛃ Jera; Ger—Grain - Sif's golden hair
Cut at harvest, yet returns
The wheel turns again.

ᛇ Eihwaz; Eoh—The gifts of eihwaz-
Strength and flexibility
And Yr's healing grace.

ᛈ Perthro; Peord—The enclosing womb
Passage between death and life
Initiation

ᛉ Algiz; Eolh—Protection 'gainst foes
Sedge grass cuts, yet can conceal
Catch spears in mid-air.

ᛊ Sowilo; Sigel—Sunna's chariot-
Activating principle
Sun wheel - life giver.

ᛏ Tyr—Willing sacrifice,
Tyr's hand offered to Fenris -
Symbol of justice

ᛒ Berkana; Beorc—Women's mysteries.
Birch brooms bring fertility
Freya's cherish'd gift.

ᛖ Ehwaz; Eoh—Travel between the worlds
Partner on the spirit path
Horse pulls the wagon.

ᛗ Mannaz; Man—Couple embracing
Man—Woman, bound together
Joining makes magic.

ᛚ Laguz; Lagu—Womb of the Lady
Depths from which our dreams are born
The waters of life

ᛜ Inguz; Ing—Freyr, Bringer of rain
The fertile fields, his domain
Growth and completion

ᛞ Dagaz; Daeg—The first light of dawn—Day that
brings new beginnings
Wisdom becomes Fool.

ᛟ Othila; Othel—The journey's complete—
We've come full circle and learned
There's no place like home.

< ACUTE ANGLES >

by Steve Pollington

As anyone who has looked into the background of runelore will know, there are divergences concerning the development of the script, with the two main mediaeval traditions characterised as "Anglo-Saxon" on the one hand and "Scandinavian" on the other. As with all things, these two different approaches to runic usage have a history. I would like to explore a little of that history here.

The Common Germanic Fuþark

As every rune primer explains, there was a Common Germanic rune-row of twenty four characters in use from at least the 1st c. AD. What these books often don't explain is that there does not appear to have been a single standard: while the general shape of the runestaves was consistent, there was always variation. The beautifully engraved text on the Gallehus golden horn has the appearance of a show-script, a highly formal means of communication; most runic texts from the same period are much cruder, scratched onto the backs of brooches or incised into wood, and they are a lot less regular. Even the order of the runes varies—the sequences shown on objects such as the Vadstena and Grumpan Bracteates differ in the final characters (they end---ᛟ ᛞ, whereas most fuþarks prefer the sequence---ᛞ ᛟ). The finds from Gudme and Kragehul show further elaboration of form. Some finds from the Netherlands are inscribed in doubled-outline, as if to emphasise their formal characteristics.

My point is that the users of the script were tolerant of variation in the forms of the characters, as well as in the placement of these characters within the sequence. This is important, because it implies that later innovations—both in England and in Scandinavia—were not fresh departures from a fixed original, but merely developments of a trend already present.

Anglo-Saxon Runestaves

It should first be made clear that the Anglo-Saxon runic tradition is quite late: we cannot speak of an 'Anglo-Saxon rune-row' until probably the late 700's at the earliest. The Saxon areas of Britain (the south coast, the southwest and the southeast north of the Thames) were generally rune-free zones in the pre-Christian period. The occasional runic find from this area, such as the purse mount from Watchfield, has the appearance of being an imported item.

The Anglian areas—the east coast from Colchester to Edinburgh—included many rune-using communities, and the runes they used were part of the tradition of the North Sea cultural area. These Anglo-Frisian runes involved an extended sequence, and the four additional characters were necessitated by developments in the language(s) of the region. The Anglian tradition was nevertheless quite conservative, and it maintained links with Scandinavia; indeed, the earlier texts are often totally Scandinavian in character—the inscribed astragalus, perhaps a gaming counter, from the cremation cemetery at Caistor-by-Norwich bears the text **raihan** 'of/from a roe-deer' with the single-barred h-rune which was maintained in Scandinavia, but converted to a double-barred version elsewhere (e.g. the Rhineland and southern England) and it is this double-barred h-rune which was adopted as the standard form in later centuries.

Runes were also used by the Jutes, in Kent and around Southampton on the south coast. The Kentish court early came under the domination of the Franks and adopted both Roman script and Christian culture, but in the 5th c. Kentish material culture is very Scandinavian in character, with strong links to southwest Norway, and this is seen in a few surviving runic texts from the area (e.g. the Sandwich text **ræhæbul** 'stag(?)').

The Anglian and Frisian tradition in the use of runestaves involved the evolution of four additional characters and the re-allocation of sounds to signs. The new characters were all vowels, **a o ea y**, (ᚪ ᚩ ᚣ ᚫ) and three of them are adaptations from the older a-rune, which was retained but with the new value **æ**. These developments were shared by many of the tribes in the southern reaches of the North Sea. The general lack of runic evidence for Saxon speech at this time makes it impossible to know for sure whether the Saxons shared this tradition, but the evidence of items such as the footstool from Fallward

bearing the text **ksamela** i.e. *scamela* 'bench, stool' implies that runes were not entirely unknown, and that the Anglo-Frisian innovations were not being shared—perhaps they were being resisted for political reasons, to distance the Saxons as a group from their neighbours.

It is possible that another Frisian development was shared with the Angles—ᛞ a rune for the sound **st**—although it does not appear epigraphically in England at this time.

Despite their manifestly close connections with Scandinavia, the high-status gravefields at Sutton Hoo (in Anglian Suffolk) have so far not produced any runic texts. Indeed they have produced little in the way of writing at all—in Mound 1, the famous ship-burial, the only text is the words 'savlos' and 'pavlos' (i.e. the names Saul and Paul), and these are evidently baptismal spoons presented as a gift to the king, and legends on some of the Frankish coins. However, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence: so little organic material survives from this site that the absence of runic texts can comfortably be assigned to the fact that almost no wood, bone, horn, antler, ivory or textile of any kind survives—archaeologists cannot with absolute certainty say that there was even a human body in the gravemound.

Scandinavian Developments

Jutland, in the 5th c., was politically part of a continuum from the lower Rhine into southern Scandinavia. Probably the transfer of the Angles from their power centres in the south of the peninsula into eastern Britain left a vacuum into which Baltic-based Scandinavians could expand—which is why the area is today part of Denmark, but was contested between that country and Germany up to the early 20th c. The change in settlement entailed a change in literacy, and this part of Denmark henceforth followed the Scandinavian path in runic usage.

The Scandinavian tradition down to the 6th or 7th c. was conservative, and linguistic developments have to be deduced from occasional misspellings, caused by confusion between alternative sound developments. There was however a single clear innovation—the development of a new rune **A** (a six-spoked star) which begins to appear around 600AD. This new character reflects a new phonology in the area. It is possible that the old p-rune went out of use at this time too, although the evidence is not compelling.

Anglo-Saxon (English) Futhorc

ᚠ f	ᚢ u	ᚦ þ	ᚩ o	ᚱ r	ᚳ c	ᚷ g	ᚹ w
ᚻ h	ᚾ n	ᛁ i	ᛇ (j)	ᛈ (ih)	ᛉ (x)	ᛊ p	ᛋ s
ᛏ t	ᛒ b	ᛖ e	ᛗ m	ᛚ l	ᛝ ŋ	ᛞ d	ᛟ œ
ᚫ æ	ᚣ a	ᛠ ea	ᛡ y	ᛢ st	ᛣ q		

The Later Traditions

At a certain point, probably in the late 700s, a watershed was reached among rune-users. In the insular Anglo-Saxon region, the trend towards adding additional characters to meet new linguistic needs was applied across a wide area, possibly under the growing power of Christianity and the 'religion of the book'. Although the basic idea—new runes for old—was not an innovation, the details of implementation were. In Northumbria, the rune-row was extended to thirty-three characters to include some very obscure sound differences which can never have been commonly perceived. This and the fact that these new runes appear on Christian monuments such as the emphatic stone crosses of Bewcastle and Ruthwell, implies that the opportunity was being taken to distance runestaves from their heathen past. The bulk of English runic inscriptions date from post-conversion times, of course, and there is no evidence for the suppression of the script as a heathen menace.

In Scandinavia, the trend was reversed. Having deleted the old p-rune, it seems to have become axiomatic among the rune-users that the fewer characters they had to use, the better. The stripped-down 16-rune fuþark was a minimalist statement—predating the modern Scandinavian love of good, plain design by more than a millennium—but it was in its way as inefficient as the Anglo-Saxon one. With too few runes to convey the sounds of their language, and too small a difference between the shapes of the individual characters, the Scandinavian system became very ill-suited to practical communication. In England, meanwhile, the cumbersome staves were probably rather too complex and academic for the average user.

The reading-and-writing programme instituted by Ælfred in the late 9th c. brought Roman script to the people of England, outside its bridgehead in monasteries, and probably heralded the demise of the fuþorc as a practical script for everyday use. Scandinavia of course clung to the runic tradition for centuries, and maintained a defined break between the two systems: 'mundane-secular-runic' and 'official-religious-Roman' scripts.

The eventual importation of Christianity, Roman script and mediaeval forms of statehood into Scandinavia is another story—or rather a continuation of the tale of the spread of post-Roman Europe into the north.

GNOSIS

by Ulf Asgardson

I have never doubted that the runes of the futhark represent the twenty-four forces that mandate and maintain the universe. For the first fourteen years of my studies this knowledge frustrated me because other teachers only seemed to hint at the significance, but nobody really spelled it out for me. Like Odin, I have always hungered to know the truths about life, death, and magic, and I hungered for the runes to allow me access to those answers.

In 2003 I found myself in the deepest despair and depression of my life. I sat alone in a room and drew the twenty-four runes on a piece of paper. In tears I screamed at the runes, "Prove to me there are mysteries hidden within you. Prove to me these last years have been more than lies, that all my studies have been for something. Prove to me your truth by revealing things others have missed. Prove it or I am done with you and the gods forever!" Despite the childish, selfish, and desperate plea, somehow all of the illusions of my ego were silenced, and the runes screamed their response. An energy flooded me, and I saw a vision before my eyes that connected me with a Higher Intelligence. Since that moment, I find that I can connect easily to this source and allow the voice of the runes to flow through me.

What follows is the story of the runes as told by the runes. I apologize that such truth and purity must pass through my own filters and imperfections. I do not claim what follows to be authentic "tradition". However, I let the following stand on the merits of its own truth. I believe that it will touch its readers on a soul level and that its logic and beauty are self-evident. What follows then is my *gnosis*--soon to belong to others—of the Runes and their deep Spiritual meanings. I too caught up the runes in madness. I took the intuition from that experience and forced it to conform to the structure and meanings already established by our traditions. This has created I believe a most beautiful mead...may all who drink it be inspired.

In the beginning there was one Mind, indeed but one thought filled all of the Unmanifest. Purified, alone, and isolated—it existed within the fortress of itself. In a vacuum—a void—that single intelligence existed, coalescing—imploding inward upon itself until a point of critical mass was reached.

And then in an instant, the Thinker became the Dreamer; for the Dream was drawn forth due to the tension and isolation erected about the True Mind. Duality was therefore the inevitability of Individuality and radical unity—the Dream becoming suddenly all that which was not at that moment the Dreamer. Within the Unmanifest a great tear occurred, and within that tear Fire and Ice were born—the architects of the Manifest.

From duality, motion and marriage were called forth. Fire and Ice were drawn by their opposite polarities into a massive collision within the Manifest. There was a violent explosion as the fringes of Fire and Ice impacted and were suddenly hurled in opposite directions by the release of element and energy that resulted. Ice melded into the Fire allowing the uncontrolled expansion and disintegration to order and contract. Fire married into the totally implosive cluster of Ice allowing for it to thaw and flow. The two great spheres began to tumble in opposite directions with two opposite spins as they sped off away from each other.

Eventually, the energy was spent. The sphere of Fire, Muspellsheim and the sphere of Ice, Nifelheim, were again drawn together across the vast emptiness of the Manifest. They were drawn to a point where all attraction was countered by the force of those opposite spins. Ginnungagap had formed in the center of the Manifest universe.

During that first explosion, a stranger phenomenon had occurred. Fire and Ice had been fused together in certain ratios so that other elements were created with new characteristics and forms. From Unmanifest Spirit, Fire and Ice were born. From Fire and Ice—Air, Time, Water, Light, Earth, Yeast, Metal, Venom, and Salt were formed. Thus, violent polarity was forced through the stability of motion and the creation of hybrids to undergo

an unfolding evolution.

All was now in place for the principle of nurturance through balance to commence. Muspellsheim, being expansive, had only captured Fire, Air, and Metal in its bounds. Ice, being constrictive, had captured all of the Manifest elements and locked them within its core. The fiery seed from the first marriage melted the core of Niflheim's icy sphere and released eleven streams of element from Hvergelmir, the Seething Cauldron. These flowed into the Northern end of the Gap and froze as they tumbled into the seeming emptiness. Molten Metal, Fire, and Superheated Air poured in from the southern end of Ginnungagap.

In the middle, all came together in balance and harmony. From that harmony a force awoke to determine the forms of Unconsciousness and the forms of Consciousness. Furthermore, it willed that the two must evolve and be further blended to fulfill the Great Will and the Dream. Therefore, Audhumbla was formed as the Great Cow, and the milk flowing from her teats became the instrument of that impetus. As beings of Unconsciousness were brought forth, more and more Ice was fused into successive evolutions. As beings of Consciousness were formed, more and more Fire was forced into their makeup as the Dream unfolded.

Ymir was formed from Venom there in the middle of the Gap. He was the father of consumption, blindness, resistance and decay. Like a cancer, he immediately began asexually multiplying hoping to bring Ginnungagap to stillness and inertia through the ever-growing tumor of his offspring. However, since Ymir suckled from Audhumbla, her milk changed the elemental nature of some of his brood. Soon Mimir was born of Metal, and his sister, Bestla, was formed of Salt. *Uruz* therefore acted upon the single form of Unconsciousness creating three forms The thurses of Venom consume and resist blindly. The etins of Metal preserve knowledge blindly, and the rises of Salt support and nurture blindly and in neutrality being a microcosm of the macrocosm that is Audhumbla.

At the same time, Audhumbla's tongue followed another directive—the drive and instinct to seek to shape, order, and preserve consciousness. She licked a great salty block of ice until she had freed Buri. Buri, The Producer, bore the consciousness of Yeast. Quickly he called forth from himself a son named Bor, "Born". However, since Buri too suckled from the Great Mother Audhumbla, her milk added more Fire to the nature of his son. Bor was therefore brought forth as the intelligence of Light.

Now *Uruz* could truly be fulfilled because Bestla and Bor were married and conceived three sons: Odin, Vili, and Ve. Fire continued to be added to the sons of Bor through the Salt of Bestla's womb. Odin was born of Air, Vili of Light, and Ve was born as a being of Water. *Uruz* reached its pinnacle because Unconsciousness and Consciousness had been equally supported and blended until the first true gods were born to blend and balance them both.

The Dream and the Dreamer now had new vehicles by which to be shaped and fulfilled. Odin, Vili, and Ve rose up and slew Ymir. They formed the World Tree and the Manifest Universe from Ymir's bones, blood, flesh, brains, and hairs creating the nine worlds and establishing willed order.

Now in order for the Dream to be able to further evolve, the universe demanded rhythm, rightness, synchronicity, and natural selection; for you see, when Odin, Vili, and Ve set the sparks of Muspelheim in motion within the skull of Ymir, cycles and progression were made possible. Motion and synchronicity thus allowed the beings of consciousness driven by *Ansuz* to progress towards the goal of the Dreamer and partake of the Dream. Any being seeking awareness and self control is allowed to blend with the Laws of the Dreamer and progress through rhythm and stages of evolution so that the Dream and Dreamer can become one again and othila be reborn.

This allowed for the goal of *Ansuz* to be realized in that knowledge could be awakened and itself be allowed to evolve through rhythm and cycles towards the goal of the True Mind. *Kenaz* fulfills the drive of *Raidho* by allowing the observing consciousness and perception of Odin, Vili, Ve and their subsequent children to blend with the Intelligence of the Runic Mind. *Kenaz* allows for the intelligent realization that by blending with the Laws of Nature, the more rapidly the evolution of the self can proceed. *Kenaz* is therefore a more conscious, willed, directed, and reflective form of synchronicity than *Raidho*. *Kenaz* is also the power of Metal that codifies knowledge storing its science, art, and technology within the Unconscious of all thinking beings—even into the very blood, genetics, and disposition of various races of beings.

This great Dwarf Hoard of knowledge is found just below the level where we all dream, and this allows for easier awakening within man in particular. Humans are therefore more easily capable of recapturing the treasures of our ancestors. Since myth, magic, mysticism, and Troth all are born directly from the Dreamer—the Runic Mind—these treasures are most readily available through the

avenue of *Kenaz*. Any who seek this awareness can and will be drawn towards the Dreamer and the Dream.

At first the consciousness and will of the Aesir did not exactly mesh with the will of the Great Mind. This created a crisis in the unfolding evolution, each will acting as a pole of a mental Ginnungagap. Equilibrium needed to be re-established to allow for the potential to better flow. The gods were drawn by the *Gebo* force to form other sentient beings. First, the dwarves were fashioned from maggots that had crawled from Ymir's rotting flesh. However, the dwarves assumed the intelligence of Metal and therefore preferred the unconscious, deep, and dark places. Learning a valuable lesson from this, Odin, Vili, and Ve decided to form another being out of elemental Earth where all of the elements were blended in the perfection of Ginnungagap's core. Ask and Embla were chosen because they were marvelous trees--rooted in the Unconscious, but reaching upwards towards Consciousness. They were given bodies, minds, and souls along with the instincts and constructs needed to react to the energy of life and magic. This gives each human being his or her personal Dreamhis or her own avenue by which to reunite with the Dreamer and to help shape the evolution of the universe.

When the Vanir created the elves as the intelligent beings of Light, the Loop of Equilibrium was established. The Law of Giving flowed from man through the elves and the dwarves and then towards the Aesir and Vanir. From the gods, the energy flows outwards towards the Runic Mind and from the Dreamer back to man. Indeed, myriads are the runic pathways that provide the flow of giving.

Before the Law of Giving could flow as designed—Odin, Vili, and Ve needed to learn the lesson of pride and stagnation. The Golden Age of their design would have brought the universe to stillness ending the Dream. *Wunjo* therefore created a cessation of flow for a while. It created a lesser state of unity and oneness. It brought forth the laws of octaves and created for the ego a seeming state of bliss to mirror the true bliss of *Othila*. This lesser mirror of *Othila*—this illusory state of bliss—can either allow peace in which the Dream may be perceived, or else it can become a vacuum to supplant illusion and draw the ego back towards the Dream. In Odin's case, the vacuum of *Wunjo* birthed the constriction of *Hagalaz* to remedy the strain caused by his delusion and illusion.

Gullveig came to Asgard. Odin learned of the Runic Mind due to Vanaheim's witch. The pride that led to her burning, the loss of the Great War, and the occupation of Asgard taught Allfather that he too was a piece of a much greater Will. Only after he fell screaming to earth with the runes, was Odin aware of the Intelligence of the Universe and its mysteries by which it is maintained. This knowledge was bought at a dear price. Each burning of Gullveig released an aspect of time and set the ørlög of gods and man alike. From *Hagalaz* and the first burning, *Urd* and the past were born to force constriction through reflection and to commence the weaving of wyrd through the threads provided by Frigga.

Naudhiz was the product of the second burning to allow the past to unfold towards the future. Ruled by Skuld, the *Naudhiz* force creates internal resistance and escape velocity as a means to drive the ego of the present towards the intention of the Dreamer. *Naudhiz* simply applies pressure upon the will until one of two things occurs. The will is either broken, or the will exerts force to counter the constraint. When the will fights back, then *Naudhiz* exerts even more force until, in an instant, there is exponential velocity and progression to some new state of being.

The third burning produced the *Isa* force within the universe, and it is ruled over by Verdandi. *Isa* seeks to bring about inertia, implosion, and stillness. The power of *Isa* produces the "Now" to insulate between the potential of the past and the predisposition of the future. The beautiful gift of *Isa* is that if enough energy is exerted, the present can be created that defies the ørlög of the past and therefore creates a new future. However, the drawback is that the Ego of gods and man seeks to abuse the *Isa* force, perhaps exploit that force, by imploding the potential of the Dreamer into its point of view, therefore forcing the Dream to conform to but a minuscule fraction of itself. What a sharp, razor edge is the Blade of the Now—shining, beautiful, and ruthless. Ego is therefore the creator and destroyer of all Magic.

Time is a formidable foe. Linear time would force the universe to flow to some single point of inevitability. However, *Raidho* and *Gebo* are reinstated on another octave via *Jera* so that time is forced from the point and the line to the circle, oval, vortex, and spiral. Ørlög is finalized in that the harvest must be the inevitable product of the seeds planted. However, *Jera* establishes cycles and seasons so we may learn from years of plenty or years of famine which seeds will lead to the achievement of ecstasy and enlightenment. The riddle of *Jera* is written in patterns of light and darkness and is found in the

echoes of Time that reflect from the depths of the Underworld like a mighty cosmic tiller churning its dark dirt upwards into Midgard. Only through consciousness can the roots of the past be severed and removed.

After the reflective power of *Jera* is established the universe couldallow for the power of decay and death to be fulfilled. *Eihwaz* is therefore allowed to come forth. *Eihwaz* assures that all that is ordered must expend energy to maintain this order. If the level of energy output drops below the threshold established by the *Eihwaz* principle, then death occurs and an ending of the current cycle. However, because of the reflective power of *Jera*, death merely sends the energy off in another direction rather than allowing for a single, inevitable outcome. *Eihwaz* is the voracious appetite of Odin's goat and the four harts that constantly attack Yggdrasil's shoots. It is furthermore the devouring nature of Nidhogg and other ravenous wyrms that gnaw and attack from Hvergelmir's depths so that the source of life and death can be seen to be one and the same. The *Eihwaz* force in fact slays itself because it instigates the creation of the Well of Urd, the very waters used to bathe the wounds of its ravages and allow for rebirth on a universal scale.

Now that Time has been forced into cycles and spirals, something had to be established so that there could be "purpose". *Perthro* establishes the Well of Urd as a matrix of Spirit, element, matter, and energy. All thoughts and actions create ripples and changes within this cosmic well. This makes rebirth and evolution truly possible. Furthermore, at any given moment, the Well of Urd holds in its core of memory the Dreamer, Dream, and all shapers and partakers of the Dream. The Runic Mind can assess at any moment what is in harmony or out of harmony with its laws. This allows the universe to undergo the truest evolution possible. Once again it is important to note that it is the Well of Urd with which the Norn's sprinkle and heal all of the damages inflicted by death and decay upon the World Tree. In a sense, the Norns are birthed in the Waters of Urd, then drawn forth by Asgard's fire, only to be rebirthed and baptized within that well as they extinquished the flames of Heid's purification!

Once the Well of Urd has been established, all that is necessary for rebirth is that the souls of conscious beings have a way to access the memories of Urd's well and interact with the pertinent records, much like a computer program that can access only its data files even though the cd rom may contain hundreds or thousands of other such files and programs. *Algiz* provides the fetch, shade, hamingja and other constructs that allow each mind-body-soul complex to experience the Dream, interact, and evolve with it.

The fetch is in essence the Well of Urd as experienced from the point of view of a unique evolving consciousness through nearly infinite incarnations. The hamingja compliments the fetch by being pre-charged with the wyrd and orlog of only a few of the last and most energetically significant incarnations. The shade expresses and stores the potential of the ego-self trapped between the hamingja and the fetch that is not fulfilled or expressed. This allows that charge to be bled off slowly into the astral and Underworld after death.

Of even more importance, *Algiz* is the runic power that most drove Odin to win the runes, capture the Sacred Mead, drink of Mimir's Well, and birth the Valkyrie. It provides Odin's mythic example and instinct so that each human being can also fulfill the quest for wisdom and inspiration.

Sowilo fulfills the drive of consciousness in the achievement of "Wode", "Intoxication", or "Ecstasy"! *Sowilo* is both an instinct and a reaction of the mind-body-soul complex to ond, the energy of life and magic. *Sowilo* fulfills the drive of algiz in that it behaves as the auger with which to bore into Gunnlod's mountain, the serpent to penetrate into its depths, the energy of sexuality with which to woo Sutung's daughter and guardian of the mead, and the eagle's wings with which to fetch the Sacred Mead back to Asgard's walls moving man closer to Dreamer and Dream. *Sowilo* can also be the lightning bolt of Thor sent to blast through the illusions of Ego and the chaos of Self purifying each human being and creating a most pure crystal of that Self.

Now that the ecstatic and purifying aspects of Wode have been created by the sowilo force, and the conscious and unconscious aspects of the soul have been established by the algiz force, the remaining runic powers operate to mitigate and promote the marriage of the soul and wode via the division and subsequent marriage of the Intellect.

The *Tiwaz* force manifests as the left-brain and the functions of analysis and judgment. This is the aspect of mind called the hugh and is represented by Odin's raven Hugin. *Tiwaz* is the sword forged in the furnace of *Kenaz*. It is the masculine part of the mind that seeks knowledge, science, and rationality. It feeds from and to the Dwarf Hoards of knowledge established via *Kenaz* and allows for optimum functioning of the *Ansuz* and *Gebo* drives within sentient beings. The last century was ruled

by the hugh almost to perversion and has brought gods and man to numerous brinks on the forefronts of technology, physics, chemistry, genetics, and artificial intelligence-to name but a few. The edge of *Tiwaz* is as treacherous and sharp as the edge of *Isa*. There is grave danger that we might slip 'ere long!

However, *Tiwaz* may be seen as the culmination of the Odinic, algiz drives. The problem is that tiwaz must acknowledge and bow to its feminine counterpart, the myne, much as Odin was forced to bow to the corruption of Gullveig and the ravages of the Norns, orlog, and Time instigated by her. Only through the feminine as represented by Gullveig can we attain the purifying wode symbolized by Heid. Also, only through union with the Unconscious feminine forces can we birth the valkyries to garrison Asgard's halls.

ᛒ *Berkano* establishes and rules the right brain, feminine half of intelligence and consciousness represented by Odin's raven Munin. These are the intuitive and reflective aspects of mind that can access and directly interact with the Well of Urd, Well of Mimir, and Dwarf Hoards. *Berkano* provides the "conscience" and the "meaningfulness" needed to guide the cold, hard logic ruled by tiwaz. Most of our world's problems stem from the fact that man has isolated himself from the magic, mysticism, and spirituality provided by the *myne* that would help keep the *hugh* in check by giving reflection and perspective.

Berkano rules the Underworld and all of the realms of the magical and intuitive. *Berkano* is the force behind Audhumbla's teats and Hvergelmir in that it feeds and bathes minds, bodies, and souls in the Waters of Urd assuring that without them consciousness withers and dies. All that the sword of *Tiwaz* slays, *Berkano* rebirths. All that *Berkano* dreams, channels, envisions, and births from the *myne*—*Tiwaz* can slay. These are essentially a deeper embodiment of the primary tensions of Fire and Ice that drive the entire universe, rooted deeply into Midgard to drive the tension of life and evolution of the Dream. It is this tension that mandates the biological cycles of birth, maturity, decline, death, and rebirth. These cycles are driven by a cooperation with those dread runes of time, constriction, and ørlög: *Hagalaz, Naudhiz, Isa,* and *Jera. Raidho* and *Gebo* also have a marked influence and seek expression through *Berkano*. Biology therefore mirrors and demarks the journey of the soul so that the flesh can become the means by which to find and understand the true nature of the Hidden and the Unseen—the Dreamer and the Dream.

M Neither *Tiwaz* nor *Berkano* can thrive isolated from the other. This is the true message and symbolism of the Peace of the Aesir and Vanir that is sealed by spitting in the jar from which Kvasir is formed and subsequently the Mead of Inspiration is brewed. The *Ehwaz* runic power allows for this necessary marriage and integration. When the *hugh* and *myne* are optimally developed and have gained adequate energy to rise to the proper level, a new hybrid consciousness is created. The Self can then occupy and experience both halves at once, two ravens becoming one magnificent eagle! This is an awesome state, but ultimately even this awareness can be raised to the level of the fetch beyond even Fire and Ice—union directly to the Dreamer—the Dream no longer necessary. This is the true goal that will lead to the culmination of the *Sowilo* directive and the true evolution from man to god, from god to Dreamer, and lastly from Dreamer back to man completing the flow of giving with the ultimate gift—superconsciousness and freedom from the ravages of Time.

ᛗ *Mannaz* can then be manifested as a deeper expression of the Law of Gebo—the Law of Giving. It links the children of the North through genetics, and more importantly spiritual wyrd, directly to our gods. *Mannaz* rules the splendor of tiwaz, but Rig is also born of the nine wave maidens. *Mannaz* is therefore a deeper rune of the Great Marriage of *Ehwaz* that gives man full access of the Dwarf Hoards, and the hoards of elves, giants, and gods. This rune most fully integrates humans back into the streams and flows of the Runic Mind and the True Mind of Odin. Such an awareness of cosmic order should spill down and be mirrored within society. *Mannaz* is a double bridge from man to the gods and onwards to the Dreamer. One span rises upwards as Bifrost attaining Asgard through the Path of Fire. One span dips below as Giallar and takes us to Hella's gates—ultimately taking us to the Dreamer and beyond via the Path of Ice!

ᛚ Inevitably and by degrees from the sacred marriage of the two halves of the mind, the Unconscious and the Conscious, the mind of man to the mind of the gods, and the mind of the gods to the Runic Mind, life and magic flow like a floodtide. First from Hvergelmir's depths, then from Audhumbla's udders, next from Bestla's womb, then from Erda's womb, and perhaps lastly—from Son, Bodn, and Oethroerir—Magic flows between the potentials of Fire and Ice. Of greatest importance, nothing flows between these poles that does not also flow into and out of Urd's Well and into and out of the Dream and the Dreamer.

As a result, the universe progresses in ebb and flow—in tides and stages. At each stage, therefore, the Dreamer is also the Judger. Every instant, every piece of the Dream is compared against the Intention of the Dreamer, and energy, progression, and awareness are awarded accordingly. It is this universal state of Natural Selection that is ruled over and operated by the runes themselves, especially *Inguz*. The universe and the Dreamer are patient. For aeons upon aeons, *Inguz* has judged each phase, stage, and incarnation of the Flow of *Laguz*—the flow of life and consciousness—of death and unconsciousness! Everything that blends best to the unfolding Dream is promoted and pushed forwards. When inevitable death comes, the needed pieces are stored in the spirals of DNA, in atoms and molecules, energy, elements, and Spirit so they can be reborn and the process can continue. Only the strongest stags will be allowed to copulate with the does of promise!

The Great Stag of Light knows the truth of the universe. In time each of us will come to know and understand from our deepest spirituality what has been codified in proteins in RNA and DNA, molecules, atoms, solar systems, and galaxies. We will come to see that the Well of Urd has acted all along as a repository of those codes and that all the Laws of Science and Nature have been made to abide by the Dreamer and the Judger. In time we will each come to that state of Perfect Accord. It is then that the crystal and helix of *Inguz* shall be rent apart, and, in an instant, the fortress of Odin shall be erected. We shall at that moment become purified—rarefied. We will be so radically unified with our Selves that in an instant, we will be lulled into the vacuum of sleep. There all alone and in the isolation of the One, we will Dream!

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THE NINE NOBLE VIRTUES
THREE - TROTH

by Melanie Rowand-White

Troth or Fidelity

To really begin to understand *troth* I go once more in search of the origins of the word. The word "troth" means faithfulness, good-faith, loyalty, and honesty, or truth. In my last essay I noted that the first definition of "truth" of the *Oxford English Dictionary* is: "the character of being, or disposition to be, true to a person, principle, cause, etc.; faithfulness, fidelity, loyalty, constancy, steadfast allegiance." If I consider the Latin based word "fidelity" it means, "the quality of being faithful; faithfulness, loyalty, unswerving allegiance to a person, party, bond, etc. constancy to, or towards" (*OED*).

Since all of these definitions contain the word *faith,* clearly I also need to discover what this word means. Faith comes from the Old French *fieds* or from the Latin *fides* both meaning to trust.

Trust is a concept both simple and complex. Who and/or what are we to trust? Why? Neither our gods nor our ancestors ask for blind trust, and I find an implicit urge to seek my own answers, to find and hold troth with the truths I find. This does not mean I get to decide that my ancestors were all wrong or that people with more knowledge and wisdom are not worth paying attention to; on the contrary, it means that I am bound to give each person fair treatment and be true to the values which are evident in the lore and histories of my people. The idea of being "tru" is one of great importance to our folk—for me, this means being trustworthy.

The saying, "We are our deeds," is common in modern heathenry. Correct as this is, we must know that in our modern world we are also, in many cases, our words. We are judged by our words as much as we are by our deeds; it is vitally important that we be trustworthy, faithful, and true to both.

In this modern world it is admittedly hard to know how to trust people or who is worthy of that trust. It is the duty of modern heathens to understand what it means to trust and to be trustworthy. I suspect that our ancestors were not people who implicitly trusted anything or anyone outside of their own kith and kin. The family and friends who had proven their troth, had kept their word and were known to be true were the ones who could be trusted. It was appropriate to put faith in family and friends; outside of them faith and trust must be earned because then, as now, the outside world is not a safe place.

The Troth's oath-ring

In *Our Troth* Vol. I, we find the statement,

> 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 the mead-benches and in the shield-wall. Troth is the wall that hedges the human world within the garth from the wild world outside (529-30).

To hold troth with folk is to keep your word, to be true in friendship, to be frithful within community. It is also to remember that there is wisdom in not saying too much, and it is foolish to believe that everyone is worthy of troth. The *Havamál* reminds folk to be wary in the world and worthy in the company of trusted friends. While these things should be common sense, we all know that sense is rarely common.

Truth and faithfulness, honesty, courage, and all of the other virtues are ways of believing, and to believe in these things means we should always hold them to be true, to keep these ideas as the foundations to the trust, the very troth we place in ourselves and each other.

I believe that a resurgence of the word Troth is due, to take it beyond the promise in a wedding ceremony and bring its importance back to a world sorely in need of it. We can be shining examples of troth in a culture which seems, on many levels to have forgotten what it means.

News from Heathen Homelands

Your Intrepid Reporter, Patricia Lafayllve

Ch-ch-ch-ch-changes!

Like the tulips leaping up from Frey's mound in my garden, Trothmoot is springing up right around the corner! This is the Troth's twentieth anniversary, and you should all come join us for the celebration! We'll be at Lincoln State Park, in Indiana, from Thursday May 31—Sunday June 3, 2007. Our website has all the details and the registration form.

Frey's mound in Patty's yard

Speaking of our website, thanks to the tremendous hard work of the Troth's CIO, Arthur Reyes, the Troth has a new website that includes all the information from our old one, adds a lot more detail, and—this just in!—has a new, very user-friendly "Troth Member's Only" section! Forums, individual membership management features, chat rooms, and more are all located securely for our membership. We're still under construction, but don't worry—there is a link to The Troth's original web site, and all the things you loved it for are still available there. Stay tuned for more at http://www.thetroth.org/

Whew. And if that were not enough, the High Rede has been busy working to make our organization better than ever before. Thanks to Ben Waggoner, our Associate Steersman, Rod Landreth, our Clergy Coordinator, and others, the Troth can now offer a limited number of scholarships to members! We think this is a great opportunity for The Troth to help give back to the members who have given us so much over the years. All details are posted in the members' only section of the website. We have also established a long-term growth fund. Driven by member donations, this fund will be able to oversee potential revenue for the Troth, that we can then use to provide even more services in the future. We're planning for the next generation, and it shows! We have a couple of other surprises under our hats, stay tuned for the General Members's Meeting at Trothmoot for more.

Speaking of all these funds, right now we are looking to add a line to the membership application and renewal form. There, people will be able to offer donations to any fund they choose, in any amount. This is strictly voluntary, of course, but we wanted to find a way for members to help The Troth out in their turns, should they want and/or be able to. Thanks go out to various people who have already donated their money and time to The Troth.

We've also established a lifetime membership in The Troth! Currently set at $500.00, our hope is that for our long-time members this will be a rewarding option. Thank you to Daniel O'Halloran, Troth Elder, for being our very first official Lifetime Member!

Head spinning yet? I know mine is! And here, last but not least, is the announcement you've all been waiting for! Or at least the announcement *I've* been working for this past year. The Troth's brand-new Lore Program will officially open for membership at Trothmoot 2007! This program is focused on the scholarship behind our reconstruction of heathenry. It is a self-study program so members can work at their own pace, and is peer-reviewed—meaning that we will work together to help one another in our achievements. A full introduction to the Lore Program can be found on our website. The Lore Program, like the Clergy and Steward Programs, is for Troth members only, but if you're not a member, don't worry! You can still read about the Lore Program on our new website, under the "About Us" button. It has three sections for study, followed by an optional Graduate level for those who want to specialize. The Lore Program's first project is to create an "Introduction to Asatru" web site for people new to heathenry. We should be able to get that up and running by Trothmoot 2008, so definitely stay in touch and keep your eyes on our website as we grow into our future.

Time is short and the day is long. We'll return to our interviews next issue, when we'll be speaking to Diana Paxson, Shope, Elder, author, and all around good egg. You think the High Rede has been busy, wait until you get a look at what our publications office has been up to! Here's a Hint: like Draupnir, *Our Troth* is spawning even more publications. Until next time this is your intrepid reporter, Patricia Lafayllve, signing off. Hope to see you all at Trothmoot!

ANNOUNCING!

Here are some upcoming events that might be happening in your area.

NEW! Podcasts, Spoken Lore, YouTube, and More! Internet Links Heathens Should Know About:

1) Ravencast! David and Sandi Carron discuss heathen issues, host interviews, and more. Downloadable to your iPod, educational, and fun!
http://ravencast.podbean.com/

2) Spoken Lore! Listen in as David and Sandi Carron read excerpts from sagas, eddas, and more. First project: Njal's Saga! Downloadable to your iPod for listening at work, in your car, or whenever you like.
http://spokenlore.com/

3) Asatru 101 on You Tube! Michael Smith hosts an ongoing series of videos educating us all about Asatru and issues surrounding our faith. Search You Tube for "Vinterulf," "Asatru", or
http://www.youtube.com/profile?user=Vinerulf

Ongoing Events:

1) Rune Study Group: This summer the group will be studying the Anglo-Saxon Runes. Meetings are at 7:30 pm on the 4th Wednesday of each month at Greyhaven. For further information, contact Diana L. Paxson at greyhavn@earthlink.net

2) Rune Study Group: Michael Hicks leads an ongoing rune study group in Connecticut. Occurring on the last Thursday of every month in Hartford. from 7:00 PM until discussion ends. All heathens heartily welcome! Please contact Mike Hicks at trumoonbear@hotmail.com for details.

3) F'n Sunday: Savannah, Georgia, USA. F'n Sunday is a monthly meeting for Fellowship, Fun, Food and Frith. Centered around community discussions, activities, field trips and seasonal celebrations relating to contemporary interests in Pre-Christian European (Heathen) Traditions and Histories. Usually guests bring a pot luck dish with a European theme, and a chair. F'n Sunday is generally scheduled for the Fourth Sunday each month. Send inquires to "F'n Sunday" info@pinewoodheathens.org http://www.pinewoodheathens.org/ Sponsored by Kieferwald Sippe; A Troth Affiliated Kindred

4) San Diego Pubmoot: Generally held on a Wednesday night in the middle of the month at the Kaiserhof, in the Beer Garden, 2253 Sunset Cliffs Boulevard, Ocean Beach, (619) 224-0606.

5) Orange County Asatru Meetup: A social gathering for heathens and like-minded people. Generally held on mid-month Sundays from 10:00-12:00 at the IHOP Goldenwest in Westminster (15122 Golden West Street Westminster, CA 92683 (714) 895-3611

6) Fish Club Odin [Sons of Norway]: Vista,CA. Contact Birgit Knorr (birgit001@aol.com) for details.

7) Asatru Meet & Greet in Anchorage, Alaska: An opportunity to socialize with area Heathens and learn more about Asatru. Date/Time/Location - 3rd Wednesday of every month (3/21, 4/18, 5/16, 6/20, etc); 7:00 - 9:00 pm; Organic Oasis. Fee (if any) - N/A. Contact person/group/web site - Danielle Gollihugh at akheathen@yahoo.com

8) Rune Classes: Gladsheim Kindred hosts a series of classes on the futhark. Happening on the 4th Thursdays of every month, at 7:30 PM. Gladsheim Hof, 6408 Waterloo Road, Columbia, Maryland 21405. http://www.gladsheim.org/

9) Lore Classes: Hosted by Gladsheim Kindred, an ongoing series of classes covering heathen lore and more. Second Tuesday of every month, 7:30 PM. Gladsheim Hof, 6408 Waterloo Road, Columbia, Maryland 21405. http://www.gladsheim.org/

10) Heathen Movie Night! Also at Gladsheim Hof, beginning at 7:30 PM, on the last Friday of every month. Heathen movies, mayhem, potluck and more! Gladsheim Hof, 6408 Waterloo Road, Columbia, Maryland 21405. http://www.gladsheim.org/

11) The Heathen Book Club, a discussion group that focuses on the Eddas and Sagas, meets on the fourth Friday of every month 7-10pm at: Alchemy Arts Bookstore, 1203 W. Bryn Mawr, Chicago, IL 60660,1-800-WITCHES. We ask a $3 donation and that participants bring a snack to share. For information, contact Phyllis at Atheleas@comcast.net.

12)The Saga and Eddic Discussion group, a book discussion group that focuses on the Eddas and Sagas, meets monthly(see below) from 1-3pm at:
Witchy Wearables, 4459-D West 147th St., Midlothian, IL 60445, (708) 389-1313. June 30, July 28, Aug 25, Sept 22, Oct 27, Nov 24, (No Dec. meeting).
We ask a $3 donation and that participants bring a snack to share. For more information, contact Phyllis at Atheleas@comcast.net

13)The Southside Pagan Heathen Alliance, a face-to-face networking and discussion group, meets monthly on the first Saturday of the month from 1-4 pm at: Witchy Wearables, 4459-D West 147th St. Midlothian, IL 60445 (708) 389-1313. We ask that participants bring a snack to share. For more information, contact Phyllis at Atheleas@comcast.net

One-Time Events, Weekend Workshops, Series, Errata:

1) Freyja, Lady, Vanadis, An Introduction to the Goddess: Wednesday, May 9, 2007 from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM at Pandora's Box, Norwich, CT. A repeat of Patricia Lafayllve's informative workshop regarding the goddess Freyja. Book signing to follow as time permits. Contact Pandora's Box at (860) 887-4501.

2) TROTHMOOT! Yes, it's almost that time of year. Come help the Troth celebrate its twentieth anniversary! Thursday May 31, 2007 – Sunday June 3, 2007. at Lincoln State Park, Indiana. See http://www.thetroth.org/ for details or email the Trothmoot Planning Committee at trothmoot2007@yahoo.com

3) Ancestor Discussion and Blot: Come join us for a discussion on ancestry in heathenry and a blot to honor our ancestors. Wednesday, June 27, 2007 at Pandora's Box, Norwich, Connecticut from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM. Patricia Lafayllve will be running the blot along with Michael Hicks. Contact Pandora's Box at (860) 887-4501.

4) Introduction to the Elder Futhark Part One: Sunday, July 8, 2007. History and origins of the runes, first and second aett of the Elder Futhark will be covered. Class taught by Patricia Lafayllve. Located at Awen Tree, 102 Cottage Street, Easthampton, MA 01027. Contact: Awen Tree (413) 527-3331 or awentree@yahoo.com

5) Sirius Rising: July 16, 2007- July 22, 2007 at the Brushwood Folklore Center, Fernwood New York. This broad, pan-pagan event is in its thirteenth year. A series of classes focused on heathenry will be scheduled during the event. Most heathen classes occur at the Runestead, a sacred ve and holy grove maintained by local heathens. Definitely a must-see for any Asatruar in the area! Visit http://www.brushwood.com/ for details and registration.

6) Norse Mythology: This unique combination of storytelling and song will be performed by Patricia Lafayllve on Wednesday, July 25, 2007 from 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM in Norwich, Connecticut. Contact Pandora's Box at (860) 887-4501.

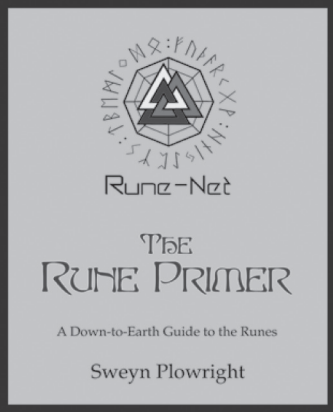
7) Introduction to the Elder Futhark Part Two: Sunday, August 5, 2007. Third aett will be covered, as will various uses of the runes from divination to bindrunes, galdr and more. Class taught by Patricia Lafayllve. Located at Awen Tree, 102 Cottage Street, Easthampton, MA 01027. Contact: Awen Tree (413) 527-3331 or awentree@yahoo.com.

8) Wyrd 101: An Introduction to the Heathen World View. Patricia Lafayllve leads this discussion of the heathen world view, including the norns, time, the cosmos, and ethical systems underlying heathen practices. Wednesday August 22, 2007 from 7:00 – 9:00 PM at Pandora's Box, Norwich, Connecticut. Please contact Pandora's Box at: (860) 887-4501.

9) East Coast Thing: August 23, 2007-August 26, 2007 at Camp Netimus, Pennsylvania. This is the premier local gathering for Asatruar in the Northeast. Hosted this year by Vingolf Fellowship. See http://www.eastcoastthing.org/ for details!

If you would like to advertise your heathen event in News from Heathen Homelands, please email Patricia Lafayllve at: walkyrja@tworavenskindred.org. Please keep in mind Idunna *comes out four times per year – feel free to get your announcement in early! There is no cost for posting announcements in this column. Additionally, if you are a member of a Troth-affiliated group and are interested in being interviewed, please contact Patricia Lafayllve. Look forward to hearing from you – you never know; your home town might be next!*

THE RUNE PRIMER



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KINDER CORNER

McRune Sticks

by David Thomas

Ingredients

One rainy day at half term
Three bored grandchildren, who have rejected their McNuggets and discarded their free Happy Meal McToy on the grounds that they have already got that one.
Twenty four wooden McCoffee stirrers
One ballpoint pen
One empty McCoffee beaker wiped clean with a McTissue

Method

Inscribe the Futhark onto the McCoffee stirrers
Place the McRune sticks so produced into the McCoffee beaker
Invite a grandchild to shake the McCoffee beaker about a bit until a few McRune sticks fall onto the McTable.
Interpret those McRune sticks that fall face up.
Repeat for each child.

Additional ingredients

A few school chums from adjoining tables
One elderly lady who once saw a film based on a novel by P.D. James and finds it all a bit scary but interesting.
One passing lorry driver whose granny could read the tea leaves.

Additional additional ingredients

One harassed McManager who asks you to leave as there is a rush on and table space is limited.

Very enjoyable, especially as by then the rain had eased off.

THE MEANDERING MEAD-OLOGIST

Ben Waggoner

My last column reviewed a couple of American meads that (thanks to annoying legal estrictions on shipping alcoholic beverages across state lines) aren't easy to find even in this country. So in this installment, I'll make up for my provinciality by sampling meads from England, France, and New Zealand.

At Trothmoot 2006, a group of us heathens sampled a bottle of *Lurgashall's Mead*, which I had found in a liquor store in Las Vegas, Nevada. Lurgashall Winery (http://www.lurgashall.co.uk/) is located in Sussex, England, and produces a range of country wines (the silver birch wine looks especially interesting), liqueurs, and meads (including a mead fortified with Scottish whiskey, which looks like an interesting idea, especially since several of the tasters ended up rather fortified with Scottish whiskey that night. . . but that's another story). What we sampled was labeled *Lurgashall's Celtic Mead*, but allegedly—according to http://www.ratebeer.com/beer/lurgashall-celtic-mead/28643/—*Lurgashall's Celtic Mead* and its *English Mead* are the same beverage under different names. Not having tasted both, I can't be sure myself.

The fifteen heathens who sampled *Lurgashall's Mead* gave it mixed reviews. As always, we rated it on a scale of one to five, one being "Why are you trying to poison me with this vile brew?" and five meaning "I would kill or die to have just one more taste of this divine liquid." Two people gave it a rating of 4, two people gave it a 1, and the rest fell variously in between, giving it an average rating of 2.43. Comments on *Lurgashall's Mead* included:

- Eh. Marginally worse than *Chaucer's*. Still scratchy.
- Great!!
- Light, strong honey taste with a touch of fire.
- A bit woody.
- Sweeter than I like, honey character simple.
- Dear gods NO! Tannin-heavy, dry, bitter, "sour apple".

We also sampled an imported mead labeled *Chouchen*, which I had picked up in a liquor store in Las Vegas. Later research revealed that *Chouchen* isn't a brand name, it's the Breton word for "mead". Mead is a very traditional Breton beverage, and there are several brands still made in Brittany, the Celtic-speaking peninsula of northwestern France. What we reviewed, it seems, was called *Warenghem Chouchen*—so our comments should not be taken as representative of all Breton meads. The label features a snarling pigtailed Celtic warrior with huge muscles—sort of a cross between Obélix and the Incredible Hulk. (Evidently it was this mead, not gamma rays, that transformed Dr. Banner. . .) A reviewer on the Web site http://honeywine.com/ writes, "This is an excellent traditional mead from Brittany. It is a semi-sweet mead that is very low in acidity. This creates a very smooth velvety texture and finish. The honey used is of excellent character and is plum/pear in aroma and flavor. I picture this mead as being similar to the meads of old."

Unfortunately, Warenghem Chouchen was not so pleasing to the palates of the seventeen assembled heathens who rated it at Trothmoot. On our five-point scale, *Waringhem Chouchen* garnered an average of 1.85. One person gave it a 3.5, the highest score that it received, but it also got six 1s and seven 2s. Written comments included:

- Tart, bitter aftertaste. Might make a good cooking mead, but avoid drinking.
- Yeasty, not much flavor.
- Overattenuated, way too much added tannin.
- Gods save me, much too little honey, too much tannin.
- Solid middle, dry with bitter aftertaste, reminiscent of fruity reds.
- Kill me!
- Kill him too!
- Drinkable without murder.

On the other side of the Earth, New Zealand is home to Havill's Mazer Mead Co., which has been making mead since 1964, using their own proprietary yeast strain. Their Website http://www.newzealandnz.co.nz/mead/ boasts that "*Havill's Mead* is brewed to Mother Nature's secret recipe and is at one with nature", and that those who drink it feel "revitalised, spiritually and physically uplifted, youthful and buzzing with a hormonal resurgence." I found a bottle of *Havill's Authentic Mead* (Medium) in a liquor store in Denver, and subjected it to the critical scrutiny of the assembled heathens at the 2006 Winternights gathering in western Arkansas, hosted by the Northwest Arkansas Kindred. *Havill's* is apparently a little better than *Lurgashall's,* but it only received an average score of 2.56. The tasters commented:

- Very bland at first. Picks up flavor later.
- Not really much taste, has a wooden aftertaste.
- Thin, boring. Tastes like pond water.
- Bo-rinnng.
- Lightly sweet with a slightly overripe fruit aftertaste (long lasting).

As for whether anyone felt "buzzing with a hormonal resurgence", it was kind of hard to tell, since many of the regulars at our gatherings in Arkansas are buzzing with hormonal resurgence all the freakin' *time*. . . but let's not go there.

The usual disclaimer pplies: it's possible that we happened to taste atypical or poorly stored bottles that don't truly represent the product. Of course, your tastes may differ from ours. So feel free to try the meads we review for yourself, if you get the chance, and form your own opinions. Even if you brew your own, try out commercial meads when you can—and reward the best makers out there by buying their products. If you can't buy their products in your home state, consider visiting Free the Grapes! at http://www.freethegrapes.com/ and find out about their efforts to legalize interstate wine shipments—their efforts will help meadmakers and mead lovers, too!)

A big "Hail!" goes out to everyone who helped out with the tasting, at Trothmoot 2006 and at Winternights 2006 in Arkansas! Send any comments and suggestions to heathen@cyberback.com.

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by Valerie Cattaneo

Thunder, tremble, rumble,
Thurisaz purifies and protects,
Thurisaz smashes and destroys.
It is better to ponder a bit longer,
Than to act too quickly.
The rose seems gentle and inoffensive,
However, its intimacy is well guarded.
True strength is not found in a tight fist,
The intensity of our actions
must always be well measured out!

Tonnerre, tremble, gronde,
Thurisaz purifie et protège,
Thurisaz pulvérise et détruit.
Il vaut mieux réfléchir un peu plus longtemps,
Que d'agir trop rapidement.
La rose semble douce et inoffensive,
Pourtant, son intimité est bien gardée,
La véritable force ne réside pas
dans un poing bien serré,
L'intensité de nos actions
doit toujours être bien mesurée!

Hedgeworts: Plantain

by Teresa Luedke

…And you, waybroad/plantain, mother of herbs,
open by the east, inwardly powerful,
over you wagons rolled, over you women rode,
over you brides made cry, over you bulls snorted.
All you then withstood and confronted,
so may you withstand poison and infection
and the harmful one that throughout the land
travels…

"Nine Herbs Charm" [1]

This excerpt from the "Nine Herbs Charm" is recorded in the *Lacnunga Manuscript,* usually identified as charms # 79-82. It dates during the changing times of the Heathen/Christian era, around 1000 CE;. This manuscript is a collection of Old English traditions and folk medicines and other odd bits of information from various sources. Now that translations are available in book form and on the internet it can be used today to give some insight into the ways of those who used and recorded this information. The first time I read this charm, 'plantain' was not included with 'waybroad' as it is in the translation quoted above. Only while researching plantain did I find that waybroad, the 'mother of herbs' was actually a folk-name for plantain. Since mothers in many Heathen myths are often represented as more than one figure, such as the Dis, the Valkyrie, or the Norns or even Frigga's handmaidens; 'mother' plantain also refers to at least two worts that are very similar, Common and English Plantain.

A unique feature of the "Nine Herbs Charm" is the way the herbs seem to be addressed directly and told what's up; something that may be worth a try when we harvest our own herb and worts?

Summer Hedgeworts

Plantain, the mother of herbs, can be found blooming in and around the hedge from the time the season begins to warm up and into the fall. Plantain belongs to the plant order *Plantaginaceae*, this order contains more than 200 species, with as many as thirty currently being utilized for one reason or another. The name"Waybroad" is known to refer to two plantain family members in particular, both native to Eurasia; *Plantago Lanceolata* or English Plantain and *Plantago Major* or Common Plantain. These two worts can be used interchangeably, and both are referred to as simply waybroad or plantain in many herbal records.

Native to Eurasia, Plantain began putting its own roots (and seeds) down on the North American continent along with the early settlers who brought it to the Americas, as reports from the Virginia area during the later half of the 1600's seem to show. Local Native American populations already were referring to plantain as 'Englishman's-foot' or 'white man's foot'. They had even begun to adopt it into their own healing traditions. (Incidentally the aborigines of New Zealand also used these folk-names as plantain invaded their homeland.) This was a commonly known plant before the advent of modern medical practices as its use in literature seems to suggest- The fourteenth century poet Chaucer says, 'And of Plantaine he hath his herb sovereine,'and Shakespeare writes 'And plantain rubb'd that heals the reaper's wound.' In the nineteenth century, Longfellow referred it in 'Hiawatha' when discussing the English settlers:

Wheresoe'er they tread, beneath them
Springs a flower unknown among us,
Springs the White-man's Foot in blossom. [2]

Today one plantain or the other can usually be found growing in most temperate regions around the globe, which means most of North America. Both are commonly listed as a 'weed' of yards, gardens, roadsides and fields wherever they grow. Like most 'weeds' plantain is a survivor, it adapts to various environments and can even miniaturize itself, much like the dandelion, allowing it to set seed at as little as two inches high. In optimal conditions plantain can grow to a maximum rosette diameter of about 12 inches, with the flower stalks rising to a height of from 6 to as much as 24 inches. The two Waybroad/plantains are distinguishable from each other by their leaf shapes and slight flower differences; both plantains flower from April to October and both have leaves with 3 to 7 prominently grooved ribs running the length of the fibrous leaf Also both have nondescript flowers on the top one third or so of the green flower stalks, originating from the center of the rosette of leaves and rising above the level of the leaves by several inches.

English Plantain has a rosette of longish, lance shaped leaves ranging from 2 to 10 inches in length; these widen gradually up to 2 inches and then narrow back to a blunt point. The flower tips are reddish along the top third of the stalk, which comes from the blush of 1/8 inch flowers which wrap around the top of the flower stalk. English Plantain seems to prefer the warmer southern latitudes and can tolerate marshy ground; this wort grows in my region within zones 7, 8 and 9; the sandy coastal plains of Georgia. English Plantain also has a fuzzy leaf surface.

Common Plantain has a shorter leaf with a slight stem that widens into a broader, more oval leaf that can reach 6 inches in length and about half that size at its greatest width. The flowers are also found on green stalks that rise from the center of the rosette, but Common Plantain has a more whitish blush on its flower stalks. Common Plantain seems to prefer milder, rockier northerly latitudes and in Europe also tolerates life among the rocks, as another folk-name, 'sea-cliff sward' seems to suggest.

Long-Leaf Plantain, illustration © 1995-2005 Missouri Botanical Garden

Several folk-names are associated with plantain, which can sometimes tell a story about the wort they refer to; 'Waybroad' comes from its habit of growing near old roadways or 'way' sides. In the Highlands of Scotland it's called 'Slan-lus' or 'plant of healing.' It's also called 'St Patrick's plant' perhaps for the same reason it's called 'snakeweed', because of its use on snake bites. Another folk-name 'soldiers herb' could refer to similar uses as Aloe Vera, also a soldier's wort that was used for healing; however aloe must be carried, whereas plantain could have been foraged as needed along the roadside.

The "First Aid Kit in a Plant"

Described as a 'first-aid kit in a plant' [2] plantain can be used on a cut or scrape much like a modern medicated band-aid. It helps stop blood flow and provides antibacterial protection and to aid in healing. One can simply pick a leaf or two and rinse it well; then bruise it lightly to soften the texture and to release some of its juices. Place the bruised leaf over a wound and secure with a strip of cloth or perhaps a band-aid.

This same macerated leaf is also good for itchy insect bites and rashes, and as a bonus is usually readily available where the insects live and bite! The PDR for Herbal Medicines states that plantain has a high tannin content, giving it antibacterial properties, and that its freshly expressed juice possesses bacteriostatic and bactericidal effects derived from its tannins. Antibacterial qualities inhibit the growth of bacteria and astringents draw tissue together more tightly. Both abilities can be very handy in healing tissue damage. Or, as the "Nine Herbs Charm shows, the ability to 'withstand poison' and confront 'infection.'[1]

Another major ingredient at work in plantain is 'Aucubin' which is a glucoside/phyto-chemical. Aucubin is noted to have the following properties; sedative, anesthetic, analeptic, antiseptic (anti-viral), anti-toxic, anti-histaminic, anti-inflammatory, anti-rheumatic, anti-tumor (anti-blastic, anti-cancer, anti-carcinogenic), diuretic, expectorant and hypotensive. [3] Many of these properties reinforce the effects of the tannins.

Plantains also contain a substance called mucilage—especially in the seeds. Another species of commercially grown plantain, *Plantago Psyllium* is utilized for its extremely high mucilage (30%) content. Mucilage is a substance that swells in the gut, moisturizing and soothing irritated membranes. Known as Psyllium, this substance is found in the winnowed seeds and is used in many over the counter bulk laxatives. It's considered safer than some other laxative ingredients. Plantago seeds are listed in The United States Pharmacopoeia XXII as an official laxative herb. [4]

Various medicinal uses are reported for plantain in old texts; one well known use is a cure for wounds from spears and iron, elves' shot, god's shot and witches' shot; also for a 'sudden stitch'. It was used to expel worms, perhaps because of the laxative qualities of the Psyllium. A tea of the dried leaves was said to stop diarrhea, to sooth a sore throat and to relieve bronchitis. The seeds are collected for bird seed and if the tiny husks are winnowed from them they can also be ground and used for a colon cleanse. A well macerated leaf warmed in a hot pan or left at room temperature,

makes a nice 'Tucks like' substitute that also heals. Chewing the root is said to help stop a tooth ache and a macerated leaf or the whole plant can be used plain or heated on boils, bruises, scrapes, rashes, impetigo, dermatitis, insect stings, or just about any skin ailment. Frequently instructions in old folklore were given for salves and ointments, some very complicated and others very simple - all referring to the same basic use in combatting skin irritations.

Plantain is used throughout the world in very similar ways. In Russia it is reportedly used for chronic colitis and acute gastritis. The German Commission E-lists plantain as a safe poultice to reduce pain and itching from hemorrhoids. Chinese medicine uses it to treat male impotence.

These hedgeworts were apparently well placed as some of the first lines of defense from 'the harmful ones that throughout the land travel' that could invade a person's body. When medicine depended on local resources these two worts had earned their place, as shown by the "Nine Herbs Charm."

Hedgewort Garden

Plantain is a perennial that can act like an annual. It propagates by seeds, but also has a shallow root system so transplanting is relatively easy. Bring this hedgewort to your own hedge garden by transplanting whatever varieties of plantain are in your area. If you come across another variety in your travels, collect it as well. As usual with any wort do not collect near roadsides or any area that may be contaminated with herbicides or pesticides or any other unseen pollutants.

Harvest up to 1/3 of the leaves at any one time for a constant supply or cut the whole plant back, leaving about a 1 inch stub. New leaves will usually re-sprout from the roots. Or pull a whole plant, but always leave a few plants to reseed. Be sure to rinse well and pat dry and allow it to dry away from direct sun light (the plant dries quickly). Store in airtight containers out of the light.

Broad-leaf Plantain, illustration courtesy© 1995-2005 Missouri Botanical Garden

To use as a vegetable, choose the most tender leaves, which occur just before the flower spikes appear, but small leaves can be eaten during the entire growing season. Use the leaves fresh with other mixed greens or cook as a mixed pot herb, the flavor is similar to spinach. Larger leaves must have their ribs removed for better palatability. Plantain, like many wild greens, provides valuable nutrients, including beta carotene (vitamin A) as well as ascorbic-acid (vitamin C), vitamin K and calcium.

When using plantain in teas, topical or most other preparations, larger leaves may be used. Often the whole plant is used; including roots and flower stalks cleaned and dried and usually chopped.

Simple Uses for Plantain

The simplest and oldest method of using plantain is to simply pick a fresh leaf for two, bruise lightly to release juices and then apply it to the injured area. Other uses include teas and tinctures for coughs and colds. Salves and ointments are used for skin irritation and repair. These are not hard to create once you have the basic ingredients. Always remove small portions of salves and ointments with a spoon or other tool and not fingers, to avoid contamination. Consult several recipes to familiarize yourself with the techniques used. Plantain is relatively safe for use; the only danger lies in over-use of Psyllium.

Salve/Ointment - Gather 1 cup of very clean and dry, loosely packed plantain leaves. Chop leaves and place into a sterilized canning jar, add 1 cup of olive oil. At this point you can let the two ingredients stand for up to 6 weeks, [the oil will begin to get greener in only a few hours]. Or go straight to the heating stage, but be aware that heat can destroy some of the active ingredients so use with caution and keep it low.

Pre-heat oven to 200 degrees and place plantain mixture in a stainless steel or enamel container 'cook' for 3 hours. Remove from oven and stir well, then strain out plantain and return to canning jar. Stir in 1 ounce of grated beeswax until incorporated and then add 4,000 IU of Vitamin E oil (as a preservative). [5]

The ointment can be used for stings, cuts, scrapes and burns [6]. Plantain can also be used as a vaginal

lubricant, and as a general treatment it can help to [7] 'strengthen the skin, hasten healing, discourage infection, and stop inflammation.' [8] Try using it on poison ivy, dry skin, or even for dandruff; or try it as a facial moisturizer before bed. Think of it as a general antibacterial product. Keep product sanitary.

One final word-- I think our ancestors find many ways to stay in contact with us, and I believe one of these is through coincidence. Coincidence recently presented me with a book by Jon Krakauer , "Into the Wild", about a plant forager, Christopher Johnson McCandless. While trying to survive on his own in the Alaskan wilderness, Christopher tasted just one small piece of a plant and never recovered. The plant he sampled had edible parts, but he decided to test another part of the plant. This was a fatal error. So please use extreme caution, use this information for a springboard and not a lesson. In fact you can have fun learning to identify these plants without ever actually using them at all.

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[1] Griffiths, p. 191

[2] http://www.worldwideschool.org/library/books/lit/poetry/TheSongofHiawatha/chap21.html Henry Longfellow in 'The Song of Hiawatha" Chapter XXI 'The White Man's Foot'

[3] http://www.cigno.com/exam.html

[4] http://healthline.com/galecontent/plantain

[5] Recipe adapted from Weed, p. 260 and Key-Walding, p. 31

[6] Key-Walding, p. 31

[7] Weed, p. 185

[8] *op. cit,* p. 187
[9] Pollington, p. 229

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Field Guides

Several good field guides are available for the amateur naturalist; I like to cross reference the worts I'm working on as much as possible, 'hedgeworts' are by their nature are relatively mild, but always use caution and be 1000% sure of plant identification! I usually study an herb for at least a year, through a whole growing season, from flower to flower before ever attempting use it on my own. Look for field guides with clear photos and drawings, both can be useful. Here are 3 useful guides:

The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Wildflowers (The National Audubon Society, Inc 1992 and Alfred A. Knopf, New York. isbn 0-394-50432-1)

I have the Eastern edition. This guide has good pictures and a comprehensive layout with the flower

shapes and colors along the edges of the book creating a thumb guide. In addition steps or lessons in identification are given in a special section. Written descriptions are easily understood and occasionally comments are given as to the uses of the plants.

U.S. Army Survival Manual, FM 21-76; (reprinted by Dorset Press 1994 isbn 1-56619-022-3)

This book is full of survival tactics and contains a section of good pictures with descriptions and uses of wild plants.

In the Footsteps of our Ancestors -Guide to Wild Foods, by Christopher Nyerges, (995, isbn 0-9603190-2-6)

This author loves his material and also conducts hands on classes on the west coast of the USA. His plant drawings are very true to life and he has a lengthy background in practical usage of the plants. He also hosts a website at http://www.christophernyerges.com/

Quotes- The Lacnunga Manuscript [in *Leechcraft*]

134.

Against a sudden stitch; feverfew and the red nettle which grows in through a building and waybread; boil in butter.

135.

Loud were they, lo! loud as they rode over the barrow
they were determined as they rode over the land.
Shield yourself now, so you may escape this attack.
Out, little spear, if it be in here.
[I] stood under linden, under a light shield,
where the mighty women declared the might
and yelling they sent spears.
Back to them I wish to send another
a flying dart in opposition.
Out little spear, if it be in here.
A smith sat, hammered a knife,
a small weapon, a serious wound.
Out, little spear, if it be in here
Six smiths sat, wrought slaughter-spears.
Out, spear, be not in, spear.
If there be in here a piece of iron,
the work of the witches, it must melt away.
If you were shot in the skin, or you were shot in the flesh
or were shot in the blood, [or were shot in the bone]
or were shot in the limb, may you life never be threatened,
if it were the gods' shot, or it were the elves' shot,
or it were the witches' shot, I will now help you.
This as a cure to you for the gods' shot, this as a cure to you for the elves' shot,
this as a cure a cure to you for the witches' shot, I wish to help you.
There it fled to the mountain [wood, no rest] did have.
Whole be you [now], may the Lord help you.

Then take the knife, put it into the liquid.

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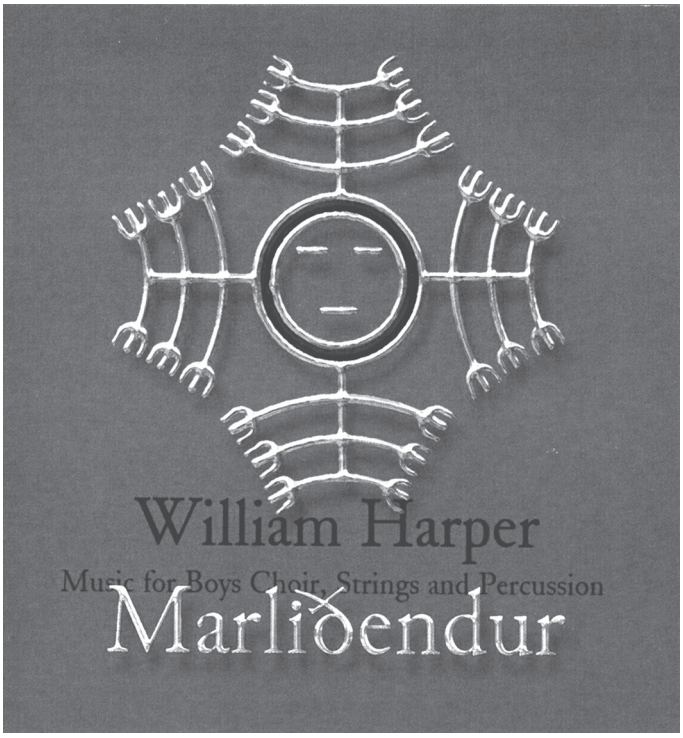
REVIEWS

Mead Hall to Metal

Reviews of Nordic Music:

William Harper. *Marliðendur: Music for Boys Choir, Strings and Percussion.* Gudmundur Emilsson, conducting the Riga Dome Boys Choir and Baltic Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra. ARTCO Records.

reviewed by Ben Waggoner



Heathens who are classical music lovers may feel like there's a rather limited selection of heathen-relevant music. There's Wagner, of course. Some fine pieces by Sibelius are based on Finnish mythology, and early music groups like Sequentia have created reconstructions of what heathen-era music and poetry might have sounded like. Great music, all of it, but not a very extensive shelf. If you've ever wondered "what else is out there?", you might pick up William Harper's *Marliðendur: Music for Boys Choir, Strings and Percussion.*

The text is based on a poem by the contemporary Icelandic poet Jóhann Hjálmarsson, which describes an Icelander's meditation on his homeland, as seen through the events of *Eyrbyggja saga*, one of the most supernaturally charged sagas of Icelanders. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to find Hjálmarsson's poem, and the CD doesn't come with lyrics—which puts me at a disadvantage in figuring out what's going on! However, several sections are named after events in *Eyrbyggja saga*. The archaic word *marliðendur* appears in chapter 16; it literally translates as "sea-sliders", but means some sort of night-riding witches or evil spirits. Fittingly, the cover is a glyph known as *angurgapi*, taken from a medieval Icelandic grimoire.

Harper calls his work "post-minimal music". Minimalism was a movement in the 1960s through 1980s—Phillip Glass being the best-known minimalist composer—that emphasized "doing more with less", stripping down music to its basics, and using repeated phrases, straightforward rhythms, and strict forms. (Hence the "Phillip Glass knock-knock joke": "Knock knock. Who's there? Knock knock. Who's there? Knock knock. Who's there? Knock knock. Who's there?...") Post-minimalist music also makes use of repeated phrases, but could be said to "play with them" more; there's more variation in melodies and rhythms, and an overall feeling of "more going on" in the music. Like much other post-minimalist music, *Marliðendur* isn't tonal—meaning that it doesn't stay in any one particular key—but unlike some other forms of modern art music, it isn't harsh or dissonant, and in fact is very listenable.

Marliðendur consists of five movements. "Rimur" begins with a bang, with pounding percussion and syncopated unison string phrases played against repeated staccato syllables in the chorus, before shifting into lyrical interlocking melody lines. Some parts are sung or played in parallel fifths and octaves, giving the music an almost medieval feel, while the strings alternate between doubling the voices and playing folk-like melodies. "Storyteller" starts with a long soaring violin solo against string chords; the chorus and percussion don't come in until the end. "Katla's Curse" is sung in English, featuring quirky rhythms and vocal glissandos. It doesn't sound all that malevolent (but remember that the sagas describe even the wickedest seidh-songs as "fair to hear"). "Seal in the Farmhouse" (the title alludes to spooky events in chapter 53 of the saga, in which an uncanny seal rises up through the floor of the farmouse at Fróði) repeats the pulsing sound of the

opening, moves on to interlocking polyrhythms in the voices, rises to a crescendo, and suddenly downshifts into "Kjartan's Song", a slow, meditative solo for a boy alto. The brisk "Finale" builds to a vigorous climax.

This is not exactly head-banging music, and not even all classical fans will like it. Nonetheless, I enjoyed the piece. It's good to hear how composers can still draw fresh inspiration from our lore. My only real complaint is the lack of a lyrics sheet—I know the saga, but I wish I could get a better grip on how Jóhann Hjálmarsson interpreted it, and how that in turn relates to the music.

Marliðendur is about twenty-two minutes long, which may seem a bit meager. Still, the CD's priced at $10.97, which is reasonable for a short work. It's available from CD Baby, at http://cdbaby.com/cd/wharper4 (who have always given me excellent service). More on this piece and the composer's other works (which look quite interesting, although none are especially heathen-relevant) can be found at http://www.wharper.com/.

Nordic Metal invades Texas! : Four live reviews.

by Hrafnkel Anders & Freyjavin Grafeldr

***Amon Amarth:* Gypsy Ballroom 12/04/2006**

A year after *Amon Amarth's* last Dallas appearance, the city's metal masses found themselves ready for Sweden's Viking metal gods' triumphant return. As the lights dimmed, the band commenced a pummeling set with "Valhall Awaits Me" and "Runes To My Memory". "Asator", "Pursuit of Vikings", "Fate of Norns" and "Death in Fire" followed along with the title track to new album "With Oden On Our Side". Getting to play a longer set than the previous year, *Amon Amarth's* relentless death metal onslaught was crushing.

***Enslaved:* Ridglea Theatre 1/29/2007**

After several years of absence from stateside touring, last January heralded a welcome return for Norway's *Enslaved*. Having evolved from their primal black metal roots into a more progressive metal style, *Enslaved* turned in a varied and dynamic performance. Churning out old classics such as "Loke" and "Jotunblod" mixed with newer songs "Isa", "Return to Yggdrasil" and new album title track "Ruun", *Enslaved* played a set which was compelling and satisfying. Hopefully their next American absence won't be quite as lengthy.

***Unleashed:* Ridglea Theatre 2/24/2007**

The abundance of superb metal shows in North Texas did well to set the stage for *Unleashed*, longstanding champions of Swedish death metal. With a career that's pushing two decades in length, this band has remained true to its roots while others have altered their style or fallen by the wayside entirely. *Unleashed* confirmed their standing that night as they tore through an old school set that included "To Asgaard We Fly", "The Longships Are Coming", "In Victory or Defeat", and title track from new disc "Midvinter Blot". Johnny Hedlund and his band hammered the crowd and left them wanting more.

***The Sword :* The Doublewide 3/23/2007**

With most bands playing a Nordic style coming from Europe, *The Sword* hails from Austin, Tx. Like many Texas bands the Sword play a style referred to as "doom" consisting of dark, minor-key scales and chord progressions mixed with slow to mid-paced temps and dark lyrics as pioneered by the mighty Black Sabbath. An up and coming band, *The Sword* packed the tiny Doublewide with a max capacity crowd. Taking the stage with "Lament of the Aurochs": the band pounded the gathered throng with "Barael's Blade", "Freya", "Iron Swan", "March of the Lor", "The Horned Goddess", "The Frost Giant's Daughter" and "Winter's Wolves" which had the fans howling along.... literally. *The Sword*'s thick wall of sound threatened the building's integrity while the set list, which focused on the immense *Age of Winters* album, made for many a pleased fan.

THE FISH ARE BACK. . .

AND THEY'VE BROUGHT SOME FRIENDS. . .

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anyone who likes to make the denizens
of the local megachurch go "huh?"

HUGINN'S HOARD:

Reviews of Books and Drama

Kveldulfr Hagan Gundarsson, *Elves, Wights, and Trolls:* *Studies Towards the Practice of Germanic Heathenry: Vol. I*, New York: I-Universe, 2007

reviewed by Diana L. Paxson

In this, the first new Asatru book to appear from Kveldulf in a decade (always excepting his revisions for the new edition of *Our Troth*), he demonstrates that he has lost none of his lore. Instead, his understanding of the theory of our religion has been enriched by the additional years of practice.

Kveldulf's experience with animals and the land at his home in rural Ireland are especially relevant to this book, which deals with the wights with whom we share the earth on which we live.

As Kveldulf points out, a reading of the sagas indicates that for many in the Viking Age, religious practice focused on the local and family wights more often than it did on the gods. Unfortunately for the modern reader, in the lore the use of terms such as *alf*, *thurse*, and *etin* is confusing, often making it difficult to distinguish which being is meant.

Building on an exhaustive survey of the sources, Kveldulf has gone far to sort out the confusion among beings who survived into later folklore as the "huldre folk", or the "invisible". After an opening section on the nature and ground-rules for dealing with the wights, the book offers sections on earth-wights, including landvaettir, trolls, skogsra (tree women), other plant wights, and all of the above as teachers of the lore. Chapter III covers Etins, Rises, and Thurses, focusing especially on their relationships with the gods. Chapter IV deals with the water-wights, V, with the Light and Dark Alfs, and VI with the Dwarves. Chapters VII through IX address the relationships between all these beings and humans with some thoughtful and practical instructions for learning how to work with them.

> ...religion is more like talking to your parents or grandparents; even if you're clueless, if you're trying and your heart is in the right place, they'll most likely forgive errors in practice or expression and help you out anyway. Whereas magic is more like dealing with electricity: no matter how good your intentions or how pure your heart, if you don't know what you're doing and aren't just unbelievably lucky (and no one is lucky all the time), you're most likely to fry yourself and/or those around you.
>
> (p. 113)

Those cautions in mind, the rites and instructions are well thought out, clear, and solidly based on folk practice and magical lore. The appendices are also worthwhile, including a translation of the *Bergthua thattr*, which until now was not available in English. In addition, there is a glossary.

This is an important addition to our information on an aspect of our faith which has not received nearly as much attention as it deserves. It belongs in every heathen home.

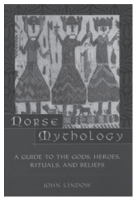
Many thanks to Kveldulf for what I hope will be only the first of more studies of this kind.

John Lindow, *Norse Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs*, Oxford University Press, 2002

reviewed by Ron Rowand-White

> There was a revival of "belief in the aesir" some years ago in Iceland, which seemed to have to do at least in part with tax breaks for organized religion, although partying is also important. That revival had its counterpart in Norway, where a group of students announced themselves to be believers in the aesir. In celebration, they drank some beer and sacrificed a sausage.

With these three sentences at the end of his introduction John Lindow made this book (and himself) the subject of much ire from many heathens. However the book is well worth getting past this unfortunate first impression. Taken in the context of the rest of Lindow's writings, it seems to be an unsuccessful attempt at humor rather than an intentional slight against a religious community he knows very little about. There are



such attempts at humor sprinkled throughout, such as in his entry on Suttung:

> The pursuit is so close that Odin cannot get all the mead back into possession of the aesir, and he urinates a bit out; this portion makes bad poets. Thus we have Suttung to blame for the lyrics of most pop songs.

Overlooking these quirks in Lindow's writing, the book is very informative and written in a manner that is accessible both to new students of Norse lore and those who have studied the subject.

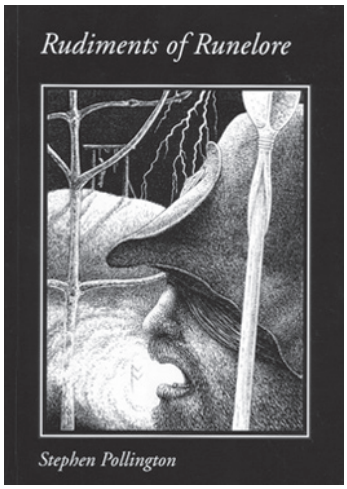
Norse Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs is divided into four sections. The first section is a survey of the historical background of the material, followed by a discussion of the Indo-European linguistic roots of the Germanic language group and how the scholarship has evolved since the advent of Indo-European studies; a discussion of the worship and ritual follows that and the section ends with Lindow's views on the importance of Scandinavian Mythology.

The second section is about Time; ideas presented include the nature of mythic time, cyclical time and the relations of myth with history. Most of the book's length comes from the third section, which is set up as an encyclopedia. The entries are arranged alphabetically and cross-referenced for convenience; most entries also include recommendations for further reading. The entries are, for the most part, concise but thorough and cover the entire range of the mythology as well as including entries on some holidays such as Alfablot and Disablot.

The fourth section is "Print and Nonprint Resources," which includes quite a bit of material for further reading as well as a warning to be careful about what you find on the internet and a list of trusted websites. Overall I find this book to be very useful as a research tool, which is seems to be how it is intended.

Stephen Pollington, *Rudiments of Runelore.* Norfolk: Anglo-Saxon Books, 1995.

reviewed by Patricia Lafayllve



Stephen Pollington has provided a simple, short, focused introduction to the modern study of the runes. He covers the Anglo-Saxon, Norwegian, and Icelandic rune poems, discusses the background and history of the runes as currently understood, and spends some time dealing with thorny issues that plague modern language historians and scholarly heathens alike. The book is eighty-eight (88) pages long, including its bibliography, and Pollington packs an extraordinary amount of information onto each page.

Pollington includes the original languages of each rune poem as well as his own translations. This is extremely useful for students of the runes at any level, for only by studying the rune poems can we begin to decode what the runes must have meant and may still mean. He also covers the most significant archaeological findings containing runic inscriptions, from bracteates to funerary urns and back again. He even explores variations within the runic systems over time, wherever possible, including conjecture about how geographical linguistic drift impacted the runic forms.

Thankfully, Stephen Pollington uses plain language to explore his findings, making this book accessible to readers at many levels of knowledge. He also gives examples of runic poetry, runic riddles from the Exeter book,and seven Old English runic verses.

One warning: Pollington does refer to phonemes, or base units of sound, and their mouth location in determining the runes, their sounds, and their meanings. This is only sensible – since the runes were used as a written form of language it stands to reason that a study of the philological units of that language be discussed. However, he does not explain what he means when he mentions such things as "high, front, lip-rounded" vowels or palatal, dental, or fricative sounds. For students of the English language these words are easily decoded, but for those who have not yet encountered them, they can be confusing. To give you an idea of what he means, "high" and "front" refer to the mouth position at which certain sounds (in this case, a vowel) are made. "Lip-rounded" means just that – the lips round when the sound is formed (think of the "oo" sound in "moon.").

Do not let this deter you, however. Pollington's book is a basic, excellent source for runic material of all kinds and should be considered a must-read. His discussion of the so-called "Norfolk Tiw" runes found on a cremation urn from the Spong Hill cemetery in England is fascinating, and his deconstruction of the various meanings behind the galdorword ALU is another piece of essential reading for any modern heathen.

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Idunna 72 Summer, 2007

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