
Renewal

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Odinism and carols

“*Carol: a religious seasonal song, of joyful character, in the vernacular and sung by the common people*” - *The Oxford Companion to Music*

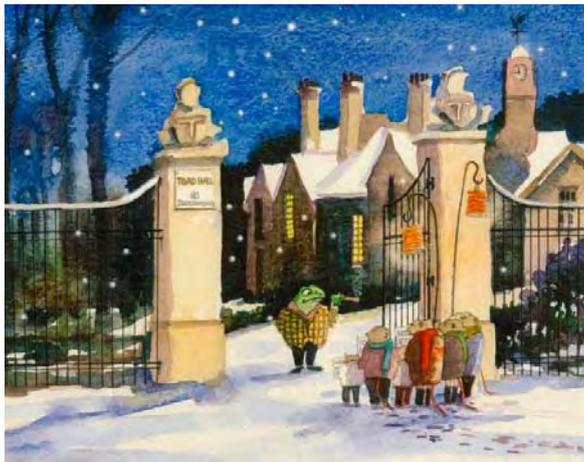
Nowadays, when we hear the word “carol”, we tend to think of those pedestrian tunes piped through supermarkets during the season when plum puddings, crackers and turkeys are prominently displayed on the handiest shelves.

The term carol, however, originally referred to a dance in a ring. It probably descends through Old French *caroler* from Latin *choraula* and dates back to the Ancient Greek *choraules* – a flute player who accompanied chorus dancing in pre-Christian times. The name is therefore impeccably heathen. What about the material?

The great carols fall into four broad groups along the following lines: (i) Some of them are of unmistakably heathen origin. (ii) Others have Christian words grafted into generally heathen lyrics, probably by priests who were unable to suppress the originals altogether. (iii) A third group has entirely Christian lyrics set to an older tune which may or may not have been heathen. (iv) The final group, often the most modern, has very earnest lyrics and tunes that aren't at all suited for robust peasant dancing.

It is fairly easy to determine whether earlier carols are of Christian or heathen origin. As a rule of thumb, if a carol shows evidence of having been composed in one of the Greek modes it is probably heathen. For instance, most people have heard the early English round *Sumer is icumen in*. This is in a transposed Ionian mode – a mode of which the Church particularly disapproved, labelling it *Modus Lascivus* (“the Wanton Mode”).

During the Middle Ages dancing was opposed by the Church, and many repressed churchmen fulminated against what they called *caraula* (carols). By the fifteenth century, with the collapse of the Christian feudal order, the robust carols of the country folk were being readmitted into Christian courts all over Europe, in a rather “daring” movement that parallels the craze for the supposedly “improper” waltz in the nineteenth century. Despite this new popularity, some of the old lyrics had to be papered over with ill-fitting Christian sentiments.



Often it is just a matter of taking out an occasional aberrant word such as “Christmas”. (Yuletide can usually be substituted.) In many cases even that isn't necessary – as in the wonderfully enthusiastic *Boar's Head Carol*, which obviously reflects a celebration of our ancestral god Frey. (See page 2)

An even more important reason to embrace the carols is that a religion lacking in decent music is seriously impoverished. Quite a few modern Odinists have attempted to fill that gap by setting new words to old folk-tunes, but sometimes the result is more well-meant than aesthetically pleasing.

Yet in our own people's traditional folk carols we already have an excellent, and time-honoured, kernel for an Odinist songbook.

One of the classic collections of seasonal carols can be found in the *Oxford Book of Carols*, first published in 1928. It contains 197 carols with all their tunes. Of these, at least 23 can be reclaimed by Odinists with little or no change. Many more need only a slightly less gentle make-over. Here are the 23 that I have identified, together with their numbers and given titles, and some brief comments and suggestions:

5. The Praise of Christmas. This is one of the examples where Yuletide can be exchanged for “Christmas”. Stanza four can begin: “When Yule's tide comes in like a bride, with holly and ivy clad”.

15. Wassail Song (both versions). This is the familiar “Here we come a-wassailing among the leaves so green.” There is one reference in the chorus to “God” – who can be any of our gods you feel like honouring.

19. Boar's Head Carol. This is a truly magnificent carol, and doesn't require any changes. After all, “the King of bliss” is a far better description of Frey than of “the pale Galilean”!

31. Gloucestershire Wassail. Most people have heard the opening lines: “Wassail, Wassail, all over the town! Our toast it is

By the early nineteenth century, carols were sung door-to-door, as depicted in Thomas Hardy's novel *Under the Greenwood Tree*. Another puritan reaction set in mid-century, and traditional carols almost died out. By that stage, though, educated people were “collecting” as much of popular folkish culture as they could.

In 1894 a Rev. J. E. Vaux wrote approvingly of the demise of popular carols, but noted in passing that one (*A Virgin Unspotted*) had recently been revived, “to the great joy of the people”. This revival had been due to “collectors” in the tradition of Percy and Child and Sharp.

By the early twentieth century the very best of the surviving traditional carols were spread across the length and breadth of the Empire through being sung live by local choirs and school groups. This was the modern golden age of carols.

It came to a crashing end with the rise of popular recording labels and their promotion of contemporary rubbish like *Santa Claus is Coming to Town* or *Granny was run over by a Reindeer*.

So, leaving aside the modern dross, what should contemporary heathens, and especially Odinists, make of this treasure-trove of our ancestral culture?

Quite simply, we should embrace it. These are ultimately *our* songs, in *our* vernacular heritage. It is often easy to remove the Christian accretions of the last few hundred years, thus restoring these often ancient works to where they belong: in *our* tradition.

Continued on page 2

The Trial of Loki

In 1999 we published a pamphlet titled *The Trial of Loki: A study in Nordic heathen morality*. That volume is now out of print in Australia, although the US edition is still available from our friends at Theod (see page 8 for their address).

Having received several requests for information about how Loki “fits in” to Odinism, we have decided to serialise this important work, for the first time, in *Renewal*.

Iceland, about 1270 AD.

A Christian scribe writes down a heathen poem composed three centuries earlier.

He probably thinks the verse exposes inadequacies in the old gods and goddesses.

But does it?

1. Lokasenna - Background and problems

The poem *Lokasenna* is preserved in the Codex Regius, a vellum manuscript written in Iceland in the second half of the thirteenth century.

Lokasenna is usually thought to have been composed in the tenth century, although it possibly contains some traces of more recent additions during a late stage of its oral transmission. While its precise date and origin are unknown, its author clearly had a good working knowledge of Nordic mythology, suggesting that he lived in the late heathen period. After a thorough study of the evidence, Einarr Sveinsson concluded that the poem was composed no later than 1000 AD.

For every fragment of heathen literature that has survived we have to be grateful to the Christian scribes who went to the trouble (and possibly risk) of writing it down. Given the fact of this Christian filter it is not surprising that no significant poetry of heathen devotion has been recorded. Anyone who searches among what the scribes saw fit to preserve for poems about the beauty, glory or anguish of the gods will be disappointed. We know that Freyja’s search for her departed husband was marked by tears of gold, so rich and fertile was she perceived to be. Yet the surviving literature is silent on her sufferings. All that is left to us is a metaphor for gold: “Freyja’s tears”.

The heathen literature that the scribes preserved for us is often grotesque, and

usually portrays the Nordic deities reaching the limits of their powers. That is neither surprising nor (necessarily) malicious. After all, the Christian scribes had an entirely different philosophy of life to the heathen bards. One very important difference between these outlooks was that although the heathens believed the world of gods and men to be ruled by Fate, they added that those with the courage and free will to assert themselves might rise above the very Fate that destroys them. This was the heathen understanding of heroism. We see it in *Hávamál* (“Wealth perishes, kinfolk perish, one’s very self perishes, but fame never dies for him who gets it worthily”), in the Anglo-Saxon gnomic verse (*Dom bið selast* – “Fame is the best of all”), and in *Beowulf* (lines 1386 onward).

Christianity consciously overturned this philosophy. The Christian universe was governed by Justice, not Fate. The idea that a hero, or a deity, might sacrifice everything in a foredoomed fight against implacable odds held little appeal to the new philosophy. After all, the cosmic order was now seen as just. Any being opposing it was therefore yielding to one or another “sin”.

Given this contrast between the two philosophies it is no surprise that the Christian scribes would have found it appropriate to preserve heathen poems that portrayed the old deities asserting themselves against Fate. Any such poem would have been seen through the new ideological lens as evidence that the deities were themselves flawed – “sinful” rather than “heroic”.

Perhaps the strangest of all the surviving heathen poems is *Lokasenna*. From the point of view of the new philosophy *Lokasenna* probably seemed to be an instance of the Old Norse bards condemning their own gods through Loki’s indictment

The poem is set during a banquet in Ægir’s hall. Loki has not been invited, but

he gatecrashes the affair anyway, and proceeds to insult every god and goddess present. One after the other the accused deities protest against Loki’s slanders, but the confrontation is only resolved when the previously absent Þórr returns and forces Loki to flee. Loki is then captured and bound, according to the concluding prose passage.

Many modern scholars have commented on this poem. Most see it as demonstrating the breakdown of the social and moral boundaries of existence under the heathen dispensation. Perhaps the most systematic exposition of this argument in recent years has been that of John McKinnell (1987-8 and 1994). McKinnell sees Loki as an institutionalised “Accuser” who exposes the gods as having “self-serving motives” for which they are “rightly humiliated”.

McKinnell’s reading of the poem is consistent, perceptive and at times ingenious. It also raises an obvious problem. If *Lokasenna* can really be dated to the late heathen period, we have to assume that the poem had moral relevance for its audience – a relevance that may not have been as obvious to the Christian scribe who wrote it down three hundred years later.

McKinnell’s interpretation suggests that a heathen audience could really have believed that the apparently “flawed” deities of *Lokasenna* were somehow justified in their treatment of Loki. If so, we must ask how. From a modern point of view *Lokasenna* seems to travesty the very notion of heathen divinity. On the other hand, its metre is unique, and it has the feel of being an anciently rooted heathen drama. The purpose of this paper is to investigate whether *Lokasenna* could have made any moral sense to a late tenth-century heathen audience.

Check out Mark’s new Odinist website, largely devoted to his own original studies of the *Œra Linda Book*:

www.angelfire.com/folk/skjoldung

More material will be added to this site in the future.

 **FRÖJEL**

Fröjel Gotlandica.
Viking Re-enactment Society.

Contact **SANDY SEMPEL**

Phone: **59411887, 0419411887**

E-mail: frojel@frojel.com

PO Box 127, Pakenham,

<http://www.frojel.com/>

Yule – past, present and future

by Mark

The most sacred of all our feasts; the time of year when family and friends come together to share in the bonds of kinship. For thousands of years, in cultures all over the world, celebrations in December, our month of Yule, are held, originating in the ancient rites honouring the return of the sun. With the passing of the Winter Solstice, the longest night of the year, winter's death has reached its culmination and the days begin to grow in length. In the days before indoor heating units and electric blankets, such an event was indeed joyously welcomed by all people, especially our Nordic ancestors.

There is much to consider in the celebration of Yule. After all, with traditions spanning all over Northern Europe, many of which can point to a heathen origin, it is difficult to get a clear view of exactly how our ancestors celebrated this most sacred holiday season. The purpose of this essay is not to detail every single Teutonic Yule tradition, but rather to present a common theme that probably echoes the Yule celebrations of ancient times. Such a theme may be useful for people constructing their own traditional standards for the holiday today.

It is generally accepted by most people in the Odinist community that there are at least two named festivals within the Yule-tide: the Winter Solstice, commonly known as "Modresnacht" or "Mother Night", and New Year's Day, called "Twelfth Night". Many reject the December 25th date as significant due to its perceived Christian origin. However, evidence points to the possibility that this was the most beloved of the Yule rites of our ancestors!

To understand why December 25th would be so significant one must observe the astronomical phenomenon it is associated with. The Winter Solstice is the longest night of the year; afterwards there are three days where the lengths of the days and nights remain relatively the same. On the fourth day, usually the 25th (when the solstice is on the 21st), the days are noticeably longer than they were. This event was recognised all over the world and became the "birthday" of saviour or sun gods such as Krishna, Quetzalcoatl, Mithras and Christ (see *The Christ Conspiracy* by Acharya S.). It was because of the widespread reverence paid to this day that the Romans assigned the date to the birth of Jesus, whose name in Greek means "The Light Bearer".

It is doubtless that our ancestors recognised this phenomenon as well and celebrated it as part of the twelve days of Yule. In fact, Bede actually assigns Modresnacht to December 25th, but this has been used by modern writers and practitioners to signify the

solstice instead. There is no need for us to try to work around Christian traditions out fear of co-opting them since the Christian faith itself is a fabricated religion based upon many different belief systems before it, including ours. We cannot steal that which already belongs to us.

It is established that Yule is an ambiguous term used to represent various passages of time. First and foremost it is the representative of The Wheel of the Year (cf. Grimm's *Deutsch Mythology* p. 91 on the *jähring*, *jares umbihring*, etc.) or the Wheel of Time represented by various wheel symbols with different numbers of spokes. The word "Yule" means "wheel". Each wheel symbol possibly represents different lengths of time (see the *Oera Linda Book* where the six-spoke wheel signifies the passing of the ages). The month of December was called Yule or Yule Month by our ancestors and then there is the Yule feast. It is possible that there is another variant meaning for this word, which caused some of the confusion in the first place. In modern day Scandinavia December 25th is called "Yule Day" (Icelandic *Jóladagr*, Swedish *Juldagen*, etc) so in the ancient records there may be incidences where "Yule" was interpreted as the entire Yule-tide when actually December 25th was intended. We can be certain that our ancestors celebrated the Winter Solstice, and that this marked the beginning of the twelve-day celebration ending in the new year, but it is the 25th, the first day of the sun's "renewal" that culminated the festival.

For our purposes here we can continue to label the Winter Solstice "Modresnacht" to distinguish it from the other holidays, giving us three names for three sacred rites within the season. *Jóladagr* or "Yule Day" would mark the 25th, and "Twelfth Night" represents New Year's Day. The three high Yule celebrations are most likely the most traditional, giving the Yule season its purpose and meaning of honouring the past, present, and future. Such a theme continued to be recognised in literary circles throughout Europe, inspiring such works as the Charles Dickens classic *A Christmas Carol*.

Probably the most significant piece of evidence we have to prove the authenticity of the three sacred Yule rites is the treatment of its patron saint in the Christian traditions, that is, Santa Claus, Father Christmas, *Wihnachtsman*, etc. Forget the absurd nonsense that his story comes from some Persian saint. The only point where the Christian and Persian traditions or tales actually connect is that both were known as gift-givers, but even this is too generic a concept to be considered to have any merit. In Scandinavia, as the *Jólnissen* or *Tomte* he is viewed as an elf, which is a divine clan of

demigods in the Odinic faith. Other traditions connect him to reindeer, which are most notably found in Scandinavia and are a major part of Scandinavian life and culture. From what we see, the origins of his depictions are most definitely Northern European.

I believe that the "Father Christmas" character is a combination of three ancient Odinic gods, each representative of the three holy days of Yule. Some traditions speak of three different gift-bringers (and correlations to the three wise men of Christian myth are erroneous): one blue, one red, one green. Only three gods can, without argument, be linked to these colours: Odin is blue, Thor is red, Frey is green. Some depictions show "Father Christmas" as a grey-bearded old man, others show him at a younger age with a red beard. This can only be explained by the fact that his is an image taken from Odin-Harbard (Grey-Beard) and Thor-Raudskegg (Red-beard). In Germany the *Wihnachtsman* rides down on his horse to bring children gifts, for which they give oats and hay in return. Odin, also known as *Onski*, "God of Wishes", is particularly known as a gift-giver (see *Hyndluljod 2-3*) and rides to Midgard on his steed *Sleipnir*.

Most of the names of Santa Claus' reindeer are modern inventions, but two of them are of ancient origin and are of particular interest to us: *Donner* and *Blitzen* (Thunder and Lightning). Not only are thunder and lightning closely related to our god Thor, *Donner* is a German variant of his name! One also need not forget it is Thor who is well known for his travels in his chariot drawn by two animals, his goats *Tanngnjost* and *Tanngrsnir*.

Finally, there is the tradition of Santa Claus or Father Christmas either being an elf or lord of the elves. Remember that the elves are only recognised by Teutonic belief systems. *Grimnismal 5* tells us that the gods gave Frey *Alfheim* as a tooth-gift, a gift given when a child cuts his first tooth, making him lord over the elves.

It is quite fitting that these three gods, whose statues were found together in the great temple at Uppsala, would be connected to the Yule rites. If the theory of the three sacred Yule feasts proves correct the first celebration, the Winter Solstice, would be a time of honouring the past year, of honouring ancestors who have moved on to the divine worlds. Some have postulated that there are correlations between the Celtic *Samhain* and the Teutonic *Modresnacht* (see MacCulloch's *Religion of the Ancient Celts*). There is no other deity in the Nordic pantheon that would fit such a tradition than Odin himself, judge at the Thing near *Urd's* well (where the lots of the dead are chosen) and lord of *Valhall*. It is also said that his wild hunt, where he

clears the atmosphere of ill-wights, is honoured here.

The 25th date, Yule Day, probably resembled, in ancient times, the celebrations held today all over the western world. It is the honouring of the present, of the gathered folk – where gifts are exchanged and feasts are enjoyed. Who else than Thor, the laughing one, the god of the folk, Midgard’s protector and benefactor, husband of Sif, goddess of affinity, could represent such a celebration?

There is an ancient tradition where the sacred oaths for the coming year, the “New Year’s resolutions”, if you will, are made on the hide of a boar, the symbol of Frey. This would be an act of looking towards the future, considering the days to come. Thus it would be Frey and his elves that would be revered on the Twelfth Night.

The question remains: why didn’t the Teutons recognise Yule as the birth of the sun god or some saviour like most other cultures? This is probably due to the climate of the North. Although Yule was certainly the most holy of holidays to our ancestors, the changes in the season would not have been significant enough to

recognise an actual birth of a sun god. It wouldn’t be until May Day when Balder celebrates his birthday (cf. Celtic Beltaine with German Phols Tag, Phol’s Day, Phol or Fol being an alternate name of Balder, see Viktor Rydberg’s *Researches in Germanic Mythology* vols. 1 and 2).

In order to fully represent all of the deities that have been linked to the Yule rites I have found it useful to honour the *families* of the three Yule gods, along with each of the three high Norns to mark the recognition of the past, present, and future (indeed, MacCulloch postulates that the “Mothers”, from which Bede gets his Modresnacht, are identical to the Norns, see *Religion of the Ancient Celts*). So the gods and goddesses honoured would be: on Modresnacht, Odin, Balder, Frigga and Urd; on Jóladaqr, Thor, Sif, Ull and Verdandi; on Twelfth Night, Frey, Freya and the elves.

I have found since I began using this theory in my own practices that many of the traditions one comes across can easily fit into one of these three celebrations accordingly. For example: the Yule-log, lit from the remains of last years’, represents the return of light and would be burned at the solstice. The “Yule-Buck”, a Swedish tradition, would represent Thor’s goats and would be used on Jóladaqr; mistletoe would be hung up on Modresnacht and taken down on Twelfth Night; Yule Trees, reminiscent of Yggdrasil (“Ygg-Odin’s Steed”) would be decorated on Modresnacht, and so on.

No matter how you celebrate Yule, it is important to remember that, more than anything, this is a time of reflection, a time when we honour the past, celebrate the present and look towards the future.

The **Melbourne Heathen Moot** has monthly social meetings on the first Friday of each month. We are now starting to organise blots. We also advertise other opportunities for Heathens to meet one another.



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Ripples in Time



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Ripples in Time is available for \$Aus10.00 within Australia. (This price includes postage and handling). Overseas residents can obtain *Ripples in Time* for \$US15.00 (US cash), which covers airmail anywhere plus handling.

There is no way around it: you *need* this booklet if you are serious about our ancestral runic heritage.

Renewal

P.O. Box 4333, University of Melbourne, Victoria, 3052, Australia.

Renewal exists to share the views of modern Odinists, both within Australia and world-wide. In Australian and British law Odinism is described as “the continuation of ... the organic spiritual beliefs and religion of the indigenous peoples of northern Europe as embodied in the Edda and as they have found expression in the wisdom and in the historical experience of these peoples”.

Renewal is an independent Odinist journal. **Opinions in articles and letters are those of their authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor.** *Renewal* will not accept paid ads under any circumstances, but is happy to inform readers of products or services that seem to be of likely interest.

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- Opportunity lost
- Himmler was no heathen
- Gentile beaches vs Judeo-Christian beaches
- Bloodlines

What's new

MA in Icelandic Studies

The University of Iceland is now offering an MA degree in Icelandic Studies, commencing in Autumn 2005. Classes will be taught in English. The deadline for applications is 1 March 2005. For further information see: <http://www.hi.is/nam/heim/>

Not enough god-botherers

Many, but not all, primary school students in Western Australia are forced to undergo a weekly half-hour of Biblical scripture lessons.

These are administered, not by proper teachers, but by zealots who volunteer their services through an outfit called YouthCARE. The volunteers have to do a rudimentary "training" course. Then they spend about two hours a week in classrooms.

Not so long ago, YouthCARE had 1300 Christians happy to cram innocent young minds with gruesome stories from the Bible. Now that number is down to 464, and falling.

According to Field officer Jill Clements, "We talk about what is in the Bible – the stories and the history attached to the Bible".

Renewal is all in favour of religion being taught in schools, but it should be taught in a methodical and impartial way by properly trained teachers.

The blueprint for such a course was laid down many years ago by the Victorian Education Department. Students would have been taught about the world's religions and their tenets, but also – and more interestingly – would have examined questions such as: the concept of the sacred in art, architecture and music; the difference between religious language and the language of poetry or science; the various "theories" of religion (euhemerism and the like); the influence of religion on our history, culture and law; the dimensions of religion; and the like.

Sadly, this course was never implemented. As a result, most of our children today don't really know what religion, one of the human mind's most enduring pursuits, actually is. Perhaps even worse, it opens the classroom door to fundamentalist who seek to warp our children's development with ghastly Bible stories.

Nazi Christians

Most readers probably know that Odinists were routinely sent to concentration camps during the German Third Reich. Most also know that the Third Reich leaders were overwhelmingly Christian and predominantly Catholic.

Here at *Renewal* we occasionally receive letters telling us that the prominent Nazis were "really" secret pagans who would have come out of the closet had they won WW2. When we ask where they got this idea, our correspondents often vaguely cite Heinrich

Himmler's interest in Germanic runes.

Fortunately, Himmler's SS adjutant, Karl Wolff, scotched any such woolly thinking in his post-war memoirs. At one point he describes a visit to his boss's home in Berlin during the war. Before the evening meal, Himmler's daughter Gudrun said grace. Later, at bed-time, she kneeled and recited the *Lord's Prayer*.

No heathen father has ever forced his daughter to grovel on her knees before some alien god, or to mutter Christian mumbo-jumbo. Himmler was no exception to this rule.

Different folks, different strokes

Case # 1: Brian Wilson was the musical genius behind the 60s group, the Beach Boys. One of his most wistful songs was called *Do It Again*. Here are some of the lyrics:

*It's automatic when I talk with old friends
The conversation turns to girls we knew when
Their hair was soft and long and the beach was the place to go.
Suntanned bodies and waves of sunshine,
The California girls and a beautiful coastline,
Warmed up weather, let's get together and do it again.*

For all of his many and much-chronicled problems, Brian Wilson was clearly one of us. Whatever his overt religious beliefs might have been back in 1968, his attitudes to nature and to the human body are entirely heathen.

Case # 2: Oscar Levant was a composer, pianist and self-proclaimed wit. After moving to L.A., he waited six years before actually taking a glance at the Pacific Ocean. His friend Harpo Marx eventually drove him to a famous beauty spot where he had an uninterrupted view of Brian Wilson's "beautiful coastline". In his memoirs, *Harpo Speaks*, Marx recalls Levant's comments that day:

"No boardinghouses, bathhouses, hot dog stands, or board walks anywhere in sight. Oscar gave a whistle of disbelief. He said, 'What do you know – a Gentile ocean!'"

These two attitudes can't be reconciled, and the whole point of Oscar Levant's joke was that he knew it.

The Judeo-Christian attitude to nature is to trash it with money-grubbing "developments" like hot dog stands – or worse. The heathen attitude is to yield to nature's boundless beauty. Thousands of people are crossing toward the heathen side of this division every day. Often their hearts are way ahead of their minds, and they

consequently find themselves in some irrational half-way house such as "green" politics.

Most of these people will remain stuck in a tree-hugging, gay-whale-saving mindset. Some of them will eventually accept the heathen spiritual nature of the impulse that is tugging their hearts in the right direction – toward a "gentile ocean" rather than a Judeo-Christian one. A few of them will provide future leadership to our sacred faith.

All we need to do at this stage is give them time. Eventually, when they "come home", we should be carefully prepared to offer them our fullest spiritual support. They, in turn, will find it exhilarating to return to their natural – and elect – family.

More Danish genes for Britain

The original (and heathen) Anglo-Saxons came from Denmark *et environs*. Their gene-pool was topped up by further (heathen) Danes during the period of Viking invasions. Many more Danish genes were imported at the time of the Norman (= "North-men") conquest. Now Britain is gearing up for yet another infusion of Danish genes. This time, however, it's all high tech.

The problem is a change in British law, scheduled for next April, by which British sperm donors will lose their anonymity – meaning that their children will be able to contact them. This is expected to lead to a drying up of British-donated sperm.

No such law applies in Denmark, and Danish donors are expected to come to the rescue of infertile British couples.

The world's largest sperm bank is Cryos International, based in the Danish university town of Aarhus. Their 250 donors are almost uniformly blond, blue-eyed university students, over 182 cm tall.

According to *The Australian*, 29/11/04, "Since being set up in 1987, Cryos has been responsible for almost 10,000 births, with such big demand in the US for Scandinavian looks that the company has opened an office in New York".

Cryos donors are rigorously tested against a wide range of potential diseases. Only those who pass the repeated health checks are permitted to help childless couples.

If any readers know of a family that could benefit from Cryos' assistance, we recommend that they check out the company at <http://www.cryos.dk/index.asp>, or

Vesterport 3 DK-8000 Aarhus C Denmark
Tel. (+45) 86 76 06 99 Fax (+45) 86 76 06
85 E-mail: cryos@cryos.dk



Ota is on holiday, but has asked us to reprint whatever extracts of this article by the late Professor Oliver will both fit on her usual page and conform with Australian law. For the latter reason a few words have been changed.

WOMEN IN THE CHRIST BUSINESS

by Professor Revilo P. Oliver

IF YOU PREFER to read gospels and rhapsodies about Jesus and his dad rather than better-written and coherent stories of the supernatural by Robert Howard, Clark Ashton Smith, and Tolkien, you will be pleased to learn that a fresh bundle of your favourite fiction has just become available in English.

In 1098 a German family in the lesser nobility had a daughter and gave her the fine name, Hildegard, which means "patroness in battle". They suffered, however, from the Christian disease, so they took the little girl, who would have become fit to inspire warriors and bring forth fighting men to expand their nation's territory, and shut her up in a convent, when she was only eight, to please their dread desert god by what amounts to a form of race-suicide.

The unfortunate girl grew up in that unnatural and tainted atmosphere, and seems to have begun to have hallucinations about the time of puberty. (You will find an interesting description of this not uncommon phenomenon in a realistic story by Daphne du Maurier, "The Pool", which is included in most collections of her short stories.) She eventually developed a physiological disorder and disease of the nervous system that induced in her, as in many other women, such as Jeanne d'Arc, religious hallucinations, and Hildegard is cited as an example of the effects of migraine in Barry L. Beyerstein's excellent article, "Neuropathology and the Legacy of Spiritual Possession", in the Spring 1988 issue of the *Skeptical Inquirer*.

Hildegard had visions, formed in her consciousness by her imagination, which had been charged by the mythology she had been taught from childhood, and, having the delusion that she was divinely inspired, began to prophesy. She acquired a great reputation for sanctity in her Benedictine order and soon became Abbess of her convent. She eventually established a new and elaborate convent of her own near

Ota's Talking Point

Bingen on the Rhine, and therefore is now generally known as Hildegard of Bingen. She also acquired great prestige in the world outside the convents, where it was believed that she was personally acquainted with Yahweh & Son and on intimate terms with them. At least two Popes and two Holy Roman Emperors consulted her for information about what the boss up in the clouds really wanted, and at least one leading theologian submitted to her soteriological problems that she, as an habituée of Heaven, could solve from personal observation.

Hildegard dictated detailed reports of her visions to a monk named Godefridus, who was her close friend and may have been her paramour. The first and most important collection was entitled *Scivias* [sic], seu *visionum et revelationum libri III*. The odd title is probably to be understood as the very rare but regularly formed present singular imperative of *scire + vias* (i.e., "Know the ways [to Heaven]"). Decades ago, I read considerable parts of this and some other writings of Hildegard in Volume 197 of the Latin section of Migne's *Patrologia*.

English translations of the *Scivias* and other works by Hildegard have now been published in a series of five paperback volumes by Bear & Co., P.O. Drawer 2860, Santa Fé, New Mexico. I have not seen these books and, needless to say, cannot comment on the accuracy of the translations. They are, of course, addressed to readers who dote on "mystical illumination".

Migraine (like epilepsy) is an affliction that may accompany a high degree of intelligence when the disease is in temporary remission. Hildegard is reputed to have made observations of the properties of herbs and other plants that show a capacity for scientific thought. Extracts from this work are evidently translated in a paperback entitled *Hildegard of Bingen's Medicine*. This is said by the publisher to be of great value today, when the therapeutic value of herbal remedies is being recognised, to the distress of the manufacturers of very expensive and often dangerous "miracle drugs".

I have given here this brief notice of Hildegard because she is a good example of what Spengler calls "pseudo-morphosis", a phenomenon that does occur in many cultures. If you seek the source of Hildegard's influence, you will find it, not in Biblical Christianity, but in our native religions from which was taken the Western veneer that made the Christian cult acceptable to our ancestors. The real precedent for Hildegard and her visions is the *Völuspá*, the revelations of the *völva* ('prophetess, sibyl'). Hildegard was possible only because Christianity in her time had been altered by our old heathen respect for women, which had always extended into religion and is seen in innumerable manifestations, such, for example, as the cults of three *Matres* that were prevalent in

Germany and commemorated, after the Roman occupation, in hundreds of extant inscriptions, or earlier in the Classical Sibyls.

Early Christianity inherited, of course, the Semitic contempt for women, especially as formulated by the Essenes and most obvious in the gospel attributed to a "Marcus" in the "New Testament". The early Fathers of the Church naturally were inclined to believe that women had no souls, but, probably because the Fathers also knew how much property was in the hands of widows who could be sold spiritual nostrums, some of the Fathers devised the doctrine that if women were pious and adequately endowed the Church, Jesus would, when they died, replace their sexual organs with male equipment, thus qualifying them for admission to a Heaven of which the doors bore the warning, "Men Only". As late as AD 585 a Catholic Synod heatedly debated the question whether women were human beings or animals, and the authentically Christian view of females persisted in the orthodox Medieval definitions of a woman as a "pestilential beast", a "destroyer of men", a "bar to salvation", etc. — the full text runs to about fifteen lines of Latin invective. And this opinion, by the way, was endorsed by the blood-thirsty social reformers of the French Revolution, who, although they thought themselves anti-Christian, were really applying the essentials of the old Judaeo-Christian doctrine in all that they did. Burke in his *Reflections* summarised their view of the lovely sex as: "Woman is but an animal, and an animal not of the highest order".

That is sound Christian doctrine, but it was intolerable to our racial instinct to esteem, cherish, and love women *for their femininity*. So Christian doctrine was necessarily modified by a persistence of our old "pagan" regard for women, which gave us, for example, the Valkyries and retained Aphrodite as a goddess in men's hearts, worshipped by a litany far older and nobler than any salvation-cult's dreary rites. That gave us our whole tradition of chivalry and even the gynaeolatry of the Provençal poets' *domnei en cor gentil*, which reappears in Dante's Beatrice. That gave us all the romantic tradition without which modern literature would be barren and jejune. But you won't find a word to authorise it in the Holy-Book.

Hildegard thought she was a Christian, but she was really an authentically Germanic and Nordic *völva*. She is a memorable symbol in the history of our race's reaction to a thinly-disguised alien superstition of which we are now experiencing the deadly narcosis.

Dear Ed ...

□ It was good to see the article "In Praise of Vikings" again. Its concluding image of the bathhouse was nothing short of *brilliant*. Shame on "A Third View" for condemning this image as being "in extremely poor taste". On the contrary, the Gods of the North are earthy and I am sure that Osred's remark would have given Thor a good belly laugh. It seems that Christian prudery still runs deep.

Joe, Adelaide

□ I enjoyed the recent debate about the political forms that might arise if Odinism eventually takes over the hearts and minds of enough of our people.

I agree that nothing can be safely predicted. For instance, Germans in the 1930s might sensibly have guessed that women would have had a high place of honour in some future folkish Germanic state. Instead, women became second-class citizens valued mainly just for their reproductive capacity.

If a determinedly folkish Third Reich ended up treating women as little more than breeding stock (and not as the demi-goddesses we read of in *Germania*), how can any political developments be predicted?

Comments, please? Especially from Osred!

Sandy, Brisbane

□ *Since everyone who says anything at all about the Third Reich is automatically suspected of bad faith one way or the other, I think I should reiterate that to my mind the Nazis did some good things and some bad things, like every other government that has ever existed. Humans are, sadly, merely "human, all-too-human". We all do some things well and some things badly.*

The same applies to Third Reich personalities. They weren't the personification of evil – or of good. They were just people. As a relatively non-controversial example, think of Leni Riefenstahl. Without questioning her genius, it is probably fair to say that she was also a self-serving liar – but the same balance sheet would apply to many troubled artistic geniuses from many different cultures.

I wish I didn't have to start with this cop-out, but our contemporary world is quite mad, and I don't want my attempted objectivity to be misunderstood as partisanship for one or another side of a war that was decided long before I was even conceived!

Having thus tried to "clear the decks", I think Sandy's statements about women in the Third Reich are factually incorrect, but still make a valid point.

As Dr Claudia Koonz pointed out in her 1987 book "Mothers in the Fatherland", women in fact played a key role during that period.

When Dr Koonz spoke at Melbourne's La Trobe university in 1993 she explained that as many women as men voted for the Nazis. Equally, 300,000 people were forcibly

sterilised, but that figure covered as many men as women.

Furthermore, she added that the second-largest bureaucracy in the nation was the Nazi women's movement, which had nine million female members, "not bad" for a nation of about 60 million. Apparently this women's movement had a key influence in determining which issues and laws it would support.

So the situation of women in Germany in the 1930s was not as simple and one-dimensional as many (male) historians have suggested. To that extent I agree with Sandy, but I'd take the liberty of putting it in a different way: Who could have guessed that in a supposedly folkish Germanic state the demi-goddesses of Germania would be co-opted into a massive bureaucracy?

Sorry, but that's all I can add to the debate at this stage.

Osred

□ I would love to read S.M. Stirling's *Drakon* series. It has interested me ever since I first read about it in *Renewal*. That Stirling focuses the *Drakon* nation in Africa is certainly interesting. I have a friend in here who is from Rhodesia and he told me that the expatriated Rhodesians in New Zealand, along with the Afrikaaners, are planning an invasion, to take back their lands. He says they have already drafted up their constitution so we might see some interesting things in the future.

Prison inmate, address withheld

□ I have not read the *Drakon* novels by SM Stirling, but I am currently proposing a colonising effort along those lines to interested people throughout the world, only instead of proposing South Africa as the "Mecca" I am proposing *Australia*. At present there is resistance to the whole idea of colonisation, it being considered a withdrawal from the struggle in our home countries. My answer is as you point out, that we are already living in a post-Western society, and if we don't attempt to save a remnant we are going to lose it *all*.

Wayne, cwleod@shaw.ca

□ Re *Drakon*, I'm sure you don't need to be reminded of the prophecy that the human couple Líf and LífPrasir will survive Ragnarok. There is no reason why these should be two individuals. They could be just eponymous names for a surviving tribe or clan, like the Heraclidae of Ancient Greece or the Ynglings of Sweden.

Ben, Melbourne

□ The *Drakon* series was a great discovery on *Renewal's* part. Stirling is not a great writer (if only someone like Saki could have edited him down by a third!), but he has a brilliant grasp of what the technological future could hold.

Peripatetic subscriber, Hawaii

Notice Board

For updates on the *Australian Viking Ships Museum*, see:

www.australianvikingshipsmuseum.surf.to

The AVSM aims to build a replica of the Gokstad ship, and also to collect other replica ships that have been built in Australia. In addition there will be a land-based interpretation centre, through which thousands of people will be exposed to our heritage.

The National Prison Kindred Alliance aims to help Odinists who are incarcerated in US prisons. Contact: NPKA, PO Box 6493. Napa, CA 94581, USA;

email: Himmingbjorg@aol.com

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The Scorpion is an independent magazine dealing in depth with matters relating to the survival of European culture. Its address is: *The Scorpion*, BCM 5766, London, WC1, England or stormloader.com/thescorpion. A sample issue costs £5.00 sterling.

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Odinic Rite Briefing is a quarterly publication of the (British) Odinic Rite. Enquiries to: BCM Runic, London, WC1N 3XX

The Runestone is a quarterly journal of Asatru, "dedicated to our Gods and Goddesses, to the people of the North, and to the values of courage, freedom, and individuality within the context of kinship". Cheques for \$US15.00 airmail should be payable to S. A. McNallen, PO Box 445, Nevada City, Ca, 95959, USA.

The **Asatru Alliance** believes in "standards of behaviour which are consistent with the spiritual truths of the Norse gods and goddesses and harmonious with our deepest being". The Asatru Alliance, PO Box 961, Payson, Az 85547, USA.

Theod has suspended regular publication, but plans to put out occasional special issues from time to time. All back issues will be kept available, and a free brochure is available for the asking at any time, from PO Box 8062, Watertown, NY 13601, USA.

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