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# Renewal

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## Hail the Folkmother!

1913 – 2005

*a tribute by Osred*

**E**lse Christensen, known to Odinists around the world as The Folkmother, died on the fourth of May this year.

While I was never able to meet Else face to face, I was honoured by a rich and rewarding correspondence with her for over thirty years, starting in 1972. With a letter-writer as gifted and as generous as Else was, it is possible to know the other person better than one will ever know many workmates, neighbours or even family members. One aspect of Else’s character that was contagious, even through the medium of letters, was the profound delight that she found in even the simplest aspects of life.

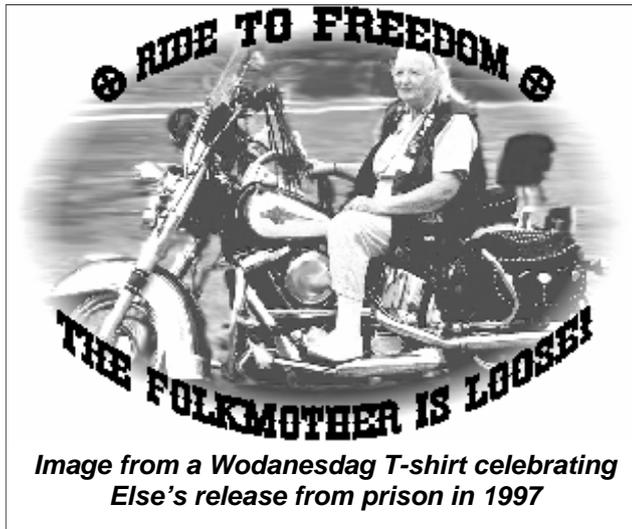
No matter how trying the circumstances, Else was irresistibly light of heart, and much of this quality arose from her boundless curiosity. Few of us could see any bright side to being wrongfully convicted of a serious crime, but Else wrote from prison – with almost child-like sincerity – that she could not be other than happy, given that she now had the opportunity of learning so much from a class of girls with whom she had never before had the opportunity to mix.

The Folkmother was born in Esbjerg, Denmark in 1913. (Her husband Alex Christensen, born in 1904, died in 1971.) She was confirmed into the Lutheran faith as a child, but “dropped out of Christianity”, to use her own words, at the age of fifteen.

Else emigrated to Toronto in Canada, where she became manager of the Xray department at a local hospital until her retirement.

After turning her back on Christianity, she considered herself an “agnostic” until the 1960s, when she discovered the writings of Rud Mills. It was a meeting of two joyful minds, and from that moment the purpose of the rest of her life became clear.

In 1969 she founded the first Odinist association in North America. This organisation was very loosely structured and went through several name changes, including The Odinist Movement, the Odinist Fellowship and The Odinist Community.



*Image from a Wodanesdag T-shirt celebrating Else’s release from prison in 1997*

As far as the historical sequence of the Re-Awakening is concerned, it is important to remember that Else’s rediscovery of Odinism preceded that of Steve McNallen, Garman Lord and others in America, of Stubba in England, of Sveinbjörn Beinteinsson in Iceland, and of the Melbourne University group in Australia – all of which took place in the early 1970s. It is also vital to recall that Else clearly saw herself as following in the path of Rud Mills, whose writings she frequently reprinted.

In August 1971 she began publishing *The Odinist*, which continued without a break until her malicious legal prosecution at the age of 79.

In the late 1970s Else moved to Crystal River, Florida, where she lived on a small acreage with a creek-front. I recall many delightful letters from that idyllic period in her life, when she was particularly taken with an alligator that lived in the creek and occasionally waddled ashore to scrutinise her.

This period of frith came to an end when Else received a 30-month prison sentence on trumped-up charges of transporting soft drugs across state lines. The background to this prosecution was that she had established a very successful prison outreach ministry which was, of course, a threat to the establishment.

After serving out this unjust sentence in her usual blithe spirit, she was deported back to Canada. Rescued by the good folk of

Wodanesdag, she lived in British Columbia in a caravan, with an annexe full of boxed archives, amid a delightful landscape. Her letters from that period were uniformly joyful and serene, her only regret being that she might not live long enough to catalogue all her books, papers, photographs and other archives.

In my view Else very much deserves her title of The Folkmother. Only she had the wisdom to pick up the baton that Rud Mills tried to pass to us in the 1930s. Most of those who have since come to the Re-Awakening probably would not have done so had it not been for Else Christensen.

Our spiritual path, Odinism, does not have a founder. It has been with us for as long as our people have existed; and it has never been lost, even during the bleak centuries of Christian persecution. In the 19th century there were many people who glimpsed aspects of our renewed spiritual dawn despite the prevailing Christian darkness, and these people are known to us as proto-Odinists. Yet one man, and one alone, can be called the Father of the Re-Awakening: Alexander Rud Mills.

Similarly, there can be no other claimant to the title of Folkmother than Else Christensen.

### Wisdom from the Folkmother

**“We’re all more or less caught up in the speed trap of modern society. We have just witnessed the Olympics where a fraction of a second makes the difference between a win or a loss. But in life you’re not in competition with anybody but yourself, you’re not out to win medals; you’re here as a member of your folk, and your efforts are not counted in seconds in competition with other people, but rather in the quiet and continuous influence you have in the overall future in the life of our folk.”**

*Else Christensen, 1992*

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● *British cave art – at last!* ● *The world's first civilisation?* ● *More on Danish sperm donors*  
 ● *Russian angels for adoption* ● *Fake history*

# What's new

## Oops, the experts were wrong

Over a hundred years ago it was “common knowledge” that all high culture began in Asia at a time when the wretched people in Europe were shivering miserably in caves. In fact it wasn't until 1902 that the existence of European cave art was accepted by the scientific community.

Even then, it was assumed that high art only occurred in Continental caves, such as Altamira in Spain and Lascaux in France. Britain, the experts told us, had no cave art.

Because there allegedly *was* no art, no-one was silly enough to look for it. At least, not until 2002, when a team led by Paul Bahn searched a group of caves at Creswell Crags, on the border of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

These caves have been visited by thousands of tourists, and were even subject to a major archaeological excavation in the 1870s, yet no-one had noticed any art. They simply weren't looking. Bahn's team almost immediately discovered a wealth of engravings, bas-reliefs and paintings dating from about 13,000 years ago. One of the caves, Church Hole, has the richest engraved ceiling of all cave art so far discovered anywhere in the world.

The old axiom was that culture somehow began in those deserts until recently ruled by Saddam Hussein, gradually “diffusing” to the backward folk of Europe – and even then, not quite reaching Britain. As Gordon Childe insisted as recently as 1958, European prehistory involved nothing more than “the irradiation of European barbarism by Oriental civilisation”.

Now we know that British artists were producing exquisite art thousands of years before the first Mesopotamian “farmer” ever thought to stick a seed in the Euphrates mud.

## Egypt not so Ancient

2,000 years before the first stones were laid for Egypt's pyramids the early inhabitants of Dresden, Germany, were building a massive complex of temples.

Over 150 of these earth and timber buildings have been excavated in the last three years, some of them up to 150 metres in diameter. So far, they all date to between 4,800 and 4,600 BCE.

The people who built these temples lived in long communal houses. Their economy was based on the farming of livestock and crops. They made their own jewellery, as well as ceramic figures of animals and humans.

The strict archaeological definition of “civilisation” implies a people living in cities and keeping written records. But what is a “city”? If it can be a community of people living in permanent houses close together, the people of the Dresden temple-culture qualify.

As to written records, none have been reported so far. Yet the famous baked-clay “Tartaria tablets” from Romania had a script and seem to date from several centuries before the “proto-literate” period in Sumer. There is therefore no reason to assume that the temple-builders of ancient Germany lacked writing.

Back in 1912, Gustav Kossima argued that civilisation, including writing, actually began among the Germans. His views have been scoffed at, largely because Heinrich Himmler is said to have summarised them as follows: “Prehistory is the doctrine of the eminence of the Germans at the dawn of civilisation”.

The new excavations in and around Dresden may well prove that Kossima was right all along.

## Danes still sharing genes

In December 2004 we reported on the Danish company Cryos, which is supplying high-quality Danish sperm to infertility doctors and their childless patients.

The company's New York office uses the slogan: “Congratulations, it's a Viking!” One of their ads shows a blond, blue-eyed baby and boasts of his ancestors who beat Columbus to North America. “You'd better build a strong crib,” it brags.

Yet freedom of choice to have a healthy and attractive baby is not seen as a right by some reactionaries. It's “consumer eugenics” according to Jonathan Moreno, a professor of biomedical ethics at the University of Virginia. “We have cultural stereotypes. Blue eyes, light skin and height are valued. It would be a historic irony if we all ended up looking like that.”

Professor Moreno needn't worry. People of Nordic appearance are becoming fewer and fewer as each year passes, and so far only 10,000 more of them have come into the world as a result of Cryos' efforts.

## Russian orphans on offer

About 800,000 Russian children live in orphanages. 180,000 of these unfortunates are being offered a better future by the Russian Education and Science Ministry, which has set up a website to try to help them find homes in the West.

Prospective adoptive parents can choose a child by hair colour, eye colour, or sex. The site lists, for instance, 263 blue-eyed, blond male children born in 2002.

More than half of the Russian children adopted abroad last year found new homes in America. Most of the rest went to Western Europe.

No doubt Professor Moreno (see our last item above) would disapprove of people's right to choose babies that appeal to them, but as Russian Education Minister Andrei Fursenko says, “Desperate measures demand

new solutions”.

At this stage the website, [www.usinovite.ru](http://www.usinovite.ru), appears only in Russian, but an English-language version is promised soon. If any readers are considering inter-country adoption, we suggest a regular visit to this site.

## Lies, damned lies, and history books

Henry Ford wrote that “History is more or less bunk”. Voltaire, on the other hand, lamented that “History is nothing more than a tableau of crimes and misfortunes”.

Can both these worthy gentlemen be right? Well, yes, when “history” depends on the word of people like Enric Marco.

Mr Marco is, or rather was, a professional holocaust survivor. In 1978 Mr Marco penned the heart-wrenching story of his years in a Nazi concentration camp, *Memoria del Infierno* (“Memory of Hell”). The book told of how its author was deported from Spain at the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939, and was a resident of Mauthausen concentration camp until its liberation in 1945.

Now aged 84, Mr Marco was president of the Spanish Mauthausen survivors' support group until May this year. Then rumours began to circulate that his claims were false. The rumours were correct. In fact he had been a voluntary guest worker in Germany from 1941, returning (again voluntarily) to Spain in 1943. He had never been anywhere near Mauthausen. His tragic story was all made up.

When Mr Marco's lifetime of lies began to unravel, all he could offer by way of apology was that he had “never lied out of malice. I thought that people would pay more attention to me and I could better spread the word of the suffering of the many people who were in the concentration camps.”

We have no intention of reading Mr Marco's book of fantasies, but if it's typical of the rest of its genre it probably contains lurid accounts of crimes committed by identifiable Germans and others, some of whom may be still alive and may even be forced to stand trial on the basis of eye-witness “evidence” supplied by contemptible fantasists like Mr Marco.

Yes, history most certainly *is* “bunk” when it is written by liars like Mr Marco and uncritically repeated by gullible academics. And yes, in Mr Marco's case, his own personal history amounts to nothing more than “crimes and misfortunes”.

# 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*.

## 3. *Nið* in *Lokasenna*

To place the poem in its literary context, *Lokasenna* takes the form of a *senna*, which Preben Meulengracht Sørensen (1983) defines as a quarrel in which “two or more people accuse each other of despicable qualities or actions”. This attempt to cast scorn on the other side doesn't necessarily involve *nið*, but it frequently does. *Nið* in turn “signifies gross insults of a symbolic kind”, usually through suggestions that the male who is attacked has the contemptible moral characteristics that Norse society associated with passive homosexuality. In the case of a female victim she can be accused of being perverted or lecherous, or else of having sex with the accuser, which is psychologically equated with the violation of her husband's sexual integrity.

Many of Loki's scurrilous insults in *Lokasenna* are of this order. The modern reader may be tempted to regard them as coarse sub-Rabelaisian burlesque. To dismiss them so lightly, though, is rather like travelling in a foreign country without ever having quite realised that one is abroad. If, instead, we choose to enter the moral and legal world of *Lokasenna*, we find that Loki's insults take on a much more serious hue. They are *nið* pure and simple, and *nið* was not something to be taken lightly. In 12th and 13th century Iceland *nið* was a killing matter.

Meulengracht Sørensen points out that “The right of vengeance prescribed for [*nið*-type] slanders is the least conditional in Icelandic law. It holds good in only two other situations, namely in a case of killing and ... in a case of sexual relations, forced or otherwise, with a close woman relative of the man to whom the right of vengeance is allowed. The most serious verbal

offences are thus equated with killing, rape and adultery, and are regarded as more flagrant than, for instance, bodily injury”.

Numerous examples in Icelandic literature suggest that a man who does not attempt to refute the accusation of *nið* through physical combat is regarded as a *niðingr*. If he is not prepared to defend himself physically against these shameful accusations, it is as if he may as well be regarded as having committed them, or at least as not being averse to committing them.

Yet in *Lokasenna* nearly all the gods are accused of shameful acts, and none of them kills Loki, as they would otherwise have been perfectly entitled to do. Why not? One obvious explanation is that they know they can't. Having a fore-knowledge of Fate, they are aware that Loki will not be killed until Ragnarök. But they also know, and Skaði makes it plain, that Loki is destined to be bound until the final battle. Why then don't they seize him as soon as he forces his way back into Ægir's Hall? Unless the poem is to be regarded as a fanciful work of art, ultimately a meaningless diversion, they must have a reason.

The analysis that comprises section four of this paper is not intended to provide a definitive answer to these questions, but rather to set up a new avenue of interrogation. If it is possible to provide a consistent reading of *Lokasenna*, not necessarily the correct reading but at least one in which heathen expectations about the behaviour of the gods are addressed, then the place of this poem in the corpus of late Norse paganism will be shown to

require reappraisal.

In brief, I will suggest that Loki re-enters Ægir's hall for reasons to which we have no direct access, but which may be those outlined by McKinnell. Regardless of Loki's reasons, the gods have a purpose of their own, which is essentially to try Loki for treason. They allow him to establish his hostility, and while giving him the fairest possible hearing manoeuvre him into boasting of his guilt; but they are unable to seize him because they have sworn that Ægir's hall is a place of sanctuary. Only Þórr is permitted to break this oath, and he is away in the East. The gods therefore attempt to keep Loki talking until Þórr returns. For his part, Loki maintains a tirade of *nið*-type slanders against the gods in the hope of at least gaining some sort of moral victory by provoking them into breaking their oaths. The temptation is strong, especially for Freyr, but his anger is diffused by Byggvir, and Loki is kept howling indignities at the gods until Þórr returns, engages Loki in a test of courage, and compels him to flee from the hall. Once outside Loki can be, and is, legitimately bound. Justice has not only been done, but has been seen to be done.

### Worth thinking about

**“The doctrine of self-renunciation bears within it a great fear, the most deadening, the most wicked aspect of fear – a fear of being, a fear of being what one is, a fear of the self, that is, a fear of the, for us, greatest fact of Reality.”**

- A. Rud Mills

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

[www.norroena.org](http://www.norroena.org)

More material is being constantly added to this site.



E-mail: [frojel@frojel.com](mailto:frojel@frojel.com)

PO Box 127, Pakenham,

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

# Hárbarðsljóð and Lokasenna

## Part 2, by Mark

It is also probable that Loki remains there [*Ægir's hall, see last issue – Ed*] for the purpose of deterring Thor from going to the feast at all. He originally tries to dismay the Asagod by telling him that his mother is dead (*Harbarðsljóð* 4), which, we can surmise, was meant to make Thor change his course and head straight for Asgard. It is well known that Thor is an excellent wader whose size increases with the depths of the waters (*Thorsdrapa, Skaldskaparmal*) so Loki could not have initially believed that he would keep the Asagod from crossing the sound, simply by refusing to ferry him. Then he discovers that Thor needs the boat to get him across, that he cannot wade due to the augur (eyes, which he makes into stars? Str. 13) he carries, so refusing to ferry him then becomes sufficient to hinder him. This would explain why he later tells Thor that his mother is alive (str. 56).

If augur really are 'eyes', as William Reaves suggests (cp. ON *augua*), then we might consider them to be evidence of Thor's mighty deeds, to be presented to the gods at the mead feast. Such a presentation was sacred to the Teutons as they passed around the Bargarhorn while boasting of their adventures. This would really be the only reason why he would be holding them, since we see in *Skaldskaparmal* and *Harbarðsljóð* 19 that these are to be thrown into the sky to make stars.

Besides the placement of the two episodes within the epic, we should also consider the location they take place in. Rydberg states (in UGM I no. 93) that "Aegir's Hall is far out in the depths of the sea. The Ocean known by the Teutons was the North Sea. The author (of *Lokasenna*) has manifestly conceived Aegir's hall as situated in the same direction from Asgard as Vanaheim, and not far from the native home of the Vanir". From this standpoint we should compare the opening prose of both *Harbarðsljóð* and *Lokasenna*: *Harbarðsljóð* states that, "Thor, journeying from the east, came to a strait or sound", while *Lokasenna* informs us that "Thor was not there (at Aegir's feast), because he was in the east."

It should be noted that Aegir's home was thought to have been located on the island of Hlesey or Laesö (*Skaldskaparmal*), which is situated in the Kattegat strait between Jutland, Denmark, and Southwestern Sweden. So we can see that in both poems Thor is returning from a journey "in the east", i.e. Jotunheim, and that his path brings him to a strait or a sound.

On pg. 111 of UGM II part 2 Rydberg

states that the body of water that restricts Thor's path in *Harbarðsljóð* is the same as that which stopped him before on his way to Geirroð's. Thus, the *Rádseyjarsund* of *Harbarðsljóð* 8 is identical to Vimur of *Skaldskaparmal*, where giantesses urinate to make the torrents swell. Elsewhere it is known that *Vimur* is one of the names of the *Elivagar* (FG pg. 204), which is caused to rise when "Gjalp, Geirroð's daughter stood astride the river (*Skaldskaparmal*.) Note that *Elivagar*, though often called a river, is actually a sea or ocean so its connection to a strait or sound would not be contradictory. It is very likely that Aegir's home, *Hlésey* or Hles Isle, was also originally thought to be located on the *Elivagarm*, the Underworld sea that actually is situated near Vanaheim (see above and UGM I no. 93). The later placement of his home on Laesö probably came from the euhemerist movement, where ancient gods became ancient kings and mythic realms became actual geographic locations. That Aegir's hall is probably located in the western domains of or near Vanaheim comes from *Lokasenna* 34 where Loki states that Njord was "sent eastward from here, as a hostage to the gods".

Considering all that has been stated here, we should now take a step-by-step look at the strophes that correspond to one another in each of these poems:

1. In *Thorsdrapa* Thor is called "Odin's grief-thief", i.e. his joy (str. 15, Odins alfi sodnum). This stands in stark contrast with strophes in *Harbarðsljóð*, where "Harbard" (Loki) lies to him (str. 4), insults his manner of dress (str. 6), implies that he is a horse-thief (str. 8), and calls him a coward (str. 26). The entire concept and tone of these strophes mimics exactly the abuses of *Lokasenna* from Loki to the gods and goddesses, further contradicting Odin's association with Harbard of *Harbarðsljóð*.

To this we should compare Thor's words to Harbard, where he calls him a weakling (str. 13), womanly (strophes 27 and 51), a liar and a fool (str. 49). He also threatens to kill him! (Strophes 27 and 47). Such a threat, given Thor's past encounters, should not be taken lightly. That scholars would consider the benevolent protector of Midgard to be capable of parricide (and strophes 31-35 show us that Thor does know who Harbard is, see below) further demonstrates the Christian influence on their investigations into the ancient Teutonic lore, since from the Christian perspective both Odin and Thor would be seen as demons. Again, in *Lokasenna* Thor calls Loki "womanish" or "unmanly" in a refrain (strophes 57, 59, 61 and 63), while in the same refrain he threatens to take his life

with *Mjöllnir*.

2. Both poems depict Loki as the representative of unbridled lust, where he boasts of his sexual exploits with Hymir's daughters (*Harbarðsljóð* 16 and 18, cp. *Lokasenna* 34), the myrk-riders (*Harb.* 20), Idun (*Harb.* 30, see above, and *Loka.* 17), Tyr's wife (*Loka.* 40), Skadi (*Loka.* 51-52) and Sif (*Harb.* 48 and *Loka.* 54).

3. *Harbarðsljóð* 14 and 15 and *Lokasenna* 61 refer to Thor's battle with Hrugnir. In *Lokasenna* Thor may be reminding Loki of his words spoken on the sound in *Harbarðsljóð*.

4. Strophe 26 of *Harbarðsljóð* describes the exact same event with the same insult Loki uses against Thor in *Lokasenna* 60. In fact, the line *ok Þú Þá Þorr vera* ("and hardly thought you were Thor") is repeated in both strophes.

These associating strophes would allow Thor to confirm the fact that it was Loki on the sound before, disguised and using the name Harbard, when he confronts him in Aegir's hall. Whether this was considered by the author or authors of *Harbarðsljóð* first or *Lokasenna* first we cannot know. This would simply be a confirmation made by the author(s) of the poems, since it is already made clear in strophes 31-35 of *Harbarðsljóð* that Thor knows exactly who Harbard was, when they reminisce over the event that led to the death of Volund-Thjazi.

5. Thjazi's death is referred to in both poems, when Loki brags about his sexual relations with Idun. We have already determined that strophe 30 of *Harbarðsljóð* describes Loki's returning of Idun to Asgard (compare str. 31 "Full fair was thy woman finding" with what is said in *Skaldskaparmal* – *saekja etir Idunni i Jotunheima*, "seek after Idun in Jotunheim"). *Hrafnagaldur* 19 tells us that Thjazi is a son of Alvaldi. Ivaldi and Alvaldi are identical (see UGM I no. 123). Thus Thjazi-Völund is a brother of Idun. So when Loki claims, in *Lokasenna* 17, that Idun laid her arms "about thy brother's slayer" this refers to the same mythic event where Harbard claims to have "held" (in this case literally, though Loki uses it in a sexual context) the linen-white maid. This mythic event is, of course, Loki's self-serving adventure into Thrymheim to bring Idun back to her rightful place among the gods and goddesses.

6. *Harbarðsljóð* 42 can be interpreted in the following manner: Loki means to recompense his offence to Thor with arrows, or with an attack (UGM II, part 2 pg. 117-119). Rydberg here relates the "hands-ring" which arbitrators (*jafnendr*) give as the

horn-bow, which forms a circular shape when drawn. The statement is a reference to Njord-Fridlevus' attempt to marry Skadi and propitiate the offended Völund for the competition between his artwork and that of Sindri, which he lost (see Saxo book 6 and FG pg. 57-60). Njord's messengers were killed and later he and his arbitrator (*jafnendr* or *ljóna*) Hödr-Bjorno were attacked by the Ivaldi sons. This competition between the artists left the Ivaldi sons to turn against the gods and seek refuge in the Myrkwood (Wolfdales).

In both *Harbardsljod* 42 and *Lokasenna* 12 the phrase *Baeta baugi* "pay a fine with rings" occurs. In *Lokasenna* it is Bragi claiming that he will *Baeta baugi* for any offence he has brought against Loki, and that he will give him a horse and a sword if he will curb his vile tongue. His "horse" is the set of stones Loki will lay upon until Ragnarök, bound by the entrails of one of his own sons, with a sword sticking in his back (UGM I no. 78 and FG pg. 137). Here the phrase refers to the same mythic idea as *Harbardsljod* 42, that Bragi will

recompense Loki's actions with violence.

7. Both poems end with a curse. In *Harbardsljod* 58 and 60 Loki-Harbard predicts that the sun shall vanish, which we should compare to *Völuspá* 57, and states that Thor should go where all the powers of evil will have him. In *Lokasenna* (str. 65) he predicts that Aegir's home shall burn to the ground, which may be another reference to *Völuspá* 57.

These proofs demonstrate that without doubt, there is a clear connection between *Lokasenna* and *Harbardsljod*. This connection has simply been overshadowed by the misconceptions surrounding the identity of Harbard in *Harbardsljod*. Once this misunderstanding is eliminated the relationship between these two poems becomes so apparent that it can lead one to wonder how such a relationship has gone unnoticed for so long.

## Renewal

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*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".

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## The Galley Song

by John Nicholson

Floats the raven banner o'er us,  
Round our dragon ship we stand,  
Voices joined in gladsome chorus,  
Raised aloft the flaming brand.

Each god's son has his duty  
When he joins the festive throng:  
Honour, freedom, love and beauty  
In the feast, the dance, the song.

Worthy sons of Odin make us,  
Truth be our encircling fire;  
Shadowy visions backward take us  
To the sea-king's fun'ral pyre.

Bonds of Brotherhood inherit,  
Over strife the curtain draw;  
Let our actions breathe the spirit  
Of Balder, Odin, Frey and Thor!

A version of this song is sung, to the air "Northland Skaal", at the annual festival of Up-Helly-Aa at Lerwick in the Shetland Islands, for which it was originally written in 1935.

Up-Helly-Aa is traditionally celebrated on the last Tuesday in January. Since 1889 the procession has been led by a replica Viking longship, which is later torched.

## Wisdom from Rud Mills

**The Odinist teaches a simple, beautiful theme drawn from communion with God and Nature. He makes visible truth and the sweetness of truth the basis of his teachings.**

**The old Nordic religion was happy in the face of the All-Father. It feared no exposure. It laughed with God. It continually strove to be in accord with the manifestations of God, so far as man could see them. Its followers rejoiced in life.**

## Ripples in Time



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Our original 21-part series has now been combined in a self-contained A4 size saddle-stitched booklet of 20 pages, with a 120 gsm clay cover (as illustrated).

This really is the complete guide to runes from an Anglo-Saxon perspective.

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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.

## Interview with S. M. Stirling

In March 2004 we carried a full-page review of S. M. Stirling's science fiction series: *Marching Through Georgia*, *Under the Yoke*, *The Stone Dogs*, and *Drakon*. Our readers have been discussing this series ever since, so we decided to interview the author.

For those not familiar with the Draka series, it follows an alternative timeline (TL), in which a British Crown Colony based on Cape Town diverges more and more from the history with which we are familiar. Eventually the warrior

Draka (named after Sir Francis Drake) specialise in genetic engineering and supersede *Homo sapiens* with two new, mutually infertile, species. *Homo drakensis* is bred to dominate the world, while the role of *Homo servus* is simply to serve their new masters.

This interview was conducted by email, and has been edited slightly for the purpose of continuity. S. M. Stirling's books are published by Baen, [www.baen.com](http://www.baen.com)

RENEWAL: What were the seed-crystals around which your ideas for the Domination of the Draka grew?

SMS: A number of sources. I'd been interested in the old South Atlantic element of the European expansion, the Africa-Caribbean-Europe triangle, and I thought it would be intriguing to see what a fragment of that system might develop into if given a nice remote location with a lot of potential.

Also, as a thought experiment, I wanted to see just how bad I could make a society within the bounds of credibility.

RENEWAL: I'd like to return to the notion of "bad" later, if you don't mind. Meanwhile, are you aware of any literary or artistic influences that may have helped you to envisage Draka culture?

SMS: Oh, innumerable. Houston Chamberlain, Gobineau, and a whole strain of late-19th-century thought that came out in everything from adventure books to posters. And of course the Classical world; not so much as it existed, as a potential way it might be reimagined.

RENEWAL: I know that Carlyle and Nietzsche both emigrated to the Dominion, but what about other influences? For instance, it seems to me that what becomes their typical architecture may owe a little to Frank Lloyd Wright.

SMS: The architecture's sort of a mix of neoclassical, oriental, Art Nouveau, Art Deco, and thirties "stripped classical".

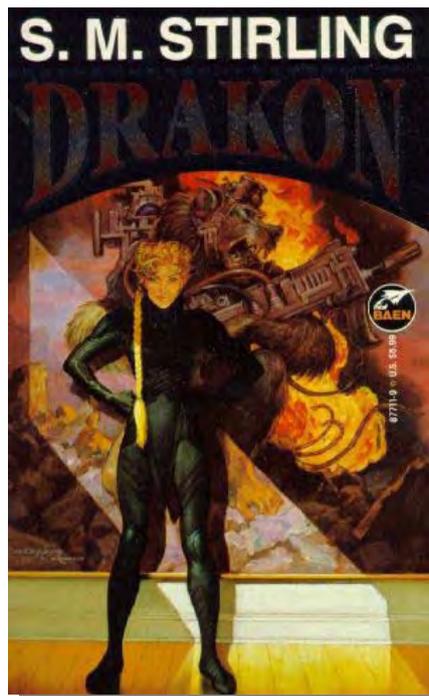
RENEWAL: Perhaps we could look at the aesthetic aspects of the Draka culture from a different perspective. If Elvira Naldorssen were familiar with the well-known Western artists of the last century or so – visual artists, musicians, architects, writers, film directors and so on – do you think she would find redeeming features in any of them?

SMS: Technically, certainly. Especially Alma-Tadema...8-).

RENEWAL: Just to clarify my question, it seems to me (rightly or wrongly) that she would dislike Leni Riefenstahl's main films, particularly "Triumph", for being both too sentimental and too collectivist.

SMS: True.

RENEWAL: On the other hand, she might find a few acceptable scenes in certain films by John Boorman, or perhaps even Paul Verhoeven. Of course, I'm being a bit simplistic with these examples: Elvira may well have cracked up with laughter at the



"typical" Hollywood film, seeing it as the self-indictment of a ludicrously decadent culture ...

SMS: Griffiths, on the other hand, might elicit some sympathy.

RENEWAL: I am rather surprised! Apart from his technical genius, what would Elvira like about Griffiths?

SMS: The general atmosphere. Also, remember where they came from.

RENEWAL: As I said, you know more about Elvira than I do.

SMS: She's a very reclusive person... 8-).

RENEWAL: I do recall where (some of) the Draka came from, but I still can't see Elvira being very interested in a film about that period in the history of the White South. Why would she care? From her point of view, a non-Draka society was merely opposed to another non-Draka society.

SMS: The psychological alienation from the rest of the human race was gradual, and happened in theory before it was reasonably complete in practice. It's a process of radicalisation.

RENEWAL: Instead, I can imagine her today making somewhat dismissive comments about *Starship Troopers*, a film that otherwise perhaps embodied one or two

moral propositions that she may have endorsed.

SMS: Well, the fact that it's awful might help...

RENEWAL: May I ask why you say of *Starship Troopers* that "it's awful"?

SMS: It's awful as a film. It's an attempted parody, but the strength of the material keeps breaking through, so it doesn't even work on that level. Not to mention the bug-fart antispacecraft system....

RENEWAL: It seems to me that the Draka have some religious impulses. After all, they tried at one stage to revive Odinism. Can you tell me why they made that attempt?

SMS: Christian morality is really sort of incompatible with the way their society was going. There's always hypocrisy and reinterpretation, of course, but they were sort of creaking under the strain. The late 19th century was a period of 'belief turnover' in most of Western Civ, anyway.

RENEWAL: Could you be more specific about the aspects of Christianity that were incompatible with the way their society was going?

SMS: Sure. Traditional morality in most cultures was, until the universal religions came along, focused on the "in-group".

There was Us, the Real People (check out tribal self-designating ethnonyms!) and then the not-really-human creatures all around. It was a world without pity.

Essentially, Christianity universalises human status, at least for believers; it's no accident that, the Judaic heritage aside, it arose among out-groups in a universal empire.

Sure, Christians (and Buddhists and whatever) often, in fact usually, don't live up to this. But it's still philosophically inconvenient to a culture which is developing a steadily stronger sense of its own alienation from the rest of *h. sapiens*. The Domination doesn't just have a predatory social system, it has one which is **overtly** predatory. Hypocrisy is the tribute vice pays to virtue. They got tired of it.

RENEWAL: By contrast, most late-19th century intellectuals tried to salvage what they could of Christianity.

SMS: Not necessarily. Nietzsche didn't, for instance, or Bergeron, or many Marxists, or the many varieties of radical Social Darwinists or racial-nationalists. In fact there was a mood of revolt against it in many

circles.

RENEWAL: So they deliberately chose **not** to opt for the Judaic "chosen people" concept, or the Calvinist "God's elect" principle, as a handy replacement for universalist values. But I'm still not sure why they took the radical religious step that they did.

SMS: It's not all that radical. The late 19th century was a period of widespread de-Christianisation in the Western world, outside the US (which has been getting steadily more religious for 200 years now).

RENEWAL: You suggest that the Draka simply became tired of universalist hypocrisy. Is that really all that there was to their decision? Or did they, perhaps, have a premature sense of the "selfish gene" theory that has become pretty much mainstream in recent biology? Or might they have had an even more fundamental philosophical or moral objection to Judeo-Christianity?

SMS: Well, that's what I was saying.

QUESTION: Point taken! Yet they **then** attempted to revive Odinism. Why would that have been their first choice as an alternative religious outlook?

SMS: Another idea floating through the zeitgeist of the time; see all the Edwardians who discovered Pan running around through the Sussex woods, and the Norse element in popular fiction of the period. Paganism was supposedly an alternative to the meek-and-mild element in Christianity, and it also represented the 'return of the repressed', the id, and libidinous forces.

RENEWAL: The only wildly popular figure I can think of who put in any sort of good word for Odin was Carlyle, in his famous essay. So why didn't the Draka try to revive worship of the pagan gods in their classical forms? In short, why Freya rather than Aphrodite? This seems to me to be a major break on their part from the main current of paganism in the late nineteenth century Anglosphere. Did they have a logical reason for this break? Or was it somehow instinctive? Or something else...?

SMS: Depends on the period you're looking at. Norse pagan themes became more fashionable in the **late** 19th century, and early 20th.

RENEWAL: So why did **they** choose the Norse tradition of paganism, rather than the Classical pagan tradition for which the educational system of the time would have prepared them?

SMS: Both were influential. The grim element also appealed.

RENEWAL: Yet some of the concepts the Draka took from pagan Greece were successful (e.g. helotry). So why did the attempt to revive Odinism fail? Was the problem something inherent in Odinism, or was it something in the Draka themselves?

SMS: Well, the fact that ultimately it was sort of silly helped.

RENEWAL: Could you help me understand by explaining quite how it was silly?

SMS: Once you've started to internalise a

materialist world-view, all religions seem increasingly silly. The old Indo-European pagan cults particularly so, since they have no developed intellectual background to speak of.

RENEWAL: Now, Gwendolyn Ingolfsson could look back and argue that Drakan genetic manipulation had improved the world. But to what extent do you think earlier generations shared this motivation?

SMS: Eugenics was very popular in OTL from the late 19th century through the 1930's, when the Nazis discredited it. In the Domination timeline, things followed roughly the same trajectory, except that of course the Domination wasn't destroyed.

RENEWAL: I should perhaps have asked: "To what extent do you think earlier **Draka** generations shared a eugenic motivation as a way of improving the world, rather than just as a way of preserving their race?"

SMS: Increasingly, they don't see much of a distinction between those. It's a case of "sacro egoism" taken to a very high degree.

RENEWAL: Your last answer would be supported, I think, by Alan E. Sorensson – but he was writing in 1983. In say 1918, when Eric von Shrakenberg was born, to what extent might some of the more prescient Dominion citizens have foreseen Gwendolyn Ingolfsson's eventual conservationist slide-show?

SMS: In broad outline some of the more advanced thinkers might have, although they'd have supposed it would take much longer, and the technological details wouldn't be possible to anticipate.

RENEWAL: So is it fair to say that from an early stage there was a rather "deep green" aspect to their thinking about the environment?

SMS: Some of the effects are the same, but they're coming at it from a different angle. They're concerned about the environment for aesthetic reasons before practical ones. They just **like** having a lot of low-population-density land around.

One has to remember that a concern for the environment as such was a right-wing, aristocratic p.o.v. until quite recently.

As for carrying capacity, that's largely a function of the available technology and there's no "inherent" limit, of course. Australia was probably functionally overpopulated in 1788, given the bare-arsed-savage tech level available.

RENEWAL: I think I need some help on this topic. There have been many cases here in Australia where "deep green" environmentalists have locked up public land simply because they enjoy access to "wilderness" areas. Occasionally they have even opposed roads that were designed specifically to allow people in wheelchairs to have the pleasure of accessing these pristine areas. How is this different from the (eventual) attitude of the Domination?

SMS: Not all that much, but the Draka aren't hypocrites. If they're going to take something for themselves because they enjoy it, they come right out and say so!

RENEWAL: It seems to me that one of the worst aspects of our TL is that so many people are hypocritical – hence "political correctness" and many other regrettable features of our world. The Draka are refreshingly honest. Would you agree that in that respect they are morally superior to us?

SMS: People tend to be honest or hypocritical depending on what they stand to gain from it, which is another way to say that the carrot and stick work.

Eg., politicians were refreshingly blunt back before universal suffrage. Bismarck, for example, once remarked that "In Germany today there are three great political swindles; the religious swindle, the socialist swindle, and my nationalist swindle."

If you ask why politicians today aren't as honest, it's simple: if they were, they'd never be elected to office.

The way Draka society is set up, there usually just isn't any profit in pretending to be nicer or more altruistic than you are.

RENEWAL: So is the way their society is set up more moral in some ways than ours?

SMS: Morality's really a matter of opinion. They're more consistent, and less hypocritical, certainly. On the other hand, they're consistently **bad** ... 8-).

RENEWAL: So should I take it that "bad" is therefore not a matter of opinion? If so, how do we objectively define "bad"?

SMS: It's simple; my subjective opinions are objectively true.

RENEWAL: Still, in view of the Draka lack of hypocrisy, I'd like to ask: "if you don't feel comfortable with the word 'moral', might we do well to copy some aspects of their society? If so, which?"

SMS: Well, the absence of wishful thinking would be a start.

RENEWAL: Given the way that Johanna von Shrakenberg treated the SS men, despite their racially-motivated good intentions toward her, it seems that the Draka might be among the least "racist" people ever envisaged. Would you agree?

SMS: Depends on your definitions. The Draka started out as fairly standard-issue racists, and then started narrowing their definition of "our race".

RENEWAL: Well, they eventually engineered their race into a separate species, so to that extent I take your point. But Johanna didn't behave like a "standard-issue racist". The SS men did so toward her, and she gutted them! Surely a real "racist" (at least at Johanna's stage in the TL) would have spared the SS men for the same reason that they wanted to spare her – racial solidarity?

SMS: Not that the Nazis always showed that much... 8-).

Anyway, when I said "started out", I meant "in the 18th century". Before a thing can be done, it has to be imagined (which is why literature is important). The Draka started narrowing their definition of "our race" well before WWII.

RENEWAL: To refine the question, it seems to me that the Draka are no more "bad" than many other societies that have been widely

admired, such as the Spartans. Do you feel that there is something **particularly** "bad" about them that sets them apart from the rest of humanity in a moral sense? If so, what?

SMS: They're a reversal of the basic philosophic trends of Western society over the past 250 years or so. All the causes and trends that lost out, or most of them, win in the Drakaverse.

RENEWAL: Do you think that there is anything "good" about them that we should emulate – if we could?

SMS: Well, they're forthright, honest, and patriotic. These are all good things.

RENEWAL: One of our readers wrote: "He [Stirling] produced the DRAKA sequence of alternate histories about the global triumph of a worse-than-nazis slave-owning society descended from the US Confederacy and the Boers ... IMHO it is kinda like racist porn – it's supposed to be lamenting the triumph of the Draka while actually allowing people to sneakily enjoy it." How would **you** respond to that person's rather aggressive criticism?

SMS: I'd point out that he's being rather parochial; that is, he's saying fiction should be limited to characters more or less like us, with moral reflexes suitable to the West in the early 21st century.

In which case he's going to have trouble with Shakespeare, all of whose characters are believers in a hereditary aristocracy, monarchy, and male domination.

A lot of science fiction does limit its characters in the way described, but I don't consider this a strength. The whole point of fiction in general is the ability to project into people who **aren't** you; SF extends this into projection into situations and cultures very unlike one's own.

RENEWAL: So what is your attitude to the feedback you have received so far from the fans? In general, does their response please you? Why, or why not?

SMS: In general, it's been pleasingly positive. There are the usual noxious pissants, of course, but that's a general hazard of publicity, and Niven's Law applies.

As for the Draka books specifically, the only people who really worry me are the ones who'd like to move there. As I've said before, there is no polite way to say "It's a DYSTOPIA, you twit!"

RENEWAL: Given that our species is placing enormous pressure on the earth, and perhaps threatening the long-term survival of both human and other biological life, wouldn't you concede that your character Gwen is at least raising a moral issue of pivotal importance?

SMS: -- not really. Environmentalism is a **prudential** issue.

RENEWAL: Do *they* see it as a prudential rather than moral issue, or do you? (I am not being critical here – just trying to understand.)

SMS: Ah, well, that goes to the heart of

Draka ethics... 8-). They see it as preserving an inheritance for their bloodlines.

(To clarify the difference from my p.o.v.: spending more money than you've got is imprudent; that would be analogous to causing soil erosion. Killing and scalping your neighbour is immoral. Objects (and the natural world is simply a collection of objects) have moral significance only insofar as they affect human beings, now or in the future. In and of itself it's just "there".)

RENEWAL: I don't think Gwen cares about human beings' moral issues. Yet I am very interested in what her own moral issues might be. Can you enlighten me?

SMS: Ah, well, *homo drakensis* is an entirely different kettle of fish. As she remarks at one point, the drakensis don't need ideology, they've got biology instead. A lot of their behavioural imperatives are instinctual, much more so than with us.

RENEWAL: I have been surprised by the number of people I have encountered who are familiar with the Draka series. Your books are in fact rather hard to obtain in Australia, but word about them seems to be getting around. Are you pleased with the sales?

SMS: They seem to have a devoted, tho' not all that large, following wherever SF and alternate history are read.

RENEWAL: Have you considered the idea of a film-script based on, say, "Marching Through Georgia"? Any such film wouldn't need costly special effects, which might be an advantage when offering the screenplay around. For what my opinion may be worth, I feel certain that a film based on the book would be successful.

SMS: The way it works is that film-makers have to approach **you**. If there's one thing Hollyweird is not short of, it's books!

RENEWAL: Is there no mechanism for people to offer their screenplays to big-name directors?

SMS: I'm not a screenwriter. It's a related but distinct set of skills, I know people who do both, like Melinda Snodgrass, but it's just not my thing.

RENEWAL: I understand your reluctance. On the other hand, I would love to see "Marching Through Georgia: The Movie". Of course you're the expert, and it is not my role to disagree with you; but wouldn't it be worth trying to approach a few independents just to "test the water"?

SMS: My agent does that, through a subcontractor who has contacts in the business. So far, no nibbles.

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