
Renewal

Vol 12 No 3, December 2005

“Odinism – the spiritual adventure of the new millennium”
Check out our website: www.geocities.com/osred

S. H. P. Steadman and Odinist art

Paul Valéry left us a very precise warning. “One must always,” he wrote, “apologise before talking about painting.” Bearing that in mind, we will confine our remarks here to the creative qualities of the young British artist S. H. P. Steadman, rather than his painterly skills.

But what is creativity? Douglas Hofstadter is a cognitive science researcher and the author of a seminal book *Gödel, Escher, Bach*. When recently asked to define creativity he said:

I am convinced creativity is the ability to discover things that are in some sense there for anyone to find: things that the rest of humanity will appreciate because they are beautiful or because they are insightful or because they are truths about nature. Of course, we consider some people great musical composers when nine-tenths of the world has never heard of them, and when most of those who have heard their music didn't like it anyway. But they've found what I call a “vein of receptivity” in the minds of a large number of people.

Implicit in this comment is the notion that all art that succeeds in finding a “vein of receptivity” will eventually turn to cliché. Hofstadter has no problem with this implication. As he happily explains: “To me, creativity is finding new future clichés. Everything truly creative eventually becomes a cliché. The Mona Lisa is the most clichéd of all the clichés you can imagine.”

This seems like an admirably commonsense starting point. It is also not very different from saying (as its practitioners do) that science is continually challenging existing views and creating new consensuses

If this view is correct, then one aspect in the quest for all new art worthy of the name is to discover new ways of resonating in the minds, hearts and souls of the intended audience. At first this new synthesis will be highly emotionally charged for the viewers. Later, it will become an image that is within the viewers' comfort zone. Eventually, it will be seen as an uncreative convention.

Clearly, abstract expressionism had some sort of emotional impact for its target audience of (mainly) American Jews from the 1940s onwards. Today, it is hard to imagine that any works by Mark Rothko or Barnett Newman, for instance, could evoke



a meaningful response from people who are not either collectors or museum staff.

The same goes for much of traditional Christian iconography. There is simply no way of painting a “Madonna and Child” from a Christian perspective that can provide any significant new insights into that faith.

For far too long, what passes for Odinist art has been stuck in the clichés of the past, without troubling to discover new resonances. It is easy enough to represent incidents from our mythology in the manner of an Arthur Rackham, a J. C. Dollman, a B. E. Fogelberg, an M. E. Winge (you *do* know that reddish-golden hued painting of Thor crushing the giants with his hammer!), or the like.

Those images have largely lost their resonance for all but the latest people responding to the call of our ancestral faith. For such viewers these works may well fall within their comfort zones, yet they are hardly likely to offer any new truths, insights or beauties even to a neophyte.

We are lucky enough, however, to live in an era when a thoughtful young artist is finding new “veins of receptivity” among both Odinists and the broader heathen community.

The painting above is a commissioned portrait by S. H. P. Steadman. It is oil on board, and measures 48 by 31 inches. Its first title was “Miss Sophie James and Alexander”.

In the course of painting it, Mr Steadman decided that a subtitle was needed: “Mother and Child with Mistletoe and Golden Hall”.

The Odinist symbols in this splendid painting may not be clear in our reproduction, so bear with us while we spell them out. The baby, representing an infant Balder the Beautiful, is appropriately dressed in golden clothes. Young Balder is clutching a sprig of mistletoe, a portent of Ragnarok. The gold of his baby clothes is echoed in the distance-reduced golden hall on the horizon: the hall to which Balder will return after Ragnarok to rule over a rejuvenated earth. Behind his mother, Frigga at her most maternally calm, is a suggestion of Yggdrasil. At her feet are daisies, at least ten different varieties of which have been given the name “Balder's Brow” in England, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the Faeroes and Iceland.

Mr Steadman has not only discovered a new, Odinist approach to the traditional portrait of a mother and child, one which manages to satisfy all three of Hofstadter's criteria for creativity. He has also found a new way of telling (or fore-telling) the story of Ragnarok, one that is not bound by the convention of historicity. There are the Eddaic references, of course, but Steadman's vision also embodies a thousand subsequent years of the wisdom and artistic tradition of our people. Of course, we can be inspired by the Eddaic period, or any other chapter in our people's history, but the virtues of earlier times never really died out and have manifested themselves over and over again in our people's subsequent achievements.

In this sense Mr Steadman has discovered, in artistic form and by artistic means, one thing that was always “there for anyone to find”: the fact that the Ragnarok vision transcends the era in which the Eddas were written, and that it is therefore directly relevant to us today. In short, he has given us an *Odinist* conception of the Balder story, rather than that of the “myth-illustrators” whose works seem so clichéd today.

Let us go one step further in our investigation of this painting. For the last few centuries the so-called Enlightenment values have permeated much of our thinking. Westerners accept the concept of “progress”

while often being dubious about the merits of some actual changes. We believe in rationality and empirical evidence, while

Continued on page 2

(Continued from page 1)

generally accepting that spiritual values must be sought elsewhere than in the hard sciences (as even Richard Dawkins conceded in a BBC interview in 1996).

Yet in the last few decades the West has become increasingly aware that there are religious fundamentalists, particularly in the Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities, who absolutely reject these values, craving relief from change in the adolescent certainties of their Holy Books. This fundamentalist backlash is a war against the Western values that have allowed modern science to become, despite some residual limitations, largely a dynamic Odinist quest for knowledge.

When we see the activities of Muslim terrorist bombers, or read of the attempts by the Christian “Intelligent Design” crowd in America to ban Darwinian texts from classrooms, or the crazy antics of the Jewish zealots in Israel, many of us are no doubt inclined to shake our heads. We simply cannot feel the dread and anxiety that underlie the passionate, inchoate, aggressive rage of the fundamentalists.

Bearing this in mind, imagine what sort of religious image might appeal to the fanatics of a US Christian fundamentalist outfit like the Discovery Institute. Would they be likely to approve of, say, a “Madonna and Child” painting in which Mary and Jesus are depicted in contemporary streetwear? Hardly! We have seen in earlier periods of art how Christian fanatics insist on obsessive period detail in the depiction of their sacred figures. Think of William Holman Hunt’s magnificent follies, such as *The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple* (1854-60).

And that is precisely why Mr Steadman’s painting of a Frigga-and-Balder couple, in modern clothing and a timeless setting, is evidence of the maturity and modernity of modern Odinism. His two figures are far above mere illustration. They gaze directly at us, challenging us as modern Westerners to relate to the concept of eternal, cyclical renewal that is at the heart of our ancient spiritual traditions – but to do so as modern Westerners, in a way that is true to ourselves.

This was, in Hofstadter’s terms, a discovery that was “in some sense there for anyone to find”. Yet until now, only Mr Steadman has found it!

A similar, but perhaps even more startling, location of our ancestral verities in the here-and-now is seen in the painting reproduced on this page. True to Valéry’s warning, we will not comment on its painterly qualities, but still invite our readers to examine this remarkable painting closely.

S. H. P. Steadman

So who is S. H. P. Steadman?

Renewal had not heard of him until he was featured in our favourite French magazine, *éléments* (see page 8 for contact details). We then succeeded in contacting him, and discovered a delightful, thoughtful, modest and somewhat diffident artist.

Steadman was born in 1962. He attended the “Royal Academy Schools”, which were the last English art schools to teach traditional technique without any bias against figurative

that you were good at it, but when did you realise that you were an artist? This was Mr Steadman’s reply: “When I fill in my tax form, I call myself an artist, but in truth, and without false modesty, I do not think I have any particular aptitude for painting and drawing. I have developed some skill through practice, but as to natural ability, there are many other people I know who vastly excel me – and indeed I am currently intending to direct my energies towards serving the blessed Gods principally through writing. There are things that I think ought to be worked on at this time in history and I am not aware of enough people doing so. At any rate, there are ideas in the back of my mind that I should like to set down before I die. So in answer to your question, I am not sure about my vocation, and I am not sure I have ever been.”

On the subject of contemporary artists, he offered these comments: “I think there are lots of excellent artists working today, with something of value to add to the richness of culture; however, I cannot think of any in particular that I have been trying to follow. More directly inspiring have been some of those who have taught me, but their names are not famous.” He later nominated Laurence Bradbury and Frank Crowhurst as particularly inspiring teachers.

As to the creative processes underlying the painting on our front page he offered this memory: “The painting you speak of became

a religious picture in the process of working on it: increasingly, I began to see the mother and her son as the Lady Frigg and Lord Baldr, and the tree she was standing in front of as Yggdrasill, to which I added the out-growth of mistletoe (which is barely visible in the photograph) from which Lord Baldr has taken a sprig with the foreknowledge of what it will mean for him; and in the distance I indicated the golden hall of Gimle.”

For various practical reasons it was impossible to complete a standard interview with Mr Steadman, but we hope that the insights into the artistic mind that he has been kind enough to share with us will prove inspiring to our readers.

We end with a caution of our own, to match Valéry’s at the beginning of this article: it is never wise to take anyone’s self-appraisal at face-value, perhaps especially that of a brilliant but temperamentally very private artist.



“The cardinal days of the year at the house of a friend (the Spring Equinox, Summer Solstice, Autumn Equinox and Winter Solstice at the same place in the same year)” by S.H.P. Steadman, oil on board, 18 x 18 inches

art. There he was taught by, among others, the artist Norman Blamey, who taught in the life room once a week, and “it was a privilege to have known him”. Although perspective, life drawing and other formal skills were taught, Mr Steadman adds: “That was still the formal structure of studies when I was there, which is why I had applied to be accepted as a student; but even then it was out of step with what the majority of students were interested in, and it was not pursued with the vigour that I had hoped for.”

Things have not improved since then: “Sadly, the college has changed greatly since those days, though I think the students studying there are just as talented as they ever were. At present, I am on the Council of the Alumni Association (RASAA).”

When asked when and how he first became aware that he would be an artist, Mr Steadman replied: “My father was an art teacher, so from an early age I was aware of painting, and did not have much confidence in being able to do anything else, which was falsely based because all of us have many things that we can do and make a contribution through.”

We asked: “Because of your father you were very aware of painting, and from your own self-knowledge you must have known

● *Maverick takes on Bomb-Father* ● *Ancestor worship in ancient Scotland* ● *First Aussie Viking replica?* ● *Try this at home*

Cult-busting in physics

Odinism can never be a cult. Cults require infallible gurus, while Odinists prefer to rely on their own intelligence. Science, however, is yet to break fully free from the Christian constraints under which it necessarily emerged, and contemporary physics bears some of the hallmarks of a cult. Never is this more obvious than in the near-Biblical reverence usually accorded to Albert Einstein (see our lead article last issue).



Professor **Reg Cahill**, pictured above, is a theoretical physicist at Flinders University in South Australia. In 2002 he began to query Einstein's theory that time and space are relative. He was treated just like any cult member who tries to break free of the rigid group mentality. "I've been treated with utter contempt and hostility," he told *The Australian* newspaper in an interview published on 7 November. "This is pretty shocking stuff – but it's what you'd expect."

As we mentioned in our last issue, one of the cracks in Einsteinian theory is the rotation of spiral galaxies. We wrote:

Globular clusters are tight groups of stars orbiting the Milky Way and other galaxies. Some of these clusters, such as Omega Centauri, are orbiting so fast that they should spin off into intergalactic space. The only thing that could possibly hold them in place, according to Big Bang theory, is dark matter. Yet globular clusters are the very last places where the theory suggests dark matter could possibly exist.

Professor Cahill focuses on just this difficulty. "The rotation of galaxies has always been a problem – we now understand how they work," he told *The Australian*. "The outer part of spiral galaxies go around about 10 times faster than Einstein's theory permits, so people invented dark matter to account for extra gravitational pull. They've spent years and millions of dollars looking for it – but it doesn't exist."

Furthermore, Cahill claims that physicists have deliberately ignored the results of their own experiments "because they feared they would be shouted down for questioning Einstein".

Professor Cahill's own theories are set out in a new book called *Process Physics: From Information Theory to Quantum Space and Matter*, published by Nova Science Publishers, 2005. We are in no position to comment on whether Reg Cahill's own theories are right or wrong, but we applaud him for having the guts to take on the biggest cult figure of 20th century science.



Mummies in the Hebrides

The mummified remains of a man, a woman, a teenage girl and a three year-old girl have been found beneath a prehistoric house at Cladh Hallan on the island of South Uist.

The adults' bodies had their knees up against their chests (see the photo of the adult female above), just like the blond Peruvian mummies featured in some of Thor Heyerdahl's books. Bodies don't end up in that position by chance, so Jen Hiller of Cardiff University says they "must have been trussed up that way".

It seems that after they were eviscerated and bound in this ritual position they were then immersed in a peat bog for several months in order to mummify them. Hiller describes this as an "incredibly sophisticated process".

The male body is said to be about 3,500 years old, 200 years older than Egypt's Tutankhamen. Scientific testing indicates that the bodies remained above-ground in their mummified state for up to six hundred years before being buried in the ground. Other tests reveal that they were native Hebrideans.

Mummification is usually regarded as evidence of ancestor-worship. Modern Odinism has always stressed this form of reverence for our ancient kinsmen and kinswomen, so it is gratifying to find that the first artificially-preserved mummies to be found outside Egypt and South America are those of ancient Brits.

What's new



A lost Aussie Viking ship?

The photo above is from a glass-plate negative in the collection of the Australian National Maritime Museum. It was taken by William James Hall in about 1900. The ANMM's magazine, *Signals* (Dec 2005-Feb 2006, p. 10) describes Hall as "the prolific Sydney Harbour photographer". The replica ship in the photograph, however, is described as "unidentified".

The flag at the bow of the ship looks like a blue or red ensign, either of which would have been appropriate in Australia at that time. There is nothing in the photo that is incompatible with the idea that the location may be Sydney Harbour. Four quite large sailing ships, moored widely apart, can be dimly seen in the background, which certainly suggests a very large harbour.

It is therefore entirely possible that this was the first Viking ship replica to have sailed on Australian water.

The Australian National Maritime Museum is running an exhibition called "Vikings" from November 30 2005 to 18 June 2006. On display, among many other treasures, are the famous Lewis chessmen.

Next year the ANMM will also hold an exhibition dedicated to Sydney's Norwegian-born Halvorsen boatbuilding dynasty. In March the ANMM will host the ever-popular Classic and Wooden Boat Festival.

Spiritual meditation may be best

A recent Ohio university study of meditation randomly assigned students to one of three groups. The control group was instructed simply to relax. A second group meditated on a secular phrase such as "I am happy". The third group meditated on a spiritual phrase such as "God is love". After two weeks of practise the students were tested for pain tolerance, as measured by the time they could keep their hands in water at 2°C. The "winners" were the spiritual group, with an average tolerance of 92 seconds compared with 49 seconds for the others.

Project for readers: meditate on "Odin is wisdom" for a fortnight – and be sure to let us know the results!

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*.

5. More on the *Senna* of *Lokasenna*

Gefjun takes up this theme by calling Loki and Bragi “you two Æsir”: as with the modern legal presumption of innocence, Loki remains one of the Æsir, and has to be treated as such, until he is clearly shown to have overstepped the mark. If Gefjun’s next comment means that Bragi’s threats were not meant seriously, she may be trying to give Loki the confidence to proceed with his case. (We learn later that Loki will not fight when a genuine opportunity is presented to him.) If her comment actually means that Bragi is quarrelsome but the gods are aware of that, she is again encouraging Loki to continue.

In response, Loki accuses Gefjun of having prostituted herself for a jewel. Whether there is any form of truth in this charge – perhaps at a symbolic level – is irrelevant: Loki has now made it clear that on his own terms the exchange of sexual services for a consideration is a grave charge. Loki then foolishly invites Óðinn to speak by parodying an expression used in *Hávamál*. (Whereas Gunnloð had “laid her arm over” Óðinn, Loki tells Gefjun that she “laid [her] thigh over” the supplier of the jewel.)

Óðinn might be expected to respond in anger. Instead, he reminds Loki that Gefjun knows Fate. If the poem regards Óðinn as a wise god, this can have only one meaning. Loki is being formally reminded of the gravity of the situation in which he has placed himself. It is as if a modern judge half-way through a trial were to break off proceedings to remind a witness of the laws relating to perjury.

At this point Loki would be well-advised to heed the judicial warning. Instead he attacks the validity of Fate itself. As the chooser of those who will be slain in battle to join the

ranks of the *einherjar*, Óðinn is one of Fate’s agents. But Óðinn chooses only the best warriors, and Loki says this is unjust. Both the assembled Æsir and the audience of the poem know that the *einherjar* are doomed to fall in **this** life precisely because they **are** the best, and are required for a higher purpose: the gods need their help to ensure that the forces of chaos are ultimately defeated. In short, despite Loki’s absurd claim, Óðinn is adept at choosing the best warriors. By rejecting the higher, cosmic justice of this aspect of Fate, and satirising it in mundane human terms, Loki is treading on very thin ice. To reject Fate in this way is also to challenge the validity of the gods – and that validity constitutes Loki’s only protection.

If a modern person accused of contempt of court were to respond by strenuously denying the authority of the court that was trying him, he would be a fool. Loki is such a fool. That he is worse we soon see. Having already proclaimed that the alleged sexual indiscretions of Iðunn and Gefjun are damning, Loki has prepared for himself a trap that any hearer of the poem could have foreseen. Óðinn now springs that trap. Compared to anything of which the two goddesses could be accused, Loki is an absolute pervert. Not only has he changed sex, but he even served as a subterranean milkmaid for eight years. (According to Meulengracht Sorensen this “must certainly be taken to mean that Loki served as a mistress to giants or trolls, whose sexuality was considered gross and unbridled”.)

Loki counters that, in effect, his sexual perversion is no worse than Óðinn’s working of a form of magic that would bring **human** male practitioners into disrepute. Once again he is sawing at his

own lifeline by dissociating himself from the higher purposes that the Æsir represent, and which Óðinn’s magical quests are undertaken in order to serve. In equating his own low lusts with Óðinn’s necessary self-sacrifices Loki has only underlined the vast moral difference between the two foster-brothers. He might as well have alleged that hanging on the wind-swept tree was an act of masochistic auto-eroticism.

Frigg now throws Loki a possible line of defence. She points out that the deeds of both Óðinn and Loki were fated anyway. Loki can safely back out at this point by saying he can’t help being what he is. In refusing this offer to plead diminished responsibility Loki implicitly stands by his own past. He then accuses Frigg of having sex with Óðinn’s brothers. Once more, Loki reveals his self-alienation by equating the actions of the gods with paltry human sexual sins. (If there is any substance to his accusation at all, it would presumably have been based on some myth in which Frigg’s actions were cosmically positive. If there is no such mythical basis, Loki is simply becoming boring. He seems unable to think of any insults that don’t involve accusations of sleeping around.)

- continued next issue

Worth thinking about

“All Reality is our Reality; we can attain or be nothing without it; there is nothing else; it is all. Man is given responsibility by Reality and has power over a phase of himself and so over something of Reality.”

- A. Rud Mills

The Norroena Society is dedicated to the thorough and proper investigation of the ancestral traditions of Northern Europe as well as the promotion of our results and expansion of the Asatru faith.

www.norroena.org



E-mail: frojel@frojel.com

PO Box 127. Pakenham,

<http://www.frojel.com>

Important AIDS update

We have mentioned in several articles that many people are totally immune to HIV, and therefore cannot develop AIDS. The incidence of immunity is highest in northern Europe and Britain, and also in places settled by people from these areas. The rate of immunity declines progressively further South in Europe, and reduces to near-zero at the Mediterranean.

Clearly, the countries that have traditionally been described as more "Nordic" are those with the highest level of immunity, about 12% to 15%. If we assume that the relevant genetic variation is confined to people who are predominantly Nordic, and recall that Nordics are not necessarily a majority in even the countries with highest resistance, we can guesstimate that among truly Nordic individuals the actual rate of immunity might be at least 30%.

Now, the traditional explanation for this genetic quirk is that Nordics somehow

responded to the medieval Black Death in a way that no other people did, by developing a resistance to the Plague that also protects them against modern HIV. If so, the genetic variation would have been a medieval mutation.

This conventional wisdom has recently been set on its head.

The age of a mutation is established by studying how many variations there are, since these variations take time to come into existence.

Pardis Sabeti of Harvard Medical School has now done just this with the chromosome carrying the CCR5 gene, on which the HIV-immunity variation exists. According to Sabeti's estimate, the HIV-resistant mutation is about 5,000 years old. Some published reports say she attributes this to "sheer good luck".

There is another possibility, but one that is not as politically correct as "sheer good luck".

In historical times, the percentage of Nordics in northern Europe, Scandinavia and the British Isles has been steadily declining due to a variety of factors, not just modern immigration to those regions. If we project that trend back for five thousand years in a fairly linear way, it seems likely that pure Nordics have been in demographic decline throughout that time. This applies not just in northern Europe, which was really just the last redoubt of a subracial group that was once prominent in Ancient Persia, Greece, Rome and elsewhere, as the literary, artistic and anthropological evidence attests.

It is therefore quite possible that the HIV-resistant gene is not a "mutation" at all, at least not in the time-frame we are considering. (All of our genes are, of course, "mutations" if looked at over a sufficient time-frame. If our genes had not mutated over and over again we would still be the single-celled organisms ancestral to all modern life forms.)

It is entirely possible that the majority of early Nordics had the genetic variation that confers HIV immunity, technically known as "CCR5-delta32". In other words, the "negative delta32" gene may have been absolutely normal for all original Nordics, and therefore probably normal also for all original white "Caucasians".

The implication of this suggestion is that those whites who have the *other* form of the CCR-5 gene, the "positive delta32" form, have acquired this typically African and Asian variation as a result of having inherited genes from Africans and Asians. This is not a radical suggestion. After all, most Afro-Americans have a good dollop of European genes. Why should the opposite not apply?

Let's do the numbers. Suppose there are about 200 million Nordic-looking people in the world, and that 30% of these have no significant non-Nordic genetic input. If all humans were exposed to HIV, 60 million pure Nordics would survive. Quite enough to replenish the earth. Australia's population would be reduced to c. 2.4 million, low enough to satisfy the most extreme conservationist, and all of them Nordic.

Wisdom from Else Christensen

"Humanity must get back in touch not only with Mother Earth, but also with its own repressed subjectivity."

Ripples in Time



The Anglo-Saxon Runes

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.

Fully up-to-date in terms of research, *Ripples in Time* reveals, for instance, that Germanic runes probably relate to pre-Classical Greek letter shapes. That is much earlier than most current New Age and even scholarly accounts suggest. The booklet also establishes that our Anglo-Saxon ancestors used runes for a variety of purposes, including divination, magic, and the control of occult powers.

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.

We welcome manuscripts for possible publication, as well as letters, artwork, and information in any form. Copies should be taken before submitting original material. We retain the discretionary right to shorten or amend articles. **All material is copyright, but other Odinist or heathen journals may seek permission to reprint articles.**

Renewal is available by subscription only. There are four issues a year. The cost of an annual subscription is \$Aus12.00, plus \$4.00 for overseas airmail. A two-year subscription costs \$20, plus \$8 for airmail. Cheques should be made payable to *Renewal*.

Echoes of Tacitus on the Anglo-Scottish Borders

In a previous article¹ we have seen how the culture of the Anglo-Scottish borders remained almost entirely heathen until the border way of life was itself destroyed by the troops of King James the First.

The Borders could not be effectively controlled by either the English or the Scottish kings, from 1286 to the mass hangings of border reivers in 1609. The borderers of all classes therefore happily played off one nation against the other, using the supposed border itself as a line of sanctuary.

There was some attempt to establish a form of international control, and both Crowns appointed wardens who were supposed to administer special laws in what became the counties of Kirkcudbright, Dumfriesshire, Peebleshire, Roxburgh, Berwickshire, Northumberland and Cumberland. It was mostly a hopeless task, and several of the Wardens behaved just like any other border reiver, although sometimes on a larger scale.

An indication of the lawlessness and bloodshed on the borders is the escalating nature of clan feuds. Two clans, in particular, detested one another: the Maxwells and the Johnstones. After a century of intermittent warfare Lord Maxwell decided to end it by exterminating the Johnstones. On 6 December 1593 he rode into Johnstone territory at the head of a clan army of 2,000 superbly trained light cavalry, only to be ambushed by 400 Johnstone cavalymen. 700 Maxwells are said to have died at the Battle of Dryfe Sands.²

We know from the beautiful ballads of the borderers themselves that they were far from Christian. In the words of one modern critic, York Powell:

"The religion of the ... ballads, save for the few poems that deal with the popular Catholic mythology, is absolutely as heathen as that of the Helgi Lays; the sacredness of revenge, remorse, and love, the horror of treason, cruelty, lust and fraud are well given, but of Christianised feelings there are no traces. The very scheme on which the ballads and lays are alike built, the hapless innocent death of a hero or heroine, is as heathen as the plot of any Athenian tragedy can be."

That is from the testimony of their own literature. One witness who knew them well, Eure, complained of churches "mostly ruined to the ground, ministers and preachers comfortless to com and remaine where such heathenish people are." Another account claimed that hardly any of them could recite the Lord's Prayer. A third credits the Armstrong clan alone "with the destruction

of fifty-two church buildings". Another visitor to Liddesdale, noticing the absence of churches, asked whether there were no Christians there, only to be told, "Nah, we's all Armstrangs and Elliotts".

Most interestingly, the Archbishop of Glasgow formally cursed every last borderer in a proclamation that takes up four modern printed pages. This gentleman made sure to include in his curse "thair wiffis, thair bairns and thair servandis" (their wives, children and servants). Not only were they cursed, but no Christian was permitted to have anything to do with them: "I forbid all cristin man or woman til have ony company with thaim, etand, drynkand, spekand, prayand, lyand, standand, or in any uther deid doand, under the paine of deidly syn".

So much for the evidence of the ballads and of the borderers' contemporaries. Now for the laws. Special border laws were enacted, often more in hope than confidence. At least one of these shows that some traditions persisting on the Anglo-Scottish Borders until well into the reign of Elizabeth I can be traced back directly to the period of Germanic heathenry.

This was a 1563 law banning the custom of "bauchling", which in turn meant publicly vilifying an enemy as a detestable man. According to George MacDonald Fraser, the bauchler "sometimes made his reproof by carrying a glove on his lance-point, or by displaying a picture of his enemy, and by crying out or sounding a horn blast, indicating that his opponent was a false man and detestable." Bauchling was regarded as being a mortal insult, and could only be defended by combat.

Fraser describes this merely as "a delightful local custom", but those of us familiar with Old Norse literature will see at once that this is what the Norse – and their laws – knew as *níð*. This was a form of ridicule inviting universal contempt for the victim. *Níð* in the Norse context seems to have always involved the suggestion that the victim was *both* a coward *and* a passive homosexual. It was often associated with two other words: *ergi*, which meant a female nymphomaniac, and *berendi*, the sexual parts of a female animal, usually a cow.

Like bauchling on the borders, in Norse law an accusation of *níð* allowed its victim to "clear" himself by killing his accuser. And just as the border bauchler could express himself by "displaying a picture of his enemy", so could the perpetrator of *níð* express himself by carving a statue of his enemy – usually in a position implying passive homosexuality, as several sagas attest. The two characteristics, being a hopeless coward and being the recipient of sodomy, were thought to go together. To be unmanly in one aspect was to be unmanly in

all.

This in turn takes us back to Tacitus, who described how heathen German men guilty of *flagitia* ("infamous deeds") were drowned under wicker bundles in muddy swamps. Tacitus describes such men as *ignavos et imbelles et corpore infames*, or "cowardly and unwarlike and infamous with regard to the body".

We can therefore be fairly confident that bauchling involved some component of sexual vilification, even though Fraser fails to explore this topic. The three clues available to us are the glove on the lance, the picture of the enemy, and the derivation of the word bauchling itself.

Gloves were largely associated with women. The reivers themselves, who dressed as lightly as possible, don't seem to have worn even gauntlets. Therefore one doesn't have to be particularly Freudian to see a suggestion of sodomy in the image of a leather ladies' glove impaled on a lance. (Remember the Norse word *berendi*.)

We know nothing about the nature of the pictures that were displayed, other than that they somehow depicted the enemy. We do know that the parallel statues in Scandinavia often depicted the enemy in a position of passive homosexuality.

As to the dialect word bauchling, the Oxford English Dictionary suggests it may derive from a Norse word, and means "weak, poor, pithless, without substance or stamina". A probably related word, *bauchle*, means "an old shoe worn as a slipper, or worn down at the heel, which causes the wearer to shamble". Again we have the notion of penetration, this time of a worn-down old object that is practically worthless.

The years in which Christianity was the official religion of our homelands have often been described as the Period of Dual Faith. The idea is that Christianity prevailed in (most) official circles, while heathen German customs lingered on in remote areas and among the (mainly) lower classes. Yet on the Anglo-Scottish borders during the reign of good Queen Bess a heathen custom that dates back to Tacitus' report was so common that it had to be banned³.

1. See **The Anglo Scottish Border Ballads: a treasure hoard of Odinst folklore**, at: http://www.geocities.com/osred/border_ballads.htm

2. For comparison, there were only 500 dragoons in the Hanoverian army at Culloden in 1745.

3. In the sixteenth century there were probably about 120,000 people in the "English" marches and about 45,000 in the "Scottish" marches.



Renewal warns that this column is suitable for mature audiences 15 years and older. It contains low-level coarse language and medium-level skulduggery. Those who are offended by the c-word are particularly advised to turn the page immediately.

Yes, I write of the most vulgar c-word imaginable, “capitalism” – at least, capitalism in the American-speaking world.

Die-hards fans of this column (yes, both of you) may remember that from time to time Ota the Irrepressible has indulged in the odd fantasy of doing something with the important hours of her life other than eating Tim Tams, lying on the beach at Bondi, and waiting for that long-delayed phone-call from Bill Gates with a proposal at once obscene and irresistible.

The trouble is, I don’t have the talent for much else, a fact which has presumably not been lost on the Gatester. My fantasies of becoming Ota the Warrior Princess, for instance, lasted about five or six paragraphs before reality intervened toot sweet.

But then, I’m not sure that the Gatester himself has all that much *talent*. At least, nowhere near as much of it as he has of other, more desirable assets. So what is there to stop Ota getting up off the sand and leaping, with true Gatesian nerdiness, on the capitalist carousel?

Let’s do a personal stock-take, then. Hmmm. Well, on the evidence of Tim Tam consumption I suppose I must know something about chocolate. Perhaps I could become a chocolatier. That can’t be hard. All I’d have to do is find a source of top-shelf confectionary, which would be no hardship in itself, hire a shop, charge a reasonable price, advertise a little, sell lollies to anyone with the moolah to pay me ... and after that it should be all blue sky.

Except that – wipe my nose and call me snotty if you must – it doesn’t work that way. Let me tell you a little story. Once upon a time there was a man named Henry Ford. Henry dreamt that if he made pretty good cars at a pretty good price the world would beat a path to his conveyor belt.

So it did, for a while. Unfortunately, the company Henry founded hasn’t been able to keep up. For years now the poor old Ford Motor Company has been making cars that most Yanks don’t want to buy. Worse, it has bought the right to flog other cars that even fewer Yanks want to buy, like Jaguars and

Ota’s *Talking Point*

Range Rovers and Volvos. (I kid you not: Volvos!) As a result poor old Ford has had its debt downgraded to junk, and is furiously shedding jobs in a frantic effort to stay afloat.

But then some people at Ford thought of a cunning plan. If normal people won’t buy our cars, they thought, let’s flog them to the fags and dikes. The bean counters estimated that the auto industry’s share of the gay and lesbian purchasing power would be somewhere around \$US610 billion this year. A few of *those* nice bickies might help turn the old jalopy around! Ah, the magic of free enterprise ...

Ford then found out, if it didn’t already know, that the theory of capitalism is a bit like my fantasy of being a chocolatier. Neither bears any relation to reality.

You see, in Dubya-land there is an outfit called the American Family Association. It claims to have 2,993,485 members, all of whom seem to be born-again Christians and most of whom seem to believe in ethical investing.

I’m all for ethical investing myself, within

major stumbling bock.)

The AFA, though, isn’t sitting back and basking in the warm glow of its success over Ford. The AFA, out for more scalps, is now organising a boycott of Kraft Foods and the Walgreen drug stores for sponsoring the Chicago Gay Games.

The AFA is not the only bunch of Christian-fundies who think it’s somehow “pro-family” to threaten to wipe out a company that employs tens of thousands of working family members. Another wacko mob called Focus on the Family recently began boycotting Wells Fargo bank. Yep, Wells Fargo had the temerity to donate some of its own money to a gay group.

But the AFA doesn’t just hate gays. It is also targeting the Carl’s Jr. hamburger chain (to protest a new ad featuring Paris Hilton), Mary Kay Cosmetics and Old Navy stores (for advertising on the soapie, “Desperate Housewives”) and NutriSystem Inc, the weight-loss company (for airing a TV ad). Here is the AFA’s breathless denunciation of the NutriSystem ad:



Paris Hilton grossing out the fundies

“A woman in black panties, bra, and high heels, is pushing a shopping cart through a supermarket aisle,” the AFA says in an Action Alert on its Web site. “A man stocking items seems to be lusting after her, as she pauses in front of him (shown from side angle). They zoom in on her stomach as the stocker glances up and down at her torso with a lustful smile. The panties are very low cut, [and] as she walks away it is in slow motion.”

Shocking stuff, eh? Thank Yahweh that the X’tian theocrats are onto it! Otherwise – assuming the NutriSystem product actually works – there might be more women feeling good about their own bodies, and maybe, just maybe, a few more marriages saved.

But how do nutters like the AFA get away with blackmailing companies like Ford? Allow the ever-helpful Ota to explain. (Believe it or not, this is true.) In America, the Mecca of the c-word, companies don’t actually know who owns their shares! About 80% of US shares are registered in the name of the brokers through whom they were bought. It costs companies anywhere between \$US40,000 to four million to get a list of the names and investing history of their own shareholders. Imagine being the CEO of a company on the AFA hitlist and being ambushed at the AGM by a couple of thousand AFA – who do *not* look like Paris Hilton. You wouldn’t be paying a visit to Ota’s chocolaterie for the next few months, would you? There goes another dream!

reason. The idea is that you don’t invest in a company that’s all about doing something blatantly shonky, like destroying the planet. I certainly won’t be buying shares in any outfit that’s trying to find a cure for those diseases that help stop swarming Third World populations from *completely* despoiling the earth.

The good Christians at the AFA didn’t like the idea that Ford was advertising its unwanted cars in gay and lesbian magazines. So they brought the pressure of those 2,993,485 members to bear on Ford. “Flog your crap to those same-sex weirdo atheists,” was the basic message, “and we’ll boycott your anti-family company.”

Ford didn’t take long to cave in. Of course, its spin-masters claimed the withdrawal of ads from gay publications was just a bit of cost-cutting. Last week this line was trumped when the AFA chairman Donald Wildmon trumpeted his gratitude to Ford for “acting on our concerns.”

(By the way, there was a cute little side-play going on at the time. Ford insisted that it hadn’t really capitulated, not completely, because it was still trying to sell its Volvos to the same-sexers. Maybe straight Yanks don’t buy Volvos anyway – who does? – but for whatever reason, Mr Wildmon didn’t seem to think this was a

☐ I still think you've always been a bit too hard on Rud Mills. I used to have half a dozen of his Anglecyn Church of Odin books. Spread them all around – result: no real interest. Was he before his time?

Padraig, Perth, WA

We are trying to make up for any inadvertent neglect of Rud Mills. You may have noticed that we are now featuring a quote from Rud Mills (and also the FolkMother) in each issue of *Renewal*. Furthermore, earlier this year a group of Melbourne Odinists made a pilgrimage to Rud Mills' grave. We hope this will become an annual event. There are photos, somewhere, of us at the gravesite, but meanwhile here is a snap of the grave itself from the yahoo group, *Wolfhearthandfriends*:



We are also trying to locate any living members of Rud Mills' family, in the hope of tracking down the so-far-lost manuscript of his autobiography. Given that Mills died in 1964 this is a difficult task, but we have a few promising leads at this stage.

Inquiries at the local Anglican church have led to the suggestion by one of the elderly parishioners that Mills was friendly with the adoptive Australian sculptor Hans Knorr, of Menzies Creek. It seems that both Mills and Knorr may have been interned in the same Australian concentration camps during WW2.

That lead is also being followed up.

Please bear with us. We're doing what we can to honour Rud Mills!

☐ Most Syrians struggle to even read Arabic – much less have a clue about English. So, how does a group of Syrian protest leaders create the most impact with their signs by having the standard "Death To Americans" (etc.) slogans printed in English?

Answer: They simply hire an English-speaking civilian to translate and write their statements in English.

Unfortunately, they were unaware the "civilian" insurance company employee hired for the job was a retired US Army sergeant. Obviously, pictures of the protest rally never made their way through the Arab TV network, but the results were "Priceless" (see below).

David, Adelaide



Bus fair to anit-war protest rally - \$0.50.

Paint and canvas protest signs - \$32.00.

Asking a retired US Army Sergeant to translate your anti-American slogans - PRICELESS.

☐ I loved the article called "The Re-Awakening – taking stock" in the last issue. Well overdue, and my congratulations!

While this is no criticism, I think the moral side of our religion has been somewhat understated. The Nine Noble Virtues are great, as far as they go, but I feel that in 2005 some of us, maybe just a minority, need to go a little further than that.

In my view, the whole question of morality needs to be re-evaluated in the light of recent advances in evolutionary biology. The old views of philosophers like Kant and Hume are looking a bit shopworn, and since Odinists are at the forefront of "the spiritual adventure of the new millennium" (according to the quote under our masthead) we are the ones who should be addressing this problem.

I have discovered an interesting ethics questionnaire developed by Donelson R. Forsyth of the University of Richmond, Virginia (see: <http://www.has.vcu.edu/psy/faculty/fors/ethics3.htm>) It essentially has two axes, one of which is called "Idealism" and the other "Relativism". The idea is that you answer only twenty questions, and the results are supposed to tell you where your moral compass is set.

You end up being diagnosed, non-judgmentally, as an Absolutist, an Exceptionist, a Situationist or a Subjectivist. I was the last of these, defined in this way: "You base your judgements on personal values rather than universal moral principles, and pragmatically recognise that even the 'right' action may lead to negative outcomes for other people. You are the least moralistic, preferring to base decisions on self-interests."

It would be interesting to know what ethical ideology other Aussie Odinists might score on this test.

Edith, still in the Darwin area

Notice Board

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Wolfhearthandfriends/> All readers of this journal should consider joining this Melbourne-based Odinist list.

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.

Wodanesdag – Celtic & Viking Craftworks has provided original hand-crafted products to the Celtic and Viking Community since 1993. <http://www.odin.org/>

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, WC1N 3XX, England or <http://thescorp.multics.org>. A sample issue costs £5.00 sterling.

éléments: pour la civilisation européenne is a stylish and intelligent magazine sympathetic to the heathen world-view. Published in French, a year's subscription costs 180 F or 240 F by air. Address: 41 rue Barrault, Paris, France. This is an often brilliant publication!

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.

Pagan Times Australia's oldest continuing pagan publication, published quarterly, 4 issues: A\$30 (within Australia), A\$44 (rest of the world). Sample copy A\$6. Overseas payment by Visa or Mastercard only, send card name, number and expiry date with order. A\$ cheques/mo payable to Pagan Times.

pagantimeseditor@hotmail.com/Mobile 0417 114317

PO Box 26, North Hobart, TAS, 7012