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**Prolegomena to a  
 cosmology of healing in *Vanir* Norse mythology**

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**[P125] Summary**

The focus of this article is the *Vanir* layer of Norse mythology, and its relevance for the discussion of the relationship between healing and cosmology. One fundamental assumption is that the connection between healing and cosmology may be more or less conscious, and that intentional awareness of the relationship between the two determines the kind of healing which may result. While indigenous healing practices usually entail a close conscious connection with cosmology, healing or curing endeavors may also occur without the awareness or evocation of any particular kind of cosmological understanding (e.g., in contemporary eurocentered medical practices). - The present inquiry is conducted as reconstructive conversation within an indigenous universe. Here healing is described as journey to the places of origins and creation, and the retracing of one's steps from there into the present. The biographical subjectivity of the authors, the mythological interpretation of the current moment in time (*Ragnarök*), and a reconstructed story of *Vanir* healing cosmology constitute the beginning points of these prolegomena. Subsequent sections explore and support various aspects of this story: The meaning of the original void of richness (*auður*), the original record and law (*örlög*), and the labors of the *nornir* are discussed; the connection to origins and the process of creation via the Tree of Life (*Yggdrasill*), its continuation in the Spirit Bridge *Bilröst*, and the guardian of this bridge (*Heimdallr*) are described; then *Freyja*, the supreme female spirit in Norse cosmology, is discussed as far as her relevance for healing endeavors is concerned; the practitioners of ceremonies relating to healing (such as *seiður*) are described as the stand-ins for and mediators of the cosmological forces relevant for healing. The healthy and healing life process in this cosmology is described as a movement in time of becoming present through the past. The final discussions of this article address the connection between healing and cosmology in this world view where becoming complete means remembering in the present at *Urðarbrunnur* the source we have come from so that we go forward as complete human beings. Recovery of indigenous mind and the remembrance of indigenous roots together with the awareness of concomitant cosmologies is seen as *conditio sine qua non* for healing activities which purport to be not just individual, but also communal, cultural, or even planetary. The final discussion mentions some of the issues around neo-shamanism and contemporary indigenous peoples which pertain to this article.

*Hon kvað:  
 Heill dagr!  
 Heilir dags synir!  
 Heil nótt ok nið!  
 Óreiðum augum  
 lítið okkr þinig  
 ok gefið sitjöndum sigr!*

She said:  
 Hail to the day,  
 hail to the sons of day,  
 hail to night and its daughter!  
 Gaze on us gently!  
 Grant us sitting here  
 your blessing on our battles!

*Heilir Æsir!  
 Heilir ásynjur!*

Hail to the gods,  
 hail to the goddesses,

<i>Heil sjá in fjölnya fold! Mál ok mannvit gefð okkr mærum tveim ok læknishendr, meðan lifum!</i>	hail to the all-giving earth! Wisdom and lore, as long as we live, grant us, and healing hands!"
<i>Bjargrúnar skaltu kunna ef þú bjarga vilt ok leysa kind frá konum; á lófum þær skal rísta ok of liðu spenna ok biðja þá dísir</i>	...I'll teach you lore for helping women in labor, runes to release the child; write them on your palms and grasp her wrists invoking the disir's aid.
<i>Limrúnar skaltu kunna, af þú vilt lækni vera ok kunna sár at sjá; á berki skal þær rísta ok á þaðmi viðar, þeim er lúta austr limar.</i>	"...Here are the limb-runes that heal the sick and close the worst of wounds; write them on the bark of a forest tree with eastward-bending branches."
<i>(Sigdrífumál, Neckel, 1927)</i> <sup>[1]</sup>	(TERRY, 1990)

### To Freyja

#### [P127] Introduction

What the relationship between cosmology and healing might be is worthy of consideration for a number of reasons. We can start out with the observation that any human activity has at least an implicit cosmology or is part of a social enactment of a cosmology or cosmologies. One of the dimensions relevant for the discussion of the relationship between activity and cosmology is awareness. Healing activities in contemporary indigenous societies usually seem to occur at least within the awareness of the cosmology they are embedded in, if not their evocation or even enactment. The chantway ceremonies of the *Diné* people of the southwestern US are a good example of this; here each ceremony conducted for specific illnesses relates in some form back to the story of creation, the origin of this particular ceremony, and the illness it is intended to heal (WYMAN, 1970; HAILE, 1981). However, healing endeavors also seem to occur without any apparent awareness of any cosmology in which the healing activity may be embedded or when such awareness is considered superfluous; the modernist eurocentered allopathic paradigm represents an example of this (but laying on of hands for healing purposes similarly does not necessarily involve awareness, evocation or enactment of its underlying cosmology). All this leads us to inquire rather quickly what the words health, healing, and cosmology actually refer to. What are their definitions? Of course, the first thing to notice is that by questioning the relationship between 'cosmology' and 'healing' we place the two terms at a certain distance from each other, almost implying some form of dialectic, maybe a relationship which is not natural or necessary, but questionable or incidental.

This, however, may not be the only starting place for inquiry. For example, we could bring the two concepts together almost as two sides of the same coin: Understanding and embodying a cosmology is healing, or: healing happens as part of understanding and embodiment of cosmology (thus making healing or healing endeavors a subset of cosmological understanding and enactment - what Native Americans colloquially refer to as "living in balance", and what the *Diné* call *sa'a naghái bik'e hózhó*, loosely translated as: "to walk on the trail of beauty toward old age"; cf. FARIS, 1984). Obviously, this is not the place where inquirers initiated into the eurocentered discourse would start, since healing as cosmology (or cosmology as healing) represents a fusion in thinking which the rigor of scholarly inquiry is eager to split into its component parts.

So we need to start our inquiry in the place of thought where eurocentered thinking has created two quite distinct concepts - presumably linked in some fashion, but not inevitably or necessarily intentionally connected in the awareness of healing and curing practitioners. How then are these two concepts related? Or rather: How should they be related depending on our definitions and purposes

or intentions? What should our awareness of their relationship be?

The latter two questions are particularly relevant, if we assume that the ordeal of the postmodern critiques has left eurocentered thinking without the possibility of persuasive objectivifying sciences as final arbiters of truth. The alternative is to accept that no matter what (whether consciously acknowledged or acted out unconsciously) all inquiry is a form of participatory knowing, or: the reality we live in is a narrative universe (KREMER, 1992a, b). What we call truth or fact or reality is never a mere reflection or mirroring of the *Ding an sich*, but we always participate actively in the construction of what we call truth or reality. The examples of objectivifying sciences, hermeneutic inquiry, and archaeomythological investigation are all ways of creating a story about the world as we perceive it (and thus construct) with the help of these methodologies. All this is not to say that there is no *Ding an sich*, or that any[P128]thing goes (as FEYERABEND [1984] would provocatively have it), or that we can make it all up through some voluntaristic or decisionistic acts, or that there aren't any constraints on the narrative universes we can create, or the truth claims we can make, or that there isn't such a thing as sloppy research - in fact, it does something rather curious: it increases the responsibility of inquirers to understand their personal, historical, geographical, ecological, gendered, cultural situatedness in order to avoid sloppiness. It is in this sense that the awareness of our participation in a narrative universe increases our burden in terms of integrity, self-reflectiveness, ethical and other value considerations.

With this in mind the authors of this article cannot but begin the description of our inquiry by exploring the pertinent personal and historical situatedness of this process and product. The starting point is at the place of inquiry and awareness of where we stand as researchers. We ask the question of the relationship between cosmology and healing in the form of a participatory inquiry. Here the place of knowing, the place from which knowing happens, is just as important and generative for the purposes of the topic as that which we consider the objective of our investigation. Indeed, as will become apparent below, this inquiry is as much about being as it is about knowing. Knowing and investigating as an aspect of being will be understood as an activity of nurturing or feeding that which is the object of knowing. The dedication to *Freyja*<sup>[2]</sup>, following *Sigrdrifa's* invocation, may be odd and unusual for an article in a yearbook for cross-cultural medicine, but it is truthful in the sense that - from an indigenous perspective - the knowing of this aspect of our narrative universe is simultaneously the feeding of the particular spirit which is central to any understanding of cosmology and healing in the place where we are situated. *Freyja* is an old carrier of the knowledge and the practice of healing and the relevant cosmology of the ancient people of Norse and older ancestry. When we remember and describe her knowledge we feed her spirit through this remembrance, which is the practice of conscious participatory knowing within the awareness of a storied universe. The dedication to *Freyja* is thus not frivolous, but inevitable in the sense of our awareness of our knowing practice and its effect upon the narrative world in which we live. It is a way to make the situatedness of our inquiry transparent.

It seems that more and more scientists are concerned with the more subtle impact of the theories they create, the impact of mere thought. We share this concern. Computer scientist Jim Crutchfield, for example, has estimated "that the gravitational pull of an electron, randomly shifting position at the edge of the Milky Way, can change the outcome of a billiard game on Earth. In such a precarious world, the very act of constructing a theory of the universe might significantly change the universe itself" (JOHNSON, 1994). If this is so, then the responsibility for our thinking increases dramatically. We cannot stand apart and regard this little article as a mere abstract thought form severed from any impact by the covers of this yearbook. A mistaken or incomplete or ill-formed thought may have a significant impact by virtue of its mere existence as cognition - as may a well-formed thought in a different way. This way the concerns and so-called taboos indigenous peoples have for the use of spoken words, or certain words or stories, the timing of when to say and not to say certain things, may make much more sense in light of these conclusions drawn in the realms of the so-called hard sciences. This article is written with the increasing awareness of the participatory nature of all knowing, and the [P129] realization of possible impacts on the results of billard games

and other significant human actions. It is in this sense that our talk about the *Vanir* is inevitably a feeding of that group of divine spirits.

This inquiry into the relationship between cosmology and healing is carried out within the epistemological framework of the recovery of indigenous mind (for longer discussions see KREMER, 1997, 2002). Its fundamental assumption is that the dissociative and pathological illusory split from the participation in the phenomena (that is: the unconsciousness of our participation, and consequently the imperialistic and controlling grasping of what is made into facts as they appear at an illusory distance) stands in the way of the resolution of our ecological crises, the discontinuance of colonialism, equitable relationships with indigenous peoples, etc., etc. One of the foundational prerequisites for the renewed participation in the phenomena as we attempt to know and as we live is the remembrance of our indigenous roots, and thus the recovery of a consciousness process, which can be called indigenous. Thus the process of knowing is not seen as separate from nurturing something or somebody or from being nurtured by knowledge. Healing the split from participation means the inclusion of the history of dissociation as part of any knowing activity (which is in good part the history of the European enlightenment and modernity). Obviously, all peoples have indigenous roots. Contemporary native people are quick to point this out, and they feel that it is highly significant that so many people who regard themselves as modern, have little regard for or interest in the oftentimes complicated layers of their ancestries. It is not just a matter of integrity in relation to native peoples which obliges us to step out of dissociative epistemologies, but it is even more the obligation to knowing and nurturing without denial which forces us to seek the reconstruction of participatory knowing. An article like this involves many an electron, and many a billiard game may end differently as a consequence. Thus making the awareness of our participation in the phenomena as complete as we possibly can seems a natural and necessary thing to do. This is the epistemology which guides our exploration of the relationship between healing and cosmology from the perspective of *Vanir* Norse mythology.

One way of categorizing our epistemology is to describe it as reconstructive indigenous science, and it is in that sense analogous to HABERMAS' (1983) description of reconstructive social sciences. He mentions three characteristics of reconstructive social sciences: the critical aspect, the constructive role, and the transcendental argumentation for theoretical knowledge, and notes that all rational reconstructions can only claim hypothetical status. Reconstructive indigenous science shares the critical aspect (e.g., the indigenous critique of eurocentered thinking and practices) and the constructive role (the remembrance, recovery, and rediscovery of indigenous knowledge), while the argumentation for the theoretical knowledge would be grounded in the pragmatics of the ongoing indigenous conversation as described below, which has the value goal of mutuality and balance.

In our attempt to present an initial overview of Vanir Norse mythology as it pertains to healing we had to keep in mind that cosmologies and mythologies oftentimes do not conform to the laws of consistency we find in formal logic, but are much more akin dreams. Different historical layers, local variations, and fluid definitions have created worldviews which have the level of aliveness and inconsistency we find in any culture past and present (or in individuals, for that matter). DE SANTILLANA & VON DECHEND (1969) discuss this issue aptly in their investigation of "human knowledge and its transmission through myth," *Hamlet's Mill*:

To begin with, there is no system that can be presented in modern analytical terms. There is no key, and there are no principles from which a presentation can be deduced. The structure comes from a time when there was no such thing as a system in our sense, and it would be unfair to search for one. There could hardly have been among people who committed all their ideas to memory. (...) Any effort to use a diagram is bound to lead into contradiction. It is a matter of [P130] times and rhythms. (...) Archaic thought is cosmological first and last. (...) The chief implication is a profound awareness that the fabric of the cosmos is not only determined, but overdetermined and in a way that does not permit the simple location of any of its agents, whether simple magic or astrology, forces, gods, numbers, planetary powers, Platonic Forms, Aristotelian Essences or Stoic Substances. Physical reality here cannot be analytical in the Cartesian sense; it cannot be reduced to concreteness even if misplaced. Being is change, motion and rhythm, the irresistible circle of time, the incidence of the "right moment," as determined by the skies. (56/7)

In this sense we will make no attempt to make stories and concepts more consistent than they are,

even though any representation of *Vanir* mythologies inevitably entails some smoothing of breaches and fractures as we are using our lense.

Our reading of the literature - whether mythic stories, etymology, poetry, historical records, archaeological finds - is guided by our exchanges with indigenous peoples and the understandings they themselves have provided about their worldviews, their relationship to modernity, and the past of European peoples as they see it. An example of their practice of knowing and living is succinctly summarized in the following statement by DELORIA:

The Plains Indians arranged their knowledge in a circular format - which is to say, there were no ultimate terms or constituents of their universe, only sets of relationships which sought to describe phenomena. No concept could stand alone in the way that time, space, and matter once stood as absolute entities in Western science. All concepts not only had content but were themselves composed of the elements of other ideas to which they were related. Thus it was possible to begin with one idea, thoroughly examine it by relating it to other concepts and arrive back at the starting point with the assurance that a person could properly interpret what constituted the idea and how it might manifest itself in concrete physical experiences. ... A list of the most important components of the Indian universe... The universe is alive ... Everything is related ... All relationships are historical ... Space determines the nature of relationships ... Time determines the meaning of relationships. (1996, 40ff.)

This statement provides one of the possible definitions, or parts thereof, for the word indigenous from the perspective of consciousness. This quality of interrelatedness, where one concept leads to another, where the connectedness between everything is not a trivial observation, but a tool of thinking, can easily be seen in Norse mythologies. The identities of divine spirits (or goddesses and gods) seem to change over time, now merging, now individuating; at times we seem to know how *Freyr* is clearly distinct from *Óðinn*, but then their characteristics seem to overlap, and the distinctions blurr; similarly with *Freyja* and *Frigg*. The cause of anything is difficult to pinpoint outside of a story of interwoven actions and actors. The tree of life leads us as much into the fertile void of the original beginning from *Ginnungagap* as to a mythological interpretation of the present time as *Ragnarök*.

Thus, one of the fundamental assumptions guiding our reconstructive efforts is the importance of contemporary indigenous peoples, their stories, histories, ceremonies, and philosophies. We have found that their interpretations and approaches are useful in the reading of the prehistorical layers of Old Europe. GIMBUTAS' archaeomythological approach has been described as "a rather involved interdisciplinary method used to decipher the symbolic meaning of prehistoric art and religion. This approach combines comparative archaeological, folkloric, mythological, ethnographic, historic, linguistic and physical anthropology data" (ANTANAITIS, 1997, 145). To this we add the lense of contemporary indigenous peoples and their past and present practices of indigenous sciences. The goal here is not knowledge with any universal truth claims, but the reconstitution of indigenous conversations and their concomitant pragmatic tests for truth claims, and the equitable knowledge exchange between different traditions of conversations.

**[P131]** Native American peoples in particular have spoken of the notion of living in balance, the Hopi *suyanisqatsi* (as opposed to *koyaanisqatsi*, a life of turmoil and disorder; LOMATUWAY'MA et al., 1993). We can use this goal as a criterion for the reconstructive efforts in Norse mythology. Such an effort could be called successful if it is descriptive or evocative of a process which is embedded in the seasonal and larger astronomical cycles, the ecology, the ancestral heritage, the community, and the gifts or medicine of the individual. Native American traditionalists would consider themselves in the "good mind" if they as individuals and as community would find this place (the Iroquoian *skanagoah*, a place of stillness and peace; COLORADO, 1988). While it is tempting to romanticize or idealize such process, it would be inaccurate to do so - the "good mind" or "balance" is a goal, at times achieved, at times utterly missed. The Andean peasants have developed a description of this process as "conversation", in which human and non-human participants nurture each other (GRÖNBECH [1954] has given analogous descriptions of *fridhr* based on his analysis of the Sagas):

The *ayllu* is a group of related persons living in a particular place. The *ayllu* consists not only of a group of related humans but of other beings of that place: the animals, the mountains, streams and rocks and the local deities. The *ayllu* should therefore not be considered simply a sphere of kinship.

Rather one could say that kinship in the Andes extends to the non-human realm.

The conversations held between persons and the other inhabitants of the world are not primarily engaged in for the purpose of "knowing reality". They are engaged in as part of the activity of *criar y dejarse criar*, of nurturing (raising) and letting oneself be nurtured (raised). The verb *criar* is used to speak of raising children, animals, plants, relationships, etc. It is the activity that fosters the growth and development of any potentiality or generativity. It is a fundamentally mutual or reciprocal activity: as one nurtures one is simultaneously nurtured. The action in the world does not leave the actor untransformed; acting in the world is being in relationship with that world, so the language of conversation is more appropriate than the language of knowledge. There is here no knower and known, no subject and object. Rather there are actors in relationships of mutuality. By acting one transforms not only the world but oneself as well. Therefore it is a fundamentally dynamic world, always moving, always changing, always in flux. There is, as it were, no simple act of knowing as we moderns understand the term for such knowledge-acquiring activity presupposes that there is something to be known, irrespective of who knows it.

This is not to say that conversing with the world does not involve cognitive faculties, it of course does, but that the activity is not primarily and certainly not exclusively a cognitive one. *Criar* demands not only understanding but love, tenderness, patience. But it is to say that the point of conversation is not the attainment of knowledge through the interrogation of nature, it is rather to generate and regenerate the world and be generated and regenerated by it in the process. (APFFEL-MARGLIN, 1994, p. 9)

In such a universe everything is immanent, there is no duality, no transcendence. We may see something similar not only when Old Norse people addressed their spirits or gods and goddesses as *vinr*, or even *ástvinr* (friend, dear or beloved friend, lover; BOYER, 1993, 231), but also when we think of the image of the Tree of Life, and all the surrounding events of feeding, nurturing, degeneration, and regeneration involving all qualities of being. Something stated rather clearly by indigenous practitioners of Peruvian traditions is the local validity and variation of their indigenous science knowledge, e.g., as it pertains to agroastronomy. This is important to keep in mind, since what has remained as documentation of the Norse traditions draws most likely similarly on a variety of local traditions with all their differences, which makes the creation of a cohesive picture more difficult (and even leads us to question the validity of such efforts, since such abstractions are clearly part of our modern thinking, rather than of indigenous perspectives).

[P132] The worldviews and practices from *any* contemporary indigenous peoples, such as the above description of *criar y dejarse criar*, are able to facilitate the reconstruction of indigenous layers of other cultures and societies, even when they seem to have moved very far from their roots. However, the indigenous peoples of Eurasia have to be of particular relevance to any such project concerned with Norse mythology. PENTIKÄINEN (1989), when discussing the Kalevala, is among the scholars who have discussed the connections among the peoples of Eurasia. Most obviously, the Tree of Life or "the 'Tree of the World' is one of the most essential elements in northern Eurasian shamanistic rituals" (165). In relation to texts which are of particular relevance for this article he states: "It is more likely that Scandinavian saga literature, the Edda as well as the witches' songs, and ancient Finnish poetry are partial manifestations of folklore and mythology which is common, in part, to northern Eurasia" (173). He then makes a statement which is helpful in delineating the "indigenous roots" we are talking about:

The existence of the same phenomenon in ancient Scandinavian epic, in Finnish and Saami tradition, and also among the Altaic and Uralic peoples indicates its great age. The wide distribution of shamanism in the arctic area indicates that it is certainly one of the deepest layers of northern Eurasian culture and may have been practiced by these peoples even before they journeyed to their present dwelling places thousands of years ago. If this is true, the connection would date back four or five thousand years, to a time when ancient contacts reigned between the Uralic and Indoeuropean or Aryan peoples. It is possible, although unlikely, that this does, in fact, indicate a genetic, linguistic, and cultural relatedness extending beyond mere contacts. (192)

The connection between the ancient Norse peoples and the *Sámi* peoples stands out as particularly significant within this large picture of ancient relationships, since here we find contemporary shamanic practices (despite the many declarations of the end of *Sámi* shamanism), which may help us illuminate the older historical layers. Since the connections between the two groups of peoples are rather well documented (see most recently PÁLSSON, 1997), it is reasonable to pay particular attention to the *Sámi* tradition. It goes without saying that this needs to be done with care; the obvious two reasons are that the actual historical relationship has been and continues to be fraught

with prejudices and the effects of colonialism, and that eurocentered scholarship investigating Sámi traditions in particular is far from being free of such prejudices and colonial attitudes. While it is not the purpose of this article to document the various connections between the Old Norse traditions and those of the Finno-Ugric, Altaic, and Uralic peoples, we will refer to them as is illuminating for the purposes of our reconstruction.

The reasons for focusing on the *Vanir* layer of Norse mythology deserve to be explained further. While we will hardly be able at the present time to reconstruct in any depth the pre-Indoeuropean indigenous layers of the area of the subsequent Norse peoples, we nonetheless can push it to a stratum which is most clearly shamanic and connected with the preceding traditions. This is where the *Vanir* aspect of Norse mythology is useful in four regards: 1) Despite the many confusions and interconnections it is arguably an identifiable layer of Norse mythology. 2) While all the source material pertinent to Norse mythology is more or less influenced by Christianity, the *Vanir* layer can arguably be placed at a pre-Christian historical period. 3) It connects most clearly to the pre-Indoeuropean shamanic layers of this area (even though the *Æsir* layer may be of somewhat similar age, it seems to have originated in a different place and is arguably a later arrival in the lands of Norse mythology as indigenous conversation). 4) Finally, the *Vanir* layer has the clearest connections with the *Sámi* traditions relating it to a better known indigenous conversation, and opening a gateway to other relevant northern Eurasian traditions.

[P133] ad 1) While the available documentation in the Eddas, Sagas, and other medieval texts is not always consistent or clear regarding distinctions between the *Vanir* and *Æsir* spirits, it nevertheless seems reasonable to use this dichotomy, which, according to BOYER (1993, 237) "must be looked upon as authentic, probably in history, if not in sociology" (see also SIMEK, 1995). While these two groups of spirits are clearly distinguishable (e.g., the *Vanir* allowing sibling marriage, more intensely connected with sexuality and fertility, and more associated with farming communities; in contrast to the *Æsir* who are more associated with a highly stratified society; both are said to have a place of origin other than the north of Europe), confusion can arise in the reading of the Eddic poetry where the terms *Æsir* und *ásynjur* are frequently used for divine spirits in general.<sup>[3]</sup> Additionally, these two groups have intermarried and exchanged hostages. The layer of *Vanir* Norse mythology is most clearly identified through *Freyja*, *Freyr*, *Njörður*, *Nerþuz* and their connections with elves, giants and dwarfs.

ad 2) BOYER (1993) is among the many scholars who have acknowledged the difficulty of studying Germanic and Norse mythologies.

The historical data on these [Germanic] religions certainly belong to an Indoeuropean culture, their originality definitely derives from various indigenous substrata which were conquered by invaders and about which we know very little ... other than that they belong to a very old tradition, as is evident from the many stone engravings going back to the Norse Bronze Age (1500 to 400 B.C.) found throughout Scandinavia. (226)

BOYER distinguishes diachronically four phases of Norse mythology: prehistory (MARSHAK [1991] suggests a beginning point of the indigenous layers as early as 28,000 BCE), Bronze Age 1500 to 400 BCE, Iron Age 400 BCE to about 800 CE, and the Viking age from 800 to 1100. It is the first two periods in which we are particularly interested. It seems quite possible to locate the *Vanir* in time and space with the help of such variables as glaciation, the advent of agriculture, animal husbandry, and Indoeuropean invasions, however, such endeavor is clearly beyond the scope of this article. Without further explanation it seems reasonable to associate the *Vanir* with megalithic horticultural and early animal husbandry times either as a pre-Indoeuropean indigenous layer which had its genesis in the north, or as a pre-Indoeuropean layer which migrated into the area, maybe even as late as the people of the *Æsir*, and hybridizing with them either during their migration or upon the later arrival of the *Æsir*. Even though there are reasons to assume that the *Vanir* layer is pre-Indoeuropean or more closely connected with pre-Indoeuropean layers of the north, it is important to remember that whatever we know about it comes through an Indoeuropean lense. Much of any interpretation of the available sources depends on the reading of SNORRI's<sup>[4]</sup> challenging geography, and the much and hotly debated Indoeuropean homeland (and the homelands of other

peoples).

ad 3) The *Vanir* spirits show a closer association with what could be called primal spiritual forces - the giants, elves, and dwarves than the *Æsir*. Obviously, the *Æsir* and the *Vanir* have fought with each other. The distinction between *álfar* and *Vanir* is not always clear, and these words are used interchangeably on occasion. The male dwarves have a very intimate relationship with the *Vanadís Freyja*. The giants and the *Vanir* seem to have intermingled and intermarried on numerous occasions, while similar connections are less frequent with the *Æsir*. The *Æsir*, *Óðinn* in particular, have learned at least some of their significant shamanic skills from the *Vanir*, *Freyja* in particular. All this seems to suggest the greater age of the *Vanir* spirits, at least in this location, and their greater closeness to the pre-Indoeuropean shamanic layer in Norse mythology (whether the *Vanir* themselves were pre-Indoeuropean or not). BOYER summarizes his understanding of the *Vanir* by saying that "they presided over a mass of essentially vitalist and perhaps North Asian beliefs and devotions, in which the cult of life and the cult of the dead - the world of germinating earth and the spiritual universe - were not separated" (1993, 237).

ad 4) PÁLSSON (1997) has documented numerous instances which show the - sometimes pejorative - identification of the *Sámi* people (commonly called *Finns* in the source material) with giants (also in his annotation to the *Völuspá*, 1994, Engl. 1996). He discusses the teaching of *fjölkygi*, the "multi-knowledge" or shamanic or magical knowledge by *Sámi* foster parents to young Norse people, especially of high rank, and offers numerous examples from the literature (additionally, intermarriages seem to have been very common). His survey of the available documentation provides ample evidence for frequent and ongoing interconnections between the Old Norse and the *Sámi* people, even during these later times whence the written sources originate. This is the clearest evidence of a positive relationship with the northern Eurasian cultures - it is our access door, so to speak.

To summarize, the focus on the *Vanir* layer of Norse mythology is guided by our intention to identify those cosmological aspects where the indigenous Norse conversation was not just intact, but presented an image of balance allowing us to delineate their understanding of health and its connection with *Vanir* cosmology.<sup>[5]</sup> This reconstructive effort is guided by the following assumptions:

- Inevitability of participatory knowing and the inevitability of such knowing having effects in the world.
- Indigenous knowledge has a circular format and resists the linearity of eurocentered analytical thinking.
- The image of balance or complete conversation as goal of the reconstruction.
- The importance of contemporary indigenous traditions for our efforts.
- The particular relevance of the indigenous northern Eurasian traditions, with the *Sámi* people having the greatest relevance.
- The *Vanir* layer of Norse mythology as closest identifiable layer to a pre-Indoeuropean indigenous conversation among the Germanic peoples and the oldest layer accessible for reconstructive purposes in that location (itself possibly Indoeuropean, but not necessarily).

### 1. Participatory inquiry

Contemporary indigenous people oftentimes introduce themselves by referring to their ancestry in some way; this may be done by introducing their mother and father, the grandparents, the clans of these people, the place of birth, etc. Icelandic people continue to use this practice [P135] to this day in informal settings, but it is now considered old-fashioned and an invasion of privacy. All this helps people who are introducing themselves to each other to locate where they stand in the web of the community. It also brings to awareness the ancestral relations and honors their spirit. Since we are attempting to write this article as participatory inquiry in an indigenous sense it is important for us to share where we have come from and our histories, at least to the extent that they pertain to this

article. Put differently: The beginning point of rigor is concerned with the sincerity and truthfulness with which inquirers explore to the best of their understanding their own place and history, and all the baggage and wonder that comes with that; personal knowing needs to be explored as gateway to generative knowledge. So, this is where we begin - *naturally*.

*I, Valgerður Hjördis Bjarnadóttir, am a woman. I am the mother of Sunna Elin and the daughter of Kristjana Tryggvadóttir and Bjarni Sigurðsson, the granddaughter of Elín and Tryggvi, Kristín and Sigurður. I trace my lineage over many generations to Auður djúpúgða and Álfdis barreyska, women who came from across the sea to the shores of my country, more than a thousand years back.*

*My way of working with information is to bring the seed of inspiration into my womb, carry it, and nurture it consciously and unconsciously until it is ready to be born in words and images, movements and magic. I am a dreamer. My womb is my dreaming space, there I gather information. The gathering for this work is done through the written word, the myths, poems and stories, left to us from our ancestors, and those gathered by visionary, searching women and men of today. I gather information and inspiration from the spoken word of people, women and men still living in touch with our Norse ancestry, people weaving a new vision into and out of our modern culture. I make use of my dreams of the night, the auður still living in our collective unconscious (an Icelandic word with paradoxical meanings ranging from riches to fate to void and joy, as we will discuss below). Attempting not to destroy the mystery of this magical paradox, having dreamed I weave it into form to become a new earth rising from the sea. As the völva who saw the divine in the hills of the land and in the waves of the sea, I seek my auður, my fate, my riches, my joy, my emptiness, my ancestral web, in the spirit born out of those hills, that sea, out of nature and out of dreams, in my womanness, thus balancing the logic of the written word.*

*I am an Icelandic woman; born and fed from the soil of that island in the North who some say takes her name from the goddess Isis, and the rune "isa", meaning much more than ice, meaning divine, unchangeable, god/goddess, an island with a rich literary and oral history, story tradition and magical nature. I have been nurtured with the stories of that soil, the language of the völva, but I have also been cultured with the stories, language and food of our masculinistic, scientific, dissociative, western culture. My way of approaching this material is necessarily influenced by those conflicting parts of me, and by my relationship to my mothertongue. I have travelled back across the ocean, to the shores of the lands of my ancestors, and to the shores of new lands, lived in Britain, Norway, France and North America, always to return to those hills, this sea, that sky, so dark in winter, so bright in summer.*

*I am Jürgen Werner Kremer, the son of Gerda Kremer geb. Rosenow, and Werner Kremer. On my maternal side I am able to trace my ancestry along the Baltic Coast past Gdansk reaching into what was once called East Prussia, touching into Lithuania. On my father's side I can follow my ancestry south into the Rhineland past Krefeld into Alsace-Lorraine. Dreams and indigenous seers have told me, that I have Jewish ancestry, but I have been unable to verify this through any documents; nevertheless, several autobiographical events support this, and I have been told on occasion by Rabbis to take this knowledge seriously. I grew up in Northern Germany shortly after the Second World War watching bombs getting fished out of the river, and finding Nazi paraphernalia in attics. I have lived in the Rhineland, moved to New York, and spent the last fifteen years in California before moving to Iceland. My time with native peoples has been formative in the process of remembering my own indigenous roots. My shamanic pursuits dating from the years of my study found a container in the loving help which many Native [P136] Americans offered as they used their own ceremonies and knowledge to guide me into a healing recovery of my roots.*

*My Germanic ancestry puts me in the gateway of the holocaust. I recall Hitler's perversions of mythology in the service of genocide; I will never forget the image of the Germanic goddess Nerþuz cattle-drawn past Hitler, which I saw in the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. I cannot think of the German word for healing - heilen - without awareness of how the culture was wounded in its center through the genocidal Sieg! Heil! I recall the aberrations of the Vikings, their vicious slaughters and conquering - another guardian at the threshold of recovery. Passing these and more guardians, witnessing what they hold, is to heal old collective wounds as they have been passed down to me as an individual, passed down consciously and unconsciously. These guardians don't stand at the threshold simply to propagate guilt. The guardians are medicine for the collective shadow of the Western world. They are the medicine of remembrance with all that it entails, be it fear, pain, guilt, anger.... The only way to reach the tree of the world which they guard is to pass the guardians at the threshold and to take the medicine they offer. They offer their painful medicine kindly. Only then may I journey beyond.*

*In recent years I have travelled to the place in the farthest north of Europe, Sápmi, to honor a call from my adolescent illness, and where I encounter noaidis sitting on the earth and in the sky, guiding me to another ancestral place where more work needs to be done. And to the stars.*

*All this helps me understand what my obligation is as I recover ancient memory for the future, today. And I follow an old pledge of mine made to the ancestral spirits of the Chaco Canyon kivas: to dance northward, to heal what history has wrought, to fight the subversion of Freyja-freedom. So, here I am in the place where the memories of seiður, blót, and útisetá are not as distant as in Germany; and where Sápmi shines through the ancient stories which have been handed down to us.*

*We both now live in a place in Iceland close to the point where the American and the European tectonic plates meet, and where the traditions from those two continents meet in a place which seems to have one of the strongest connections to the Old Europe of the Norse and their ancestors. We look back to our exchanges with indigenous peoples on Turtle Island and in Europe as we are engaged in the current reconstructive endeavor and the practices which follow from it.*

## 2. Cycles of history: *Ragnarök*

If, according to indigenous understandings, "all relationships are historical," then it is not just our personal history and ancestry, which is relevant for this inquiry, but also the larger interpretations of the historical moment. In 1998 we might look at all the emergent socio-cultural trends, whether this is postmodernism in all its variations, or the concern with multiculturalism (a word with numerous definitions and interpretations), or the concern with ecology and the Earth Summit, or the trends toward economic globalization, or the spirituality of the so-called New Age - we might look at all these and other significant developments, and conclude that, indeed, we must live at a special or critical time. We may even be tempted to join one form or other of millenarianism, even though these interpretations of the end of the millennium are fraught with many problematic assumptions (GOULD, 1997). When we look into the historical understanding of indigenous peoples, their stories, myths, and calendars, we find yet another possible interpretation, one which is immediately relevant for our understanding of healing.

In the Norse traditions the most critical historical moment is called *Ragnarök*. The usual translation of this term as "the twilight of the Gods" is based on a confusion of *rök* (meaning [P137] fate, line of events) and *rökkur* (meaning twilight) (DE VRIES).<sup>[6]</sup> *Ragnarök* thus would be a fateful moment for those who reign (*ragna* from *regin*). Thus we find the spirits confronting that which came before them: *örlög*, the fate which was laid out for them. Since the divine spirits (*Æsir* and *Vanir*) are not in charge of the fates, but are subject to them, they undergo a confrontation with their origins.

One thing is clear from all the descriptions of *Ragnarök*: The destruction is cyclical (SIMEK, 1995, 330-332). During *Ragnarök* the earth gets destroyed - and then a new and purified earth emerges.

<i>Sól tær sortna, sigr fold í mar,</i>	The sun turns black, the earth sinks below the sea,
<i>hverfa af himni heiðar stiörnör;</i>	no bright star now shines from the heavens;
<i>geisar eimi við aldrnara,</i>	flames leap the length of the World Tree
<i>leikr hár hiti við himin siálfan.</i>	fire strikes against the very sky.

<i>Sér hon upp koma öðro sinni</i>	She sees the earth rising again
<i>iörð ör ægi, iðiagræna:</i>	out of the waters, green once more;
<i>falla forsar, flygr örn yfir,</i>	an eagle flies over rushing waterfalls,
<i>sá er á fialli fiska veiðir.</i>	hunting for fish from the craggy heights.
<i>(Völuspá, Neckel, 1927)</i>	<i>(TERRY, 1990, 7)</i>

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* gives a most vivid description of the particular moment right before the new earth begins to live, and the subsequent renewal:

<i>Dofna þá dáþir,</i>	Then wanes the power.
<i>detta hendr,</i>	Hands grow numb.
<i>svífr of svimi</i>	A swoon assails
<i>sverþ áss hvíta;</i>	the white sword-Áse;
<i>rennir örvit</i>	Unconsciousness reigns
<i>rygiar glyggvi,</i>	on the midnight breath;
<i>sefa sveiflom</i>	Thought fails
<i>sókn giörvallri. (14)</i>	in tired beings. (23)

<i>Riso raknar,</i>	Up rose the gods.
<i>rann álfráudull,</i>	Forth shone the sun.

<i>nordr at niflheim</i>	Northward to Niflheim
<i>nióla sótti;</i>	night drew away;
<i>upp nam ár Giöll</i>	Heimdal once more sprang
<i>Ulfrúnar nidr,</i>	up upon Bäfrast,
<i>hornþytvalldr</i>	Mighty clarion-blower
<i>Himinbiarga. (26)</i>	on the mountains of heaven. (26)
<i>(Hrafnagaldr Óðins)</i>	(TITCHENELL, 1985, 267/8)

This leads to the interesting question whether there is a way to determine this cycle of destruction?

During *Ragnarök* we have *fimbulvetur*, the great winter, the world is set on fire by *Surtr*, the earth sinks into the ocean because of the violent movements of the *Midhgarð* snake, the sun darkens and is eaten by *Fenrir*, the wolf, the earth shakes, the bridge *Bilröst* collapses, [P138] and the World Tree *Yggdrasil* trembles - yet does not fall. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* describes how the new earth *Jórunn* (*Idunn* reborn) sits at the root of the tree, not yet awakened at this momentous time. There is a new sun, *dóttir sólar*, the daughter of the sun (which can also mean a new star, after the old constellation has disappeared at the vernal equinox). The tree, the *axis mundi*, does not fall during *Ragnarök*. With the *nornir* at its roots it continues to stand as the measurer of time and fates (as we will explain in greater detail below). What is its measure? Indigenous and mythological interpretations have linked the Tree of the World to two time cycles, the precession of the equinoxes and the cycles of the north star (both observable astronomical events caused by the tilt of the earth's axis).

The precession of the equinoxes refers to the cycle of 26,000 (also labelled Great Year), during which approximately every 2,100 years a different constellation rises heliacally at the vernal equinox. The astronomy mythological interpretation of these observations is that each of the twelve years of the Great Year have a different meaning because of the stars governing them. Each shift between the ages would be *Ragnarök*.

Because of the tilt of the earth, the North Star shifts very gradually. While Polaris b currently holds that position, Thuban in Draco held it 4,500 years ago, and the star at the head of Cepheus will be the north star two thousand years from now (KYSELKA & LANTERMAN, 1976). MASSEY (1992) has argued that one complete cycle of the North Star lasts about 26,000 years (equalling one full precession of the equinoxes or one Great Year), with seven stars ruling each a phase of about 3,700 years. The changes of the pole star move through seven constellations. We find many indications in the Norse literature that the North Star was attached to the top of the World Tree (as sky nail or *Weltmagel*, *veraldarnagli*, REUTTER, 1934, 226; cf. for similar *Sámi* traditions LUNDMARK, 1982, 107ff.). The moment of observed changes would be mythologically speaking an anxious moment where the tree trembles as it moves from one position to the next, where it is in transition before being nailed to the sky again. MASSEY (1992) has traced the observation of the pole star changes through a wide variety of world mythologies concluding that

the seven under whatsoever name or type, watching or slumbering, are still the keepers of the world's great year and the enclosure of the seven never-setting stars that marked the seven stations of the shifting pole (593). ... As the tree was planted anew or re-erected seven times over, it follows that there is a typical group of seven trees, as well as the one tree with seven branches, to be met with in the mythological legends. Also, as the law was given at the pole or the tree, there would be seven trees of the law established in the course of Precession. (604)

It is only twice during each Great Year that the twelve stations of the precession and the seven stations of the pole star intersect: in the middle and at the end or beginning. According to some indigenous interpretations we are currently approaching such a coincidence, which would mean, in terms of Norse mythology, a particularly intense confrontation with the *örlög* (FINCH, 1991, 1997).

All this bears a lot of resemblance with other indigenous traditions, particularly Native American understandings of the cycles of time.

They said that after the 468 years [after the intertribal meetings stopped in Mexico after 1521] there would be a new sun, which started in approximately 1987. This is in the Aztec calendar. ... What is prophesied at the end of the Dark Sun is that the condor (i.e., the land of the South Americas) and the eagle (the land of the North Americas) will be re-united, and ... the knowledge of the earth will come out again and the knowledge that we have will become whole. The ancient knowledge will rise again, only this time the key to it is integration, and we have to do it with "all the directions." (COLORADO,

1996, 8)

Much will be said about this in terms of healing below, since it constitutes an indigenous interpretation of the healing which is called for in the current historical times. Obviously, our [P139] reconstructive efforts should be seen in the light of these interpretations of the cycles of time. However, it should be pointed out right here that this Native American interpretation of the upcoming cycle is consistent with our reading of the *Vanir* Norse mythology and the healing it seems to require at this time.

### 3. A story of *Vanir* healing

It seems that most indigenous traditions have an understanding of healing, which is part of their understanding of creation and origin. A *Diné* (Navajo) medicine man once told one of the authors: "If you want to heal, then you need to place yourself at the point of creation and trace your steps from there" (ASHLEY, 1993). Thus healing is not a matter of manipulating isolated, monadic individuals for the sake of health, but understanding the individual's place in the cosmos as they relate and are related to the place where everything and everybody comes from, and intervening within that framework as is appropriate and necessary; physical healing is an aspect of this process. LINCOLN (1986, 118) says as much after his survey of Indoeuropean traditions: "It is not just a damaged body that one restores to wholeness and health, but the very universe itself. ... The full extent of such knowledge is now revealed in all its grandeur: the healer must understand and be prepared to manipulate nothing less than the full structure of the cosmos." This is in obvious ways related to the etymology of "to heal," which is connected with the German *heilen*, and the Indoeuropean root *\*kailo-*, referring to a state and process of wholeness (the word "whole" also being related to this root). But "to heal" is also connected to "holy" (as is German *heilen* to *heilig* or Icelandic *heill* - *heil* - *heilög*), which points to the older layers of understanding healing through remembering the history of language. It is interesting to note how the analytical tools of etymological thinking help us recover the intimate connections between healing and cosmology, a connection which does not find an equivalent in the dominant modern sciences.

We find an interesting similar web of etymological layers and connections, when we explore the German word *genesen*, meaning: to get well or heal. Here we find connections between healing, nurturance, food, journey, and coming home. The Indoeuropean root *\*nes* means *Heimkehr*, going home, provide for a journey, return. The Old English (*ge-*) *nesan* means to be saved, and to be whole or healthy. The related Finnish *násate* means coming together or unite, while the Greek *νοστος* refers to coming home. "Nurture" is connected with Icelandic *næra* (= nurture) and *nesti*, which is the food taken on a journey (Old German *wega-nest*, Icelandic *veganesti*, Sámi *niesti*). Feeding and nourishing (*ernähren*, Icelandic *næra*) causes healing (German *genesen*, *heilen*, *retten*, *am Leben erhalten*; to heal, save, keep alive). Thus we may say that there is *Genesung*, healing, if we journey home to our places of origin, and take the healing food necessary to make the journey whole, thus making it a healing journey.

Since it is difficult to imagine a journey home which is purely physical movement, and which does not have emotional, archetypal, or spiritual overtones, it may consequently be reasonable to think of nurturance and the food for the journey and healing not just in terms of the intake of physical matter, but as much in terms of nutritious matter for the rest of the person (indeed, *veganesti* also connotes such nourishing things as knowledge, love, etc.). A description from an entirely different tradition may help to clarify this further: As we have seen, the Andean peasants use the words *criar y dejarse criar*, nurturing or raising a being, and being nurtured or raised, to describe the process of the indigenous conversation or conscious[P140]ness process in a particular place. The place of the journey home for the sake of healing can thus be circumscribed in the following way:

The *chacra* is the piece of land where the peasant lovingly and respectfully nurtures plants, soil, water, micro-climates and animals. In a broad sense *chacra* is all that is nurtured, thus the peasants say that the *llama* is their *chacra* that walks and whereof wool is harvested. We ourselves are the *chacra* of the *wakas* or deities that care for, teach and accompany us. ...[There is a] continuous conversation and reciprocation between the relatives with the Andean *ayllu*, forming an organicity that facilitates the nurturing of the *chacra*, through practices of mutual help... This help takes place in an atmosphere of

fiesta, with joy and always asking permission of the wakas or Andean deities. (VALLADOLID, 1995, 23 &46)

In the world of the *Vanir* the place for the healing journey home would be in the community defined by the World Tree. We shall discuss the grand image of the Tree of Life below, which is the Norse equivalent of the Andean descriptions. The Icelandic *aðfæða* (meaning to feed, raise, birth) allows us to translate the original Quechua and Aymara<sup>[7]</sup> versions of *criar y dejarse criar* into *að fæða og vera fædd*, which immediately evokes birthing and being born, but means just as much feeding and being fed, and raising and being raised. We could also say: *Að næra og vera nærð*. *Að næra* is related to the poetically used *nárungar*, meaning chiefs or more properly: *die Ernährenden*, the nurturers (which may be related with the *Vanir* name *Njörður*; MAGNUSSON, DE VRIES) as well as *nara*, to vegetate, to live in misery. This circular process of *criar y dejarse criar* or *að fæða og vera fædd* is also a process of knowing:

What happens between the Andean communities of humans, deities and nature is reciprocal dialogue, a relationship which does not assume any distancing and objectification between those dialoguing, but rather an attitude of tenderness and understanding towards the life of the other. Such dialogue does not lead one to a knowledge about the other, but rather to empathize and attune oneself with its mode of being, and in company with that other, to generate and regenerate life. It is a dialogue ... that leads [not to knowledge but] to wisdom. (RENGIFO, 1993, 168, translation by APFFEL-MARGLIN)

The English 'to know' stems from the Indoeuropean root *\*gn*, which connotes to know as well as to beget indicating mental and carnal familiarity. The German *wissen* and the Icelandic *vita* stem from Indoeuropean *\*ueid-*, to see (past perfect *\*uoida*, I have seen, I know), which is related to the Old Norse *vitki* (magician, *Zauberer*), German *weise* (wise), and such spiritually and mythologically important words as Old Norse *vísindakona* (an alternate for *völva*), and the scientists of today, Icelandic *vísindamenn*. When we explore the history of these words we find a closer relationship to an embedded, circular process of participatory knowing which can be summarized in the following dramatic fashion:

Nothing is frozen or static in this view of the world: the sacred rivers flow without ceasing, wolves tirelessly pursue the sun and moon in the hope of swallowing them, the wind stirred up by the eagle perched on top of Yggdrasill continually moves the branches of the tree, the gods are constantly in movement in imitation of Thor, life springs forth without respite for human or divine beings, and the dead themselves interrupt neither this circulation nor this activity. (BOYER, 1993, 232)

Amidst the obvious and dramatic difference in emphasis and nuance it is nonetheless not difficult to discern a lifeworld conceived similarly to the Andean: we have an immanent [P141]worldview where the spirits, whether ancestral or divine, live in a different aspect of the same nine-tiered world, and are a part of this grand feeding and being fed, creation and destruction, birthing and dying process.

The following story attempts to describe some of this process, particularly as it pertains to healing. Writing such a summarizing story with particular attention to the *Vanir* layer of Norse mythology has many possible pitfalls. It is thus worth quoting DAVIDSON's comments on the logical inconsistencies of the Old Norse cosmos, which applies to myths *per se*:

It would be unwise to insist on an exact ruling. It would not have been thought necessary or desirable to provide a logical plan of the supernatural world, plotting out the various realms with dogmatic insistence or agreement. ... It is hopeless to expect this to fit into a precise and orderly plan, as the Swedish Ryberg hoped to prove in the last century. If in our strong desire for the rational we try to create a logical scheme out of such scattered ideas and images, we are doing violence to the traditions of poets and seers who left us clues as to the nature of the Other World. (DAVIDSON, 1988,172/3)

So many of the Old Norse words and even major characters are glistening under our gaze, then blending and merging with each other, they are almost always multi-faceted, and one word easily leads or transforms into another - which all may remind us of the the visionary aspect as the seed and egg of mythologies: One could say that a mythological story represents the best visionary understanding, the communally agreed upon seeing of a particular place, time, and people. It is in this sense that we are offering the following story not as anything authoritative, but as our best seeing based on a detailed study of the source materials in the light of our reconstructive assumptions. It is a work in progress. The reader may discern a certain kinship to SNORRI's *Gylfaginning*, a piece of writing which may have come into existence in a similar fashion and is

reflective of his times. This story will be explicated in aspects relevant for the purposes of this article below in sections 4 to 8. This way we hope to make our choices of words and emphases transparent and show the reasonableness of our reconstructive endeavor.

*You ask about healing.*

*This is the right time and a good place to ask - Venus, the shaman star, the star of the being so important for any healing, is visible and just now high up in the sky. Freyja is the name of this being. And where we are standing here at this tree - it is the center of this community, it is the place which connects us with everything that matters. There is so much to be said about the time, the star, and this place at the tree. Some of it I will tell today, but other things will have to wait for a later night. So, let me start at the beginning, the place of origins, because there is no healing without going to that place.*

*One of the völvás before me has said: 'In the beginning of time there was nothing: Neither sand nor sea, nor cooling surf; there was no earth, nor upper heaven, no blade of grass - only the Great Void.' This void was fertile, it was filled with magical power, the auður whence everything arises. This is the place of creation, and without placing ourselves at the source of all there will be no healing. If we seek balance when imbalance threatens us, then we need to start over from the place of balance between the ice of the north and the fire of the south. These are the poles of Ginnungagap, the fertile void out of which our world and we ourselves arose. Where heat and cold meet, the deadly hoarfrost from the rivers of the north is melted by the heat of Muspell. All this would mean nothing, if the richness of auður wasn't örlög. Without the primal law, without timekeepers, without moonwatchers, without sunwatchers - the world would be nothing, it would be without destinies, örlöglaus.*

*And then it all starts when the three giant maidens come along. But these women have all kinds of names, and show up in different guises, at times there are even three times three. Sometimes even twelve. Or they number the thirteen months of the moon calendar. When some see [P142] them they call them dísir, others call them nornir, but they also show themselves as valkyrjur. Whichever way the maidens are seen, where they are is the power to impart örlög, to awaken a being to move in time. They are the measurers of time and their weaving material are moon beams and sun beams. They alone are not subject to it. Whether they awaken giants, or vanir spirits, or Æsir spirits, or humans - they are all subject to the cycles of örlög created from the fertile richness of Ginnungagap.*

*There is time then, measurement, fate. Out of it emerges a primal force, a giant by the name of Ymir, a two gendered being, many generations before Freyja and Freyr, Njörðr and Nerþuz, and Þór dressing as Freya. Ymir was formed out of the drops at the confluence of the forces streaming out of Niflheimr and Muspellshéims. He was nurtured by that primal richness in the form of Auðhumla, the nourishing cow of auður, who is urðr and örlög. She is the hornless mother of all creation, the matrix which makes life possible. Be patient now, why she is hornless I shall tell you later. At this moment in creation we have nothing but the nourishing matrix of auður, the örlög in it administered by the nornir, and the giants as primal forces.*

*Not only does Auðhumla nurture Ymir, she also licks Búri, Born, Creator, Father, out of the salty stones over three days. His son Burr - we have forgotten whether he mated with a giant or created out of himself like Ymir - creates with Bestla, the daughter of the giant Bölthorn, the first divine spirits or gods. Some say their names were Óðinn, Vili, and Vé, some say Óðinn, Hæmir, and Lóður were the first divine spirits. One of them became more and more important, and in recent times many people think first of him when they think of our traditions: The auður of the primal richness sounds very close in name to Audhun, and we have Óðinn who also shows himself in the form of Óðr, who Freyja cries for - but I am rushing ahead... yes, yes, as time passed the maleness of creation was the only thing people would see, now a well known story, but many would say a rather sad story. The first three divine spirits were subject to the örlög, just like everything else, except for the female measurers of time, the nornir.*

*It was the destiny of the first three divine spirits to create earth, and later human beings, from the primal force which Auðhumla had nurtured in Ymir. They killed - or sacrificed - the two gendered giant and thus formed the earth - the mountains from the bones, the sky from the skull, the seas and lakes from the blood, the trees and vegetation from the hair, middle earth, Midhgarðr, from the brows, the clouds from the brain, the soil from the flesh, and the rocks and scree from the toes and teeth. What remained was food for the maggots, who turned into yet another magical force after feeding on the primal giant: they transformed into dwarfs. One of their duties was to uphold the sky in the four directions, another to dream. Some say that the fire and flames continued to spew out of Muspellshéimr, and these became the stars and planets which the divine spirits ordered to allow humans to measure time.*

*One day the first three divine spirits wandered the shores and found two tree trunks on the beach. Óðinn or Óðr gave them breath, Atem, Odem, önd; Hænir gave them Óðr, soul or understanding and feeling; and Lóður gave them lá and litu, the bodily fluids which gave them color. These first humans, Askr and Embla, were without örlög or örlöglaus, but in the process of becoming human they received örlög, so, somewhere there the nornir must have intervened. Our ancestors don't have much to say about that. It may have been much too obvious to them to even mention it. But some people think it was the nornir who gave them the qualities necessary for human life, and not the sons of Burr.*

*And, you see, there is an interesting thing here: The first divine spirits killed Ymir to create earth and with it the trees. And out of two of the trees they created the first humans. But there was one more special tree that was created in this process: its roots reach deep down, so far that they even reach Ginnungagap, and its trunk and branches reach way up into the sky, so far that it touches the pole star at the top. In fact, it covers our world. This is the Tree of Life, and the Tree of the World, it holds auður and Urðarbrunnur and the nornir; it is the process of life for us here, and you can even say that is the humans. While our ancestors have handed down many stories about the life of this tree, somewhere along the way the story of its creation got [P143] lost. Or maybe it didn't, since the Tree of Life is also us humans. Much more needs to be said about this tree.*

*There is another way in which the first humans were created: Ymir sweated in his sleep, and under his left armpit developed first woman and first man. And one of his feet created a son with the other foot. Since he was two gendered that seems quite possible.*

*So, the fertile void has transformed into auður, who developed örlög. The first giant was the building material for our world, and the tree became the center of this world. So, what is this tree?*

*The tree comes with many names and under different guises. There is Yggdrasil, there is Irminsul, there is Mjötúðr, there is the mysterious Sampo, and there are many other names for it. At times it is an ash, at times a larch, and it has been and continues to make its appearance as different trees in different places. As you will travel and learn about the different names and the different kinds of trees who have become the holder of life, you will learn about the knowledge and gifts of the people in different regions. This tree is the center of the world, when you look up it reaches into the stars, and connects us with the milky way and the different regions where ancestral spirits go to and come from. The roots of the tree reach into the depths of memory, and the örlög which brought us here. There is one important and crucial name for the tree I have not mentioned yet: Heimdallr. The nornir created Heimdallr early on, the nine of them. Although his function has changed over the millenia, I see that he was one of the early divine spirits. He is not only the guardian of Bilröst, but also one of the measurers; while the nornir are the movement as they keep count scoring the moon cycles in particular, the tree Heimdallr is the rod who helps them do so (and if you are no prude, and your sexual imagination gets sparked, then I shall not be a woman who inhibits the way you feel). Heimdallr holds the horn of the moon honoring this cycle. He was born from the seas, and he easily changes into a seal. He helps making the örlög real for us humans.*

*You may wonder what Heimdallr is to do as the guardian of Bilröst. This spirit bridge appears during the day to us as the rainbow, but at night it shines as the milky way. It is not for everybody. Humans have to be in a special place of wholeness to be permitted onto this special path to the ancestors and other spirits. I shall talk about that in a while, but, in short, you have to be the tree in order to be permitted across Bilröst. Let me explain.*

*The tree is our life, is us. So I could talk about it all night, and I am glad that the night is young, even though Freyja's star has set by now. Let me say this much: The tree is birth and death, becoming and decaying, generation and regeneration. At its root are the nornir, three of them are well known to us by their name: Urðr, the one who holds the memory from which Verðandi creates what is coming to be present; and then there is Skuld, she knows what is owed to the ages, what their meaning is. They keep track of the lunar cycles of time, they score the records as humans have taken the clue from them and scored the movements of the moon for many thousands of years. Then there are the other nornir who connect with different divine spirits, the Æsir and the Vanir, others connect with the giants, the elves, and the dwarves - we don't remember all their names. What each of these women creates has been seen in the form of white clay, aurr, and with this feminine fluid they spatter the tree of life, they cover it with the riches they lift from Urðarbrunnur. And yes, if you are not afraid to lie at the Ginnungagap of woman, whether you are man or woman, then you see this richness formed out of the moisture created from her heat. But their work has also been seen as the weave they create from the threads the sun woman has spun for them.*

*Thus the tree of life is nourished by the women who live at her roots and ladle the fluids from Urðarbrunnur and other sources. As the tree receives she gives nourishment to others: At her roots snakes gnaw away, and deer eat her leaves. She gives protection to the eagles and hawks in her top.*

*Squirrels run up and down as messengers between the different parts of the world. Because the nornir never cease to spatter the tree with aurr the tree stays green year round. She stretches into all nine worlds, into all nine aspects of being, she connects us with them, and she is all these, she is the above, the below, and the middle.*

**[P144]** *There is one other thing you need to know now: When you look at all this you see how much knowledge the tree has, how much knowledge Heimdallr has as the measurer, as Vindlér, the borer, the turner, the spiralling one, the ram. The tree is living knowledge, including the deepest knowledge of the cycles which is created with aurr from örlög. Of course, this drum here, which I use in ceremony is partly made from a special tree, a tree which also is the world tree, and in the center you see the drawing of the tree. This way the drum is Sampo, the mill, and Yggdrasil, the horse which can take us into other worlds; and it is all the others; this way the drum is knowledge, one way to knowledge. But there is another, actually: there are many others, but an important one is the sacrifice on the tree. We are trees, and to honor our origins and in order to journey across the spirit bridge we can sacrifice our self to spirit on the tree by fasting. On this occasion Heimdallr lets us pass. Even the one who was Óðr in the earliest times of this cycle (who later became Óðinn) did this, and he taught us how to do this. As he was with the tree for nine days, honoring the nornir, and all the cycles which come from woman, and as he travelled across Bilröst, he used the drum made from a sacred tree to journey. Myself, at times I wonder about that Óðr, since he was also Auður - so: a man? a woman? both?*

*But now I need to talk about the one who cried for this Óðr, she of the star which governs our cycles of shamanizing, she who lies with the dwarves in the depth of the earth, and she who all the giants yearn for, she who carries the most magic of all divine spirits. She is the owner of the necklace Brisngamen, which holds such great power of healing and auður that the male divine spirits always scheme to steal it from her. And, yes, the dwarves gifted her with it after she had lain with them for four nights. Of course, you know that I am talking about Freyja. She is also known by many other names - Gullveig, Syr, Sjöfn, and many more. Whenever I ponder the names of these divine spirits I see not only how they and their meaning has changed over the generations, I also see their close connection, how their energies melt and merge, and at times I get very confused who is who. There are the siblings Freyr and Freyja, very close they are indeed. At that time among the Vanir there was an understanding of the sacred marriage between sister and brother. There is Dellingur, the shining one, who is Heimdallr, and Mardöll, who is Freyja, the shining sea. And Þór dresses up as Freyja. The creative forces seem to mix and blend in a fashion which we late borns of this cycle barely understand anymore. But I tell you: when you enter the magic of seiðr deeply enough, then you will see and understand.*

*Freyja is Vanadís, a divine woman of the Vanir. But her name also connects her with the dísir, the protective spirits who travel with all humans. And as I have told you: the spirits who are connected with örlög seem to be able to shapeshift into each other: now they appear as nornir as needed for imparting destinies, then as dísir to protect, guide, and carry out destinies, now nornir and dísir being two words for the same; and then finally they appear as the birdgoddesses by the name of valkyrjur, divine lovers also; they help humans with the final destinies on their paths as they are entering the realms of the ancestors and merge with what has gone before in Urðarbrunnur up in the sky. You see, talking about one thing leads us in circles around and around until we return where we started - returning with a deepening understanding. And I have barely started to talk about this divine spirit woman, who some call a goddess or the great goddess, she who has brought us everything we know about magic. I see you want to object and talk to me about Óðinn - but what would Óðr have been without Freyja? What would Sigurdr have been without Sigrdrifa? (And in the end he didn't even know how to use her knowledge, but that is another story altogether.) What would Óðinn be without the valkyrjur?*

*Freyja is the holder of magic, at times she flies as the falcon; the valkyrjur, the cats are with her. Her sexuality is healing as much as it is fertility; she knows how to tease knowledge out of the white clay of aurr. Without her there is no healing. Without her völur and vitkar cannot see. She knows how to water the tree and create the aurr for the highest blót. At times she seems to be the völva, or maybe the völva is her. She carries the staff of the völva, the staff of becoming and evolving, to churn the white clay, to nurture and fertilize, to move with the nornir, dísir, and valkyrjur in the matrix of örlög. And, yes, everybody talks about Óðrærir and the fury of Óðr, aah yes, but don't you see what came before? Why do you think Óðinn is accused of ergi, of being unmanly? One more thing about her which you need to remember if you want to **[P145]** be true to your ancestors: Many people say they don't understand the words Vanir, but some suspect it may have something to do with the star which rules her activities. Many of our kin have Venus on their belt or on their drum. Never do the work of Freyja with others when she does not show herself in the morning or the evening; this is the time to follow her into the great stone, the time to seek the power of the depths.*

*Do not think about doing her work of seeing and healing before sacrificing your Self to the tree, before talking in útisetu to your ancestors. Do not think you can pass by the guardian Heimdallr by just*

*uttering the name of your ancestors. Yes, that you must do. But it is only the beginning. Until you have not been picked apart in the deep darkness of all the changes, all the history which Urðarbrunnur contains, until you have not shed the tears of memory, until you have not plunged into the shadow of all and everything our ancestors have wrought, until then: Remember the tree! Do not attempt to pass Heimdallr, because you are a lost soul, and lost you will be in the world you are trying to enter.*

*You ask about útisetu, the calling for the ancestral spirits while out in the night, you ask about blót, the offerings to the different spirits at different times, you ask about seiðr, the seeing magic through drumming and singing, the workings for protection and healing. And I tell you: None of this can be done without Freyja. To reach her you have to travel up the tree and pass the test of the guardian Heimdallr. He checks whether you are traveling alone, by force of your ego only, - or whether you have drunk from Urðarbrunnur, and are traveling with the ancestors, and all else you need to have along. When you walk across that bridge you better know where you are going, you better remember the old stories which guide you to the places in the matrix where you can do your work as völva or vitki, walk with your ancestors, walk with your dísir, honor Freyja as you step forward, call upon the bird spirits, the valkyrjur, to show you the fateful lines in the white clay you need to see. And then do your work. Because then you will know whether it is meant to be done or not. And then you will know what to do. All this is healing, and in all this is healing.*

*This much I can tell you tonight, but you have to know: Much of this knowledge has been passed down with the help of our neighbors, and there have been many influences. One group of neighbors seems to have been particularly important in our past; they called them derogatively jötun, giants, but some called them that to honor their mastery of the forces of auður. There are people who think the Vanir would be nothing without them, because they are the master magicians and they know how to nurture the mother of creation best. If you ever want to deepen this story, if you ever want to find missing pieces, go visit them. I honor the people who are now known as Sámi, and their relatives to the east.*

#### **4. Creation's beginning: Auður, Örlög, and Nornir**

Beginning with this section we will discuss the relevant reasons for telling the story just given in this particular version. Much of the work of this reconstructive inquiry has been the investigation of etymological roots, old stories, the usage of names, and contextualizing this knowledge not only within the Norse traditions, but also the Sámi and other related northern Eurasian cultures as appropriate.

Old Norse *auður*, according to MAGNUSSON, contains all the concepts which are so important in the old culture - here we find emptiness (the adjective *auður*) and fullness together, life, good fortune and death, the riches of life and the void, here we find *örlög* and the web. This almost suggests that it may have been a very important concept in the thinking of the ancient ones, but barring further evidence this is a premature claim. *Auður* as grammatically feminine noun is connected with the Indoeuropean roots *\*auð-* referring to *Gewebe*, the weave or web (connected with the Lithuanian *áudziu* and *áusti* - to weave -, and the Latvian [P146] *audi* - meaning web). DE VRIES glosses it as "fate, death; Norn; woman (only poetically), probably really meaning the web (that is of the Skapanornir)".

This word is related to the, possibly later, grammatically masculine *auðr*. *Auður* is still used in Icelandic as female name, whereas the masculine form today is no longer used as name (we find this word as name in *Gylfaginning* 9, where he is the son of *Nótt* and *Naglfar*). However, the masculine form has remained as noun (meaning property, riches, and the like) and as adjective (meaning empty). GOUCHET (1997, 288) talks about "the wise polysemy of the root *auð* in Old Norse," an apt description for this word.

The name *Auðun* is an alternate form for *Óðinn* (DE VRIES), as SNORRI says in *Ynglingasaga*: "The name "Auðun" is derived from that of Óðin" (HOLLANDER, 1964, 11); according to MAGNUSSON it is composed of *auðr* and *vinur* (and *vinur* is related to *Vanur*, the singular form of *Vanir*). *Óðinn* is closely related to *ódr* (meaning excitement; the art of poetry, poetry, probably really mantic poetry, today still also used for inspiration, song; connotes mind, inspired thought; *önd*, by slight contrast, means spirit, *Seele*, *Atem*). *Ódr* later took on the additional meaning of the excitement of anger (which always existed in the adjectival form *Óðr*). *Óðrærir* is the name of the

poetic mead, that which excites the mind and soul to ecstasy. SIMEK (1995, 316) seems to think that the identity of *Óðinn* and *Óðr* can likely be assumed, despite some inconsistent facts. As we have seen *ó* may change to *au*, and *au* may come from the older *ou* or *o* (DIETER, 1900). Thus we can suspect a rather intimate linguistic relationship between *Auður* - *Óður*, *Auðun* - *Óðinn*.

MAGNUSSON and DE VRIES gloss *örslag* (pl. *örlög*) in a way which overlaps with *auðr*: as "end" in the singular, and in the plural as "fate, death", with Urnorse *\*uzlagjan* (that which has been laid out). While *auðr* seems to emphasize the fateful richness of the ground of being, the interconnection and weaving, *örlög* seems to emphasize more fate *per se* or *auðr* as it has been given to an individual to live.

*Urðr* (masculine), somewhat like *örlög*, denotes also "misfortune; event, death (poetically)," while *urðr* (feminine) refers to "fate; goddess of fate." MAGNUSSON thinks that the feminine form is older (as the feminine *auður* is probably older than the masculine; both words live on in the feminine only as names). All the old Germanic related words like *wyrd*, *wurþ*, *wurt* and *wurði-* are feminine. The feminine *Urðr* exists in such important words as *Urðarlokur* - meaning *örlög*, fate -, and *Urðarmáni* - meaning a particular phase of the moon. All this brings us to the ones who are administering the weave of *auðr* (feminine), who are the holders of the riches of *auðr*, and who give the individual *örlög* to people, namely the *nornir* (laying out the *Schicksalsfaden*, the thread of fate or destiny, *örlögsíma*; in *Reginismál*). The threads they are laying out, as lunar reflections of sunlight, are what the sun woman spins for them (see MCCRICKARD, 1990; GRIMM, 1966). This is beautifully described at the beginning of *Helgakviða Hundingsbana in fyrri*: "They wound the threads of fate, ... gathered the strands into a golden rope, and made it fast in the moon's high hall" (TERRY, 1990).

The *nornir* may be three, or nine (or even twelve or thirteen), but it seems they are mostly multiples of three. Since three of them are known by name (*Urðr*, *Verðandi*, and *Skuld*), most authors seem to focus on the number three. But SNORRI, for example, says that some of the *nornir* coming to a child are of divine origin, but that others have elf ancestry and some dwarf ancestry, and that there are good and bad norns. "Of very diverse parentage I think the norns are, they do not have a common ancestry. Some are descended from Æsir, some are descended from elves, some are daughters of Dvalin" (FAULKES, 1987). The *nornir* blend with other spirit beings, particularly the *dísir* and the *valkyrjur*.

[P147] The belief in the norns is part of the same conceptual configuration to which the *dísir* and the *valkyrjur* belong. The norns represent the fate aspect of the *dísir*, and are consequently genetically closely linked with them. ... Like the *dísir* they appear as helpful powers at birth ... The fertility aspect is not far away. The norn *Urðr* is in character closely related to the great goddess, *Hel-Freyja*. (STRÖM, 1954, 102, transl. J.W.K.)

In our story we are relating the norns to a time keeping function. Obviously, even in the not particularly helpful nor accurate interpretation which parallels them to the past-present-future of the *fates* or *μοιραί* we have some sense of that; these kinds of interpretations seem to be comparatively late. More importantly, *Skuld* denotes not just *sollen* or "shall", but also debt, tribute, tax, cause, reason, with obligation probably being the original meaning. Consequently we find the future aspect of this word dependent on the causes of the past. We also have *skáru á skíði* (*Völuspá*, 20, 7), the scoring on a piece of wood or ski. What was scored in the earliest times? Of course, in later times we find runes scored on wood (BENNETH et al., 1994, 75ff, 152), with examples from Greenland (p. 152) having the feeling of the roughness of logs. Incidentally, NECKEL (1927, II, 149) glosses *skið* as "*runenstab(?)*" for this particular quote, and gives the general gloss "(*norw.* ski), *n. scheid*." She may be the norn who keeps karmic score and lays out the threads of destiny accordingly; she may be doing this by tracking the cycles of the moon both internally as her menstrual cycle as well as in the sky. (The earliest image of this maybe the so-called goddess of Laussel holding what appears to be a scored horn in one hand, while holding the other on the place of the womb.)

MARSHAK (1991) has provided us with detailed analyses of palaeolithic scorings as possible lunar calendars, which have survived on antler, amber, stone and pottery (rather than the more fragile

wood). Most of these examples seem to have been found in France (cf. also SIEVEKING, 1987). MARSHAK (1991) discusses several examples of scoring on amber and antler; he offers a possible interpretation of the antler from Ugerløse, Denmark (dated to the Maglemose culture, 9,500 - 7,000 BCE) as possible lunar calendar: "This lunar count could represent a year and a half in a lunar, solar, or stellar observational year" (363). He discusses another scoring relevant for our discussion in the reindeer antler axe from Ahrensburg near Hamburg (from 8,000 BCE) on pp. 267ff. as possible lunar series. BURENHULT (1991) contains numerous examples of scoring which could conceivably be some form of time count. ERIKSON and LÖFMAN (1985, 39) show a scored antler with markings evocative of runic writing which may be records of time observations. KWAPINSKI (1997) has done an interesting analysis of burial urns from the Baltic Sea around Gdansk (Poland) interpreting them as astronomical records. To our knowledge no similar analysis of burial urns has been done of Scandinavian artefacts, but such an analysis might yield similar results, given how ancient such observations are.

All this said, it seems a reasonable interpretation to relate the norms to lunar time keeping in particular. The text, of which we find many interesting translations, goes as follows (with as literal as possible a translation behind):

<i>Þaðan koma meyar, margs vitandi,</i>	<i>Thence come maidens, with much knowledge,</i>
<i>þriár, ór þeim sal, er und þolli stendr;</i>	<i>three, from the hall, standing under the tree</i>
<i>Urð héto eina, aðra Verðandi,</i>	<i>one they called Urðr, another Verðandi</i>
<i>- skáro á skíði - Skuld ina þriðio;</i>	<i>- they scored on wood - Skuld the third;</i>
<i>þær lög lögðo, þær lífkuro</i>	<i>they laid laws, they chose lives,</i>
<i>alda börnom, örlög seggia.</i>	<i>for children of all times, the destiny of people</i>

(*Völuspá*, 8, Neckel, 1927)

[P148] *Skáro á skíði* is ambiguous, and can either refer to the scoring activity of the ones giving the *nornir* the names, or the scoring activity of the *nornir* themselves. In either case if what is scored on wood (conceivably the later rune staves) are, indeed, lunar cycles, then we might relate the three to three major aspects of the moon cycle: *Urðr* as the moon per se (which would also be the full moon), *Verðandi* as the waxing moon, and *Skuld* as the waning moon. AVENI (1980, 67) speculates that "compared with the simple annual oscillating motion of the sun, the apparent motion and cyclic changes of the moon are complex. It is perhaps this very reason which led the ancients to expend so much energy trying to comprehend its motion". One full lunar cycle takes 18.6 years to complete, however, it takes 56 years (or three 18.6 year cycles) for the moon to return to the same point in its orbit (the Aubrey holes of Stonehenge of c. 3,300 BCE probably providing the earliest evidence of such observations [NORTH, 1996; CORNELIUS & DEVEREUX, 1996]). The moon phases change over a 29 1/2 day period, and it is easy to find agreement among observers for nine such phases (the dark moon, the new moon, the waxing crescent, the waxing half moon, the waxing gibbous moon, the full moon, the waning gibbous moon, the waning half moon, and the waning crescent moon), and JONSSON (1989) provides an interesting interpretation by equating *Ásynjur* and lunar phases.

We find an additional suggestion about lunar calendars in *Alvismál* (14):

<i>Máni heitir med mönnum</i>	Máni (moon) is the name among humans
<i>en mylinn med goðum</i>	but mylinn among goðs
<i>kalla hverfanda hvel helju í</i>	revolving wheel it is called in Hel
<i>skyndi jötnar</i>	quickening by giants
<i>en skin dvergar</i>	and shine by dwarfs
<i>kalla álfar ártala</i>	elves call it yearmark

The last line is, of course, of particular interest in this context: Since *álfar* is a word which is also used for *Vanir*, we can see them charged with the counting of years with the help of the moon. The *ár* of *ártal* is a word which brings us to a concern central to the Old Norse people: *ár og friður*, the concern with a fertile and peaceful year, a phrase which we shall explore below.

Our exploration of the concepts *auður*, *örlög*, and *nornir* has presented a picture of the genesis of the Norse cosmos from the two gendered origin of the world to the feminine ground of being: Here the richness of *auður* in the form of the norn *Urðr*, the moon which contains all moons, all lunar cycles (three or nine phases), indicates time and therefore *örlög*. The *nornir* take what the sun woman has spun and weave it into the web of the living with all its aspects: fullness and emptiness, death and

life. This layer of being and knowing is an inevitable part of any healing activity in this cosmology, it deals with the understanding of the riches and the emptiness, the life and death contained in the *örlagsími* the *nornir* have laid out for humans at the place of origins.

### 5. Spirit bridge to origins: Tree of life, *Bilröst*, and *Heimdallr*

If healing in *Vanir* Norse mythology involves, among other things, the return to origins, the journey home for *Genesung*, the connection with *auður*, *örlög*, and *nornir*, then the question arises how they might be accessed. The way to these realms of creation, as described in our story, leads from the Tree of Life, which is also related to *Heimdallr* as the guardian, across the spirit bridge *Bilröst* to the realm where healing can be effected; prerequisite for the journey across was the connection with the roots of memory at *Urðarbrunnur*.

*Ymir* is the hermaphroditic or androgynous giant from whom the world was made. The image of the tree of life contains the world. An interesting drum from the Asian tribe of the [P149] Abakantatars, illustrated in FINDEISEN & GEHRTS (1983, 123) shows the World Tree as world giant, which indicates the close connection between the giant from whom everything was created, and the Tree of the World who subsequently holds all after the giant is dead. We can assume an analogous connection in *Vanir* Norse mythology based on the available descriptions. The double gender of giant finds a reflection in the tree: the grammatical gender of the tree may be masculine (e.g., *Yggdrasil*, *Askur*, *Mimameiður*) or feminine (e.g., *Embla*; "of hallowed trees [which are commonly addressed as *frau*, dame, in the later Middle Ages]...", *Dame Ellhorn*, *Frau Weckolter* [GRIMM 1966, 651-653]) - all this in keeping with the all encompassing nature of this image. It is not necessary to repeat the general interpretation of the tree of life (cf. e.g., ELIADE, 1964; HOLMBERG, 1964; JUNG, 1967), instead we will focus solely on those aspects which are of particular relevance for the reconstruction of the indigenous *Vanir* conversation. Obviously, we find trees of rather similar description in many other northern Eurasian traditions.

As noted in our story, not much is said in the known sources about the creation of the tree itself, except that we find a deep connection with creation by virtue of one of its roots reaching to *Hvergelmir*, a source in *Niflheimr* and also one of the sources of the world tree. *Hvergelmir* is the source of the rivers *Élivágar*, which flow to the meeting point with the forces of *Múspellheimr*, all of which subsequently allows the emergence of *Ymir* (nurtured by *Auðhumla*) and the creation of the world. The tree thus reaches into the deepest layers of the creation process, and feeds one of its roots from there. The other two roots of the tree lead to *Mímisbrunnur* (a source of wisdom, particularly for *Óðinn*) and to *Urðarbrunnur*, the latter finding the greatest mention in sources and interpretations. The nurturing fluids from these three sources are of obvious importance for the sustenance of the world, and so is *aurr*: BOYER (1993) translates it as primeval slime; in *Völuspá* it is what nurtures the tree, which subsequently dispenses nurturing dew (*dögg*) into the valleys to further life. That *aurr* is also a synonym for earth (*Alvísmál*) reminds us of the nurturing function of the earth. In the words of SNORRI (*Gylfaginning*, FAULKES, 1987, 19):

It is also said that the norns that dwell by Weird's well take water from the well each day and with it the mud that lies round the well and pour it up over the ash so that its branches may not rot or decay.

And this water is so holy that all things that come into that well go as white as the membrane called the skin that lies round the inside of an eggshell, as it says here:

I know an ash - its name is Yggdrasil, high tree, holy - drenched with white mud.

From it come the dews that fall in the valleys. It stands forever green above Weird's well.

The dew that falls from it on to the earth, this is what people call honeydew, and from it bees feed. (FAULKES, 1987)

(We can suspect later reflections of this in the use of milk as offering, connecting all this with the primal cow; there are connections between "milk and the northern goddess," and the stand-churn evokes imagery related to the one discussed here. See DAVIDSON, 1996.)

The tree is thus the central image of nurturance, of nurturing and being nurtured, and the *nornir* are intimately involved with this process of furthering life while also connected with the lunar and

feminine cycle. Out of the many aspects of the tree there is one other which is of central importance: The tree goes by many names and a number of divine spirits have been equated with it. The most interesting of these may be *Heimdallr*. He is most commonly known as the white *ás*, and the originator of the social ranks among the Norse in *Rígsþula* (which leads the *völva* to address her audience as: *mögu Heimdalar, meiri ok minni*, sons of Heimdallr, of higher and lower rank; *Völuspá*). However, there are indications that *Heimdallr* is of greater age and connected with the *Vanir* layer of Norse mythology: *Thá kvað Heimdallr, hvítastr ása, vissi hann vel fram, sem Vanir adhrir* - Then spoke *Heimdallr*, the whitest of the *Æsir*, who wisely foresees the future like the other *Vanir* (*Þrymskviða*). NÄSSTRÖM [P150] comments: " This could be interpreted as an indication that his wisdom was comparable with that of the *Vanir*, although he himself belonged to the *Æsir*. ... On the other hand, there is nothing to contradict the idea that *Heimdallr* resided among the *Vanir*" (1995, 70). Another hint can be taken from the numerous instances where the *Æsir* and *Álfar* (elves) are mentioned as the main tribes (see NÄSSTRÖM, 1995, 61). *Álfar* stems from *\*albh*, to shine, to be white, and *Heimdallr* is commonly mentioned as the whitest of the *Æsir*, the shining one (which quickly leads one to suspect a sun connection; his alternate names *Gullintanni*, and the name of his horse, *Gulltoppr*, containing the word for gold, suggest this also). (*Álfar* also seems to be an alternate name for the *Vanir*.) Additionally, we find etymologies which connect *heimr* not just with world (together with *-dalur* then *Heimdallr* could mean valley of the world, maybe the valley where the dew from the tree falls), but also with bright light, just as *-dallr* may mean shining (also indicated by his other name *Dellingur*). While all this is difficult to force into the consistency of linear analytical logic, it may be compelling as a mytho-logic understanding. On this basis it seems reasonable to assume that *Heimdallr's* roots reach beyond his well known *Æsir* affiliation into older layers of Norse mythology prior to the creation of more apparent social stratification.

BOYER'S interpretation of *Heimdallr* is consistent with this interpretation of the great age of this divine spirit, even though he suggests a later date for the equivalence:

There is a constant idea throughout the conceptual complex concerning him: that of origin, of support, of guardianship. This is why ... he came to personify, probably at a fairly late date, the ash or yew *Yggdrasil*, which is generally recognized as the most striking, eloquent, and magnificent conception of this universe. ... We [can] obtain a series going from *Yggdrasil* (or *Jörmungandr-Midhgarðsormr*) to *Heimdallr*, which certainly looks like an equivalent. ... Nothing more is needed to make *Heimdallr* a perfectly convincing representation of the Germano-Nordic mental world. (1993, 240)

We assume that the equivalence *Heimdallr* - tree of life is of an older age, because of the ancient context of the whole imagery together with the way in which he was birthed (including the possibility of his birthing from nine giantesses rather than just sisters, maybe even the nine months before his birth). DE VRIES also gives a possible etymological interpretation of *dallr* as *ausspriessender baumstamm* or sprouting tree trunk. DE SANTILLANA & VON DECHEND (1969) concur that "Heimdal stands for the world axis" (158). The nine mothers of *Heimdallr* quickly bring to mind these nine spirits of the sea who turn the mill (DE SANTILLANA & VON DECHEND, 1969, 158; SNORRI's *Skáldskaparmál*, 25). His head is *Mjötúðr*, the measurer; DE VRIES glosses *mjotudhr* as *schicksalsbeherrscher*; *schicksal, tod* - governor of fate/destiny; fate/destiny, death. Thus we suspect an intimate relationship between *Heimdallr* and the *nornir*. All this may relate to the worlds which the *völva* of *Völuspá* (2) claims to understand: "Nine worlds I know, nine spaces of the measure-tree which is beyond the earth. - *nío man ek heima, nío íviði, miotvið maeran fyr mold neðan*." (A variant text reads *ívidjur* making it the giantesses, thus relating it conceivably to his mothers.) DE SANTILLANA & VON DECHEND comment after this translation:

Heimdal is honored by a second name, *Hallinskidi*. This name is said to mean a bent, bowed or slanted stake or post. To be bent or inclined befits the world axis and all that belongs to it ... Grimm says that it is "worthy of remark that *Hallinskidi* and *Heimdal* are quoted among the names for the ram" [*Footnote*: ... Rydberg (p. 593) spells it: "In the old Norse poetry *Vedr* (wether, ram), *Heimdal* and the *Heimdal* epithet *hallinskidi*, are synonymous."] (158)

As concerns *mjötvidr*, A. V. Ström renders vol. 2:

*Ich erinnere mich neun Welten  
Neun im Baume (oder neun Heime),  
des ruhmvollen Massbaums  
unter der Erde.*

I remember nine worlds  
nine in the tree (or nine homes),  
of the famous measure tree  
under the earth.

[P151] And he quotes Hallberg's statement: "Der Baum selbst ist das Mass für die Existenz der umgebenden Welt - in der Zeit" [The tree itself is the measure for the existence of the surrounding

world - in time]. (386)

While most interpretations of the nine worlds seem to focus on a spatial understanding, here we find an interpretation in terms of world ages.

Heimdal stands for the equinoctial colure <sup>[8]</sup> which "accompanies" the slowly turning, wholly abstract and invisible axis along the surface of the sphere. It will emerge presently that "axis" always means the whole "frame" of a world-age, given by the equinoctial and solstitial colures. More understandable also becomes another epithet of Heimdal, namely, Vindler, of which Rydberg states (p. 595): "The name is a subform of vindill and comes from vinda, to twist or turn, wind, to turn anything around rapidly. As the epithet 'the turner' is given to that god who brought friction-fire (bore-fire) to man, and who is himself the personification of this fire, then it must be synonymous with 'the borer'" (159)

DE VRIES glosses the *vindr* of *Vindhlér* as *wind, sturm* (wind, storm), but also as *wende* (turning point), and the *hlér* as debated, with the possible meanings of the name of a sea god, protection, mild or soft (while *vinda* is glossed as to turn); *vindr* can also mean spiral or slanted (as adjective).

*Heimdallr's* name *Hallinskíði* is also a name for ram (DE VRIES; with *hallin* as *geneigt*, slanted, and *skið* or *skiði* bringing us back to the scoring and the wooden log; or *skíði* as a name for the ram, *hallin*, cold, leading to the clear sky of a frosty night, maybe reminding us of the nordic winternights when stars connected with *Heimdallr* are visible, since the summer months are not good for star gazing). DE VRIES also mentions *Heimdallr als Gott der himmelsaxe, die als schräggestellter stab dargestellt wurde*, as god of the sky axis, represented as slanted staff. JONSSON (1989) identifies *Heimdallr* with the constellation Cepheus, with his left foot as Polaris, his head marked out by the "hole" in the milky way, and *ursa minor* as his horn. This way he stands on top of *Yggdrasil*, and reaches upward into the sky. All this suggest a close affinity or mythological identity of *Yggdrasil*, *Heimdallr*, and *Bilröst* (but more about this below).

*Heimdallr's* horn and his connection with the ram also points to some interesting connections: The horn may, of course, be most obviously the crescent moon, which, again, would connect him with the lunar activity of the *nornir* and the scoring of fateful time on horns. The significance of the ram in European prehistory (the animal was probably domesticated around 8,000 BCE; BURENHULT, 1993, 69), where "sheep and goats account for 90% of animal bones found in Neolithic settlements" (GIMBUTAS, 1989, 75), is great. With the rise of agriculture in northern Germany and Scandinavia beginning approximately around 4,000 BCE we may also find the ram there during this time. (CLUTTON-BROCK [1987, 57] suggests that "there can be little doubt that it was during the eighth and seventh millennia BC that man [sic!] first began to domesticate sheep and goats within the region of western Asia and that these early pastoralists spread *rather rapidly* westwards into Europe" (our emphasis); the domestication of cattle seems to have occurred around the same time, probably in northern Europe independently from Egypt and Mesopotamia.) GIMBUTAS associates the ram with the bird goddess, which in the northern traditions are the *Valkyrjur*, who are closely connected with the *nornir* or at times even used synonymously. (And the spiralling ram horns remind us of the significance of the spiral in the Old European culture connoting the union of female [P152] and male, death and regeneration, and the ever evolving turning of the moon and sun; GIMBUTAS, 1989.)

All this puts *Heimdallr* in a rather central position as the world tree or *axis mundi*, primarily connected with the solar and stellar aspect of time keeping and fatefulness. He holds the knowledge of the ages as he is the measure for the changes of the polar stars. It is beyond the scope of this article to explore the line *Heimdallr* - tree of the world - *Óðinn* drumming for *seiður* - the special tree from which the shamanic drum is made - the drum drawn in the center of Sámi and Siberian drums (about which something will be said below). Or the connections with *Sampo* of Kalevala fame as explored by DE SANTILLANA & VON DECHEND, 1969 (where we can assume a connection with the Samoyed *sâmp?o?* - *zaubern*, to do magic, *sampa* - *die Schattenseele des Verstorbenen mit Liedern unter Begleitung der Zaubertrommel in die Unterwelt führen* - to guide the shadow soul of the deceased with songs accompanied by the magic drum into the underworld [JANHUNEN, 1977, 135]). The old shamanic understanding of the tree is profound and rich in its multidimensionality. The tree inevitably has a central function in any magical or healing work since the first humans were

made from trees. As *axis mundi* it allows the seeing of the meaning of time or the fateful timelines which the *nornir* have attached to the center. REUTTER (1934) has pointed out that the *örlögsíma*, *die Schicksalsfäden*, the lines of fate, need something steady to which they can be attached, otherwise their work won't hold. Since the pole star can only be seen at night, he considers all related work nocturnal, whether of the *nornir* or those prophecizing (e.g., *útisetur at spyrja örlaga*, REUTTER gives *Norges gamle love* as source).

When it comes to the measuring function of *Heimdallr* and the *axis mundi* it is tempting to speculate on the ages when the Norse cosmology started to take shape. We find examples for this in the literature. JONSSON (1989) dates the age of *Ymir* to the the age of Gemini, since he relates this androgyne or hermaphrodite to that particular constellation. DE SANTILLANA & VON DECHEND (1969, 59) see reason to put a zero point at approximately 5,000 BCE, which, again, is in the age of Gemini. This is consistent with the rough chronology we are suggesting for the time of the *Vanir* layer as a possible pre-Indoeuropean layer, but already connected with agriculture and animal husbandry (given the tentativeness of most dates for these times this seems a reasonable, but cautious assumption).

*Bilröst* (which seems to be the earlier form to *Bifröst*; SIMEK, 1995, 49) has created some discussion whether it is the rainbow (which most scholars seem to think) or the milky way; in an indigenous scheme of things it would make sense for it to be the rainbow during the day, and the milky way during the night. Leaving alone a possible connection with the goddess *Bil* (meaning *Augenblick*, moment), we can interpret it as *aufenthalt, zeit, augenblick, schwache stelle* (stay, time, moment, weak spot); but there is also a possible connection with the root *\*bhi*, which means *zweiheit*, double nature, Greek αμφι, and may refer to our suggestion of rainbow during the day and milky way at night. *Röst* can mean *rast, meile* (rest, mile) or *strudel, mahlstrom* (vortex, maelstream), and finally, and most interestingly, *schiff* (boat). The latter gloss is particularly noteworthy in the context of the innumerable boats we find on rock carvings all over Fennoscandia, Sápmi, and eastern Russia (dating back to times beginning at least as early as 4,000 BCE). They may have been the means to travel across this special bridge into the spirit realm. Excavations have shown that offerings have been made at these rock carving panels (relating them to the Norse sacrificial ceremony *blót*, and subsequently the possibility of journeying with the help of chanting and drumming, see below). Travelling across *Bilröst* may allow one to reach that place in the sky, *Urðarbrunnur*, where we can connect with memory and fate.

[P153] All this leads us to conclude that travel to the origins of creation for the sake of healing, the journey home for *Genesung* involves the prerequisite of wholeness, meaning the journey with the tree, on the ancestral path, to the source of the fates, and continuing from there under *Heimdallr's* watchful guardianship further into other realms which may be helpful for healing and wholeness.

## 6. Her tears are red gold: *Freyja*

As the old custom requires it seems appropriate to introduce *Freyja* by looking at her ancestry. *Freyja* is *Vanadís*, spirit, deity, *vaettur, goð, gyðja*, lady of the *Vanir*. She is the daughter of *Njörður* and his unnamed sister according to *Ynglingasaga*, and she is the bride and sister of *Freyr*. Among the *Vanir* it was custom for sister and brother to wed, but that was forbidden among the *Æsir* (*Heimskringla*, HOLLANDER, 1964, 8). SNORRI never reveals who *Njörður's* sister is, but Tacitus tells us in his *Germania* about one *Nerþuz*, whom he also calls *Terra Mater* (Mother Earth), a Great Goddess revered and sacrificed to among the many Germanic tribes of Northern Europe in the 1st century C.E. According to his description she travels among her people, covered by cloth in a wagon, drawn by cows, accompanied by her priest.

Then days are joyous, and whichever places she deems worthy of her visit as a guest are festive. They do not enter upon wars, they do not take up arms; all iron is locked up (emphasis added); only at this time are peace and quiet known and only at this time loved. (TACITUS, 1967, 83-84).

He goes on to tell about the bathing of *Nerþuz* - or the image of her - in a lake. She is attended to by slaves who are immediately swallowed up by that same lake, after having set eyes on their deity or

*dís* (same as Latin *deus*). Her resting place or temple seems to be a grove by the ocean, probably on an island in the Baltic Sea. Findings of the so-called bog people in Denmark, people of both genders who seem to have been sacrificed and thrown into a lake along with wagons, support his story (MENON, 1997; GLOB, 1969).

The etymological connection between *Njörður* and *Nerþuz* is clear. The meaning of their names is something like 'the strong one', 'the powerful one' or 'the nurturing one', related to Old Irish *nert* (power) as well as the Icel. *naera*, as mentioned above. As we have seen with the words *Auður* and *Urður*, the fem. and masc. form of those words are the same, and the feminine is thought to be the more original (SIMEK, 1993; MAGNUSSON, 1989) and so it is not unlikely that *Njörður* and *Nerþuz* are not only brother and sister as well as husband and wife, but are originally one and the same (SIMEK, 1993). They both have a close connection to the sea, her grove was by the sea and *Njörður* lives by the sea at *Nóatún* (shipyard). They both are *goðs* of *ár og friður*, fertility, good harvest and peace, as is apparent from Tacitus' tale and SNORRI who distinguishes between the roles of *Óðinn* on one hand and the *Vanir goðs* on the other. He says in the *Saga of Hákon the Good*: "Óthin's toast was to be drunk first - that was for victory and power to the king - then Njorth's and Freys for good harvest and for peace." (HOLLANDER, 1964, 107).

*Nerþuz* could have been worshipped as a divine being in the Bronze Age or even before. That her or his origin - and with that the origin of the *Vanir* - can be traced back to pre-Indoeuropean times is supported by the emphasis on peace and joyful fertility evidenced in the archeological findings in all of Europe from Neolithic times and up until the Bronze Age in Northern Europe (GIMBUTAS, 1989; 1991). The importance placed on all iron being locked in during the festivities of *Nerþuz*, supports the idea that her time was before the Iron Age, that the cold metal is an insult to her and represents in the memory of her people the destruction of the peace, the disturbance of her ultimate values *ár og friður*. The value system represented by these words is almost forgotten by the time of Tacitus and the Roman Empire, but only almost, and the appearance of *Nerþuz* brings it back for a few days each year. The Great Goddess who creates from herself is in fact an androgynous or two-gendered being.

[I]n the course of the seventh and sixth millennia BC the androgynous goddess of Old Europe with phallic neck and egg shaped body separates into female and male elements, the male becoming the fertilizing power and the female the gestating womb. The image of the god appears in Old Europe about the same time as in Anatolia. (BARING and CASHFORD, 1991, 74)

With time those two halves of *Nerþuz* would have become sister and brother. The priest who attended to her evolved into a god, her brother-lover, and eventually by the time of the Sagas he has become the deity in the wagon, a male *goð*, still known by her original name. This shift is reflected in tales about carved figures of *Freyr* and *Þór* (who at times seem to have had the same function as fertility *goðs*) with their wagons, driving around or standing in *hofs* or *hörgs* (temples) accompanied by *gyðjur* (*Njála*, ch.88 and *Flateyjarbók* - the saga of *Gunnar helmingur* -, see NÄSSTRÖM'S transl., 1995, 55-56). But *Nerþuz* isn't lost. The pair is reborn in the daughter and son of the original pair, in *Freyja* and *Freyr*.

As mentioned above *Freyja* simply means Lady. It may have been the honorary title of her *gyðjur* (priestesses); with time, and because of the goddess' many names, it came to be her name (just as *gyðja* in modern Icelandic has come to mean goddess). This also makes sense since her proper name may no longer have been safe to use with the advent of Christianity. Many of her other names were, however, still remembered at the time of SNORRI, who attributes her plentitude of names to her travels among many different peoples while looking for her lost lover husband *Óður*. He mentions *Mardöll* (shining sea), *Hörn* (flax), *Gefn* (the giving one) and *Syr* (sow), in addition to all the many *kenningar* which reflect her properties, such as: "possessor of the fallen slain, and of Sessrúmnir, and tom-cats, of *Brisingamen*, *Vanagoð*, *Vanadís*, the fairtear *goð* and love goddess" (*Skáldskaparmál*, 28, FAULKES, 1987).

*It grátfagra goð*, the fair-tear *goð*, refers to *Freyja's* tears being gold. "It is normal to qualify weeping by any of the names for *Freyja*, and to call gold that, and these kennings are varied in many

ways, calling it hail or rain or storm or drops or showers or cascades of her eyes or cheeks or jowls or eyelashes or eyelids." (*Skáldskaparmál*, FAULKES, 1987, 44)

She is seen as the star whom we call Venus, the *Vanir*-star, and there is an etymological connection between *Vanir* and Venus (DE VRIES: *Zu vinr ... mit hinsicht auf lat. Venus 'liebeshöttin', ai. vanas 'lust', gottheiten der fruchtbarkeit* - related to *vinr ...* with respect to Latin *Venus* 'goddess of love', old Indic *vanas* 'lust,' divine beings of fertility; similarly MAGNUSSON). She is also seen as the moon, as reflected in her name *Mardöll*, the one shining on the sea. *Gullveig* 'golden liquid' (*Freyja's* tears) or *Heiður* 'shining', are names that fit well for this *goð* of the golden tears and her *völva*. In *Völuspá* (21) the *völva* herself tells the story of how the peace got lost and *Vanadís* was burned and stung with spears in the hall of *Óðinn*:

<i>Það man hún fólkvíg</i>	She well remembers
<i>fyrst í heimi</i>	world's first was
<i>er Gullveigu geirum studdu</i>	when glowing Gullveig with spears was stung
<i>og í höllu Hárs hana brenndu</i>	and in the hall of High was burned
<i>þrisvar brenndu</i>	thrice burned
<i>þrisvar borna</i>	thrice born
<i>oft, ósjaldan</i>	again and often
<i>þó hún enn lifir</i>	yet she still is standing

[P155] This is the tale of the first war between the *Æsir* and *Vanir*, a war the *Vanir* won, by using *seiður* for magical means of battle, but it was only the beginning of a long succession of wars and many a fight. At last the two tribes made truce and exchanged hostages, which led to the inclusion of *Njörður*, *Freyja* and *Freyr* into the pantheon of the now dominant *Æsir goðs* or *díar* (like the above mentioned *dís* related to Latin *deus*); this may also be the reason why their names were remembered while the names of other *Vanir goðs* may be lost. The story is a perfect example of the hybridization GIMBUTAS assumes took place between the invading Indoeuropean tribes - and their deities - and the Old European tribes.

Following this collision of cultures, Old Europe was transformed, and later European prehistory and history became a marble cake, composed of non-Indoeuropean and Indoeuropean elements. The subsequent existence of a very strong non-Indoeuropean linguistic and mythological substratum cannot be overlooked. (GIMBUTAS, 1991, 352)

In spite of numerous longlasting wars and struggles between the tribes, there were intermarriages both between the people of *Vanir* and *Æsir*, and between those two and the tribes pictured as the giants in the myths.

Part of the hybridization is the blurring of distinction between the *goðs* of the different tribes on one hand, and the splitting of one and the same into many on the other. Some see *Freyja* and *Skaði* (the giantess who was married to *Njörður* and who runs in the mountains on her skis, hunting) as one and the same deity (or two aspects of one), and relate the two to *Frigg*, creating a triple goddess image (see GOUCHET, 1997). NÄSSTRÖM (1995, 98-123) claims that there is evidence for *Frigg* originally being a *Vanir* deity and the same as *Freyja*. They are clearly related, both are strongly connected to healing and the connection of all three to a *goð* called *Óðinn/Óður* is not to be denied. Eventually all goddesses or deities are related, and may be traced back to one, but here we will not assume that *Freyja's* relationship to those two is any stronger than to the other *Ásynjur*, such as *Gefjun*, *Iðunn*, *Eir*, *Sif*, *Hel*, *Gerður* or *Nanna*. It is easy to find links between all of them, and SNORRI tells us that any *Ásynja* can be called by another's name, but *Freyja* is magnificent enough by herself. Despite the small amount of information we have about *Freyja* in the old literature we still get a picture of a great being, a woman of great *auður*.

*Freyja's* lover and husband is *Óður*. "*Óður* went away on long journeys, but *Freyja* cries for him and her tears are red gold." (*Skáldskaparmál*, 35). We have mentioned before that his name is the same as *Óðinn's* and that this *Óður* could be the older version of her consort, the one lost to her by the time of patriarchal warfare. In the Eddapoeem *Fjölsvinnsmál* or *The Lay of Svipdag*, the *valkyrja Menglöd* (she who loves jewels, or she who loves her necklace - thought to be *Freyja*) sits on a mountain, surrounded by a ring of fire (gold - *brisingur*). She reminds us of *Brynhildur* or *Sigurdrífa*, who was punished by *Óðinn* (for not obeying his fatherly orders), and put to sleep in a ring of fire until a hero could free her from there. *Menglöðis* also awaiting her lover, *Svipdagur*, who is sent on a quest by

his evil stepmother (TITCHENELL, 1985, sees *Svipdagur* as *Óður* and his stepmother as *Skaði*); he gets support and advice from his dead mother, the *völva Gró* (her name is English 'to grow', a name also used for a giantess, wife of *Aurvandill*, and which is very related to the function of an earth goddess). The poem has a typical *hieros gamos* character. Of interest is the answer the gatekeeper *Fjölsviður* gives to *Svipdagur* when he asks about the mountain where the *valkyrja* resides (stanza 36):

<i>Lyfjaberg það heitir</i>	Lyfjaberg it is called
<i>en það hefir lengi verið</i>	and has long been a joy
<i>sjúkum og sárum gaman;</i>	to the sick and the wounded
<i>heil verður hver</i>	whole becomes each woman
<b>[P156]</b> <i>þótt hafí árs sótt,</i>	cured from her sickness
<i>ef það klífur kona</i>	whom the mountain climbs

The words *árs sótt* have been found difficult to interpret, however, the main message is clear: Climbing the mountain of *Menglöð* is a secure healing practice for anyone, ill or wounded, but especially for women. In *Oddrúnarkviða* (9) we find an indication of *Freyja's* help to women in childbirth, there accompanied by her fellow *göð Frigg* and other *hollar véttir* (good beings) and *göð*.

Certain plants and trees were holy to *Freyja*. The elder tree is to this day thought to be *Freyja's* special tree, and it is considered to lessen the pains of women at childbirth (NÄSSTRÖM, 1995, 80). In the Danish folk belief *Freyja* wanders about in the sky, but when she comes to earth, she places herself in the eldertree in every garden and watches over the house. She protects against fire, gives food, warmth and clothes to the family, who in return offers to her and the little beings (dwarfs?) a little milk, some wine and a bit of bread, especially on Valborgssnight (DRUEHYLD, 1987, 146).

The stanzas on healing from the *Sigurdrífumál* have been quoted at the beginning of this essay, and it is easy to see *Sigurdrífa* as the valkyrie aspect of *Freyja*, or as one of her sisters or *gyðjur*. The *valkyrjur* are in the literature called the daughters of *Óðinn*, *dísir* or *nönnur Herjans*. Their connection to him might be a late invention or development. In *Gylfaginning* (24) SNORRI quotes an old poem saying:

<i>Fólkvangr heitir</i>	<i>Fólkvangur</i> is called
<i>en þar Freyja ræður</i>	where <i>Freyja</i> is in charge
<i>sessu kostum í sal;</i>	of the hall's seating
<i>hálfan val</i>	half the slain
<i>hún kys hverjan dag</i>	she chooses every day
<i>en hálfan Óðinn á.</i>	but half belongs to <i>Óðinn</i> .

*Freyja* can shape shift into a falcon, and famous are the stories about *Loki* who borrows or steals her falconcloak. Falcon in Old Norse and Icelandic is *valr*, the same name as for those who die in battle, the slain. The *valkyrjur*, those who choose the *valr*, the slain, were likely originally the bird messengers of the great goddess of death and regeneration, having a function very similar to the vultures shown on the 8,000 year old walls of *Catal Hüyük*, where we also find a statue of a goddess with two lions or panthers (cats) by her side. CAMERON quotes MELLART, who was in charge of the archeological expedition to this site in 1961-65. He says of the dreadful paintings of vultures eating corpses of people:

The interpretation of this scene again presents difficulties. It is unlikely that these people should have felt the need to show on such monumental scale a rather macabre feature of their burial sites; the cleaning of the corpses by vultures. If we bear in mind that the vulture is a symbol of the Great Goddess in her aspect of death it would seem more likely that the scene represents the goddess of death claiming her own - the ultimate fate of mankind - but at the same time a necessary condition for the resurrection and rebirth, the aim of every religion. (29)

And CAMERON adds: "The fact that the vultures were frequently painted in red rather than black could reinforce in symbolic terms the concept of rebirth" (1981, 29).

This reference to the vultures of *Catal Hüyük* is not meant to indicate a direct correlation between the goddess culture in Anatolia in prehistoric times and the culture of the *Vanir*, although such a relationship could be argued for. It is meant to give an indication of the role of the fateful

birdgoddess wherever she is found in the world. Death for her is a part of a spiraling process, of nurturing and being nurtured, she is as active in the slaying part as in the reviving and healing part, but those parts cannot be separated. The *valkyrjur*, those who weave the web of fate for men in battle, were the messengers of *Freyja*, the *Vanadís*. Their fate aspect connects them to the *nornir* also, and as we have mentioned earlier, the words *norn*, [P157] *valkyrja* and *dís* are all interchangeable - all are being used for female beings who play an important role in the fate of individuals of human and divine ancestry, as well as the fate of the worlds. A part of their role is the nurturing, healing, regenerating role. They serve, tend to, nurture and heal the dead in *Valhöll* and *Fólkvangur* every night after the day's battle, so that in the morning they can rise again. Some *valkyrjur* take it upon themselves to protect certain people from death, they were their *hamingjur* or *fylgjur*. Although in so many of the myths that have come down to us they are connected to the battlefield, we can assume that they had a function around life, death and rebirth even in times when war was an unknown phenomenon. The many poems about *valkyrjur*, of whom the *Völsunga* poems are the best known, show well the enormous power to do good and ill, those beings were thought to have. We also see from the poems and stories, that they were thought to be woman, bird, *gyðja* and *vættur* all at once.

The *valkyrja* as well as *Freyja* are a sexual beings. *Loki* calles *Freyja* the whore of every *Ás* and *Álfur* who are assembled at the great *blót* in *Aegir's* hall - and that is pretty much everybody. She calls him a liar and her father *Njörður* supports her saying that it is no big deal if a wedded woman has lovers beside her husband (*Lokasenna*, 30). SNORRI puts it more delicately when he states that *Freyja* is very fond of love songs and that it is good to call on her in matters of love. She is a fertility *goð*, a love *goð*, *ástaguð*, and her beauty is unmatched. The importance of joy in sexuality is clearly one of the aspects that distinguishes the *Vanir* from the *Æsir*. Sexual activity is not only considered healing for the individual *goðs* or humans, but for the earth and the whole World Tree. In *Flateyjarbók* (*Sörla þáttur*, 14th century C.E., see translation in NÄSSTRÖM, 1995, 108) contains a story of *Freyja's* own healing journey: She visits the dwarves in the stone and lays eyes on the *Brisingamen*, the necklace of fire, which the four dwarves are crafting. She is instantly captured by the beauty of the jewel and the dwarves are captured by her beauty. She offers them gold and silver for the *men*, but they have enough of such *auður* - what they want is one night with her each. She agrees. The next four nights she lies with the dwarfs in the dark of the stone and comes back with the *Brisingamen*, which immediately becomes an object of jealousy for *Óðinn*, who is at the time in love with *Freyja*. The story can be seen as reflecting the nights when *Freyja* as the star Venus is absent from the sky (or also the nights of the darkness of the moon). We find similar story, although more dramatic, in the myth of *Inanna's* descent to her underworld sister *Ereshkigal* (WOLKSTEIN and KRAMER, 1983; MEADOR, 1992). This *Freyja* myth reflects another kind of inner journey in search of *heill*, wholeness, the treasure, the *auður* lying in the deepest dark. The four dwarves could be those of the creation story who hold up the four corners of the earth by a different name (the four directions who so often are significant for any circle of completion in indigenous thinking).

The nature of the *Brisingamen* has been a riddle for many a scholar through time. We could hypothesize that the dwarves, the *svartálfar* or *dvergar* have a similar position to the blacksmiths in Siberian traditions who forge the shamans' accoutrements; in both cases we find that they prepare tools essential for the functioning of the one doing shamanic work. But what is this gold that the *svartálfar* are working with, the gold which gives *Freyja* tremendous healing power? The use of gold began after 6,000 BCE, but probably did not reach the area under discussion before 4,500 to 3,500 BCE. The dwarves-as-smiths description obviously reflects this more recent time period, however, we have to assume that the *Vanir* layer reaches into earlier times, as indicated above. Then we have to think of the tremendous amber necklaces left for offerings in sacrificial places. Amber is a tree resin, which brings us back to the tree of life and the nutritious *aurr* which comes from the spring and covers the tree, and subsequently produces the dew which falls on the dales. Amber originated in the palaeogene (be[P158]ginning approximately 55 million years ago) from the resin of subtropical pine trees (mostly in southern Sweden and western parts of Finland), and can to this day be found in sediments from eastern England across northern Germany and Denmark to all around the lower half of the Baltic Sea, but even farther east inland (REINICKE, 1986). The richest finds of amber have

been made in the layer of so-called blue earth (loam, clay sand), but it can also be found on beaches. Since we have sufficient evidence for the religious significance of amber in northern European prehistory, and since the context of amber fits well with the context of the tree of life, we feel it is reasonable to assume that *Freyja's* necklace was originally made of amber, and that its power comes from its origin in the source of *Urðarbrunnur*, the nutritious depth of memory from which it fertilizes and heals life.<sup>[9]</sup> The possibility of an etymological connection between *aurr* and Urgerman \**auzom*, relating it to Latin *aurum* supports this interpretation (DE VRIES).

Our description of *Freyja* indicates that she is not just a central feminine being in Norse mythology, but also that she is primary as far as the healing arts and shamanism are concerned. She has an intimate connection not just with many other divine beings, but especially the *nornir*, *dísir*, and *valkyrjur* as well as the *dvergjar* or *svartálfar*.

### 7. The movement of healing: Becoming present through the past

We began our exploration of *Vanir* Norse mythology with LINCOLN's notion that healing means, in fact, the manipulation of the full structure of the cosmos, and the understanding that healing involves a journey to origins. From there we investigated creation's beginning and the fateful destinies laid out at the source, then we described the image of the world tree and its significance for the life process and healing. Lastly, we explored the significance of *Freyja*, a figure strongly affiliated with healing activities, but truly looming much larger and encompassing so much more in Norse mythology. While we have made some reference to the process implied in all this, it will be important to focus in greater detail on the Old Norse conceptualizations of the flow of life and the process of healing in particular.

BAUSCHATZ (1982) has provided us with a thorough analysis of *The Well and the Tree*<sup>[10]</sup>, and the movement which connects their various aspects. He identifies the tree with the realm of action, contrasting it with the well as the realm of motives and reasons (analogous to our interpretations of the well as the fateful ground, the primarily lunar aspect, and the tree as the primarily solar and stellar aspect as *Heimdallr* reaches into the sky). The tree is thus also the realm in which illness occurs as ill fate (presumably because that is the fate or because of interference with one's fate). We could say that this is also the suffering of the human as tree. Consequently, the spiritual and causative understanding of lack of health needs to be sought in a place which contains the material, so to speak, from which actions are formed. Here we find those ephemeral threads laid with the material from the spinning of the sun mother, the lunar and fateful reflections of solar activity:

[P159] Within the well, the interrelations among actions rather than actions themselves are of paramount importance; here, within the realm of the well, are the motives and reasons for and the final causes of the acts that occur within the realm of the tree. Within the well, the power of all events past still surges, writhes, twists, whelms, and weaves the whole of this greater reality 'out'. (125)

This evocative description of *Urðarbrunnur* gives a clear image of riches which we find in *auður*.

This leads to an interpretation, which allows us to understand the process of health and illness more clearly within this cosmology:

[The human being] stands outside the past and has no direct perception of it or of its force. Nor can [it] see all of its structure clearly; indeed, most of it is hidden. It does influence activities outside the well, but in ways that are not usually directly perceptible. Additionally, events of the present rush around [humans] as if from behind them. Some of these events are insignificant, but some are important and past influenced. [Humans'] striving to understand and sort these out comes only from [their] ability to know, albeit dimly, the power of the past as it reaches out and around [them] to structure activities present or 'becoming'. To put it another way, [the human being] never attaches directly to the pull of events of the well as they reach out but only can be pulled with events as they return to the well. And these events, it can be seen are never fully observable to the individual involved. (140)

In this sense illness is the power of the past reaching out and structuring the becoming of an individual as destiny. Understand the destiny of illness then is one way to come to be present. The pull into the past is the force of possible understanding. *Genesen* as journey home happens as human action returns to the well, which may allow fateful meaning to emerge in the process.

BAUSCHATZ then makes a point, which is at the center of the process in this cosmology. In the life of the tree and the well we don't find past - present - future, or past and present, but past and nonpast, or past and coming to be present (he supports this with a detailed analysis of the verb tenses in the Germanic languages). The

temporal scheme makes two points about Germanic time that are not immediately noticeable to us. First, time is binary, not tripartite. It divides into past and nonpast, not into past, present and future. There are no explicit materials to a concept like the future. Events that seem to us to be future-oriented turn out, when carefully examined, to refer directly to the interaction of the past with events of the nonpast, of that which has occurred with that which is in the process of occurrence. (141)

...within the binary time system, the past is constantly increasing and pulling more and more time and events into itself; it alone has any assured strength or reality. Because of this, time is ever-changing, growing, and evolving. ... The container will eventually become full. (142)

Reading *Völuspá* we find a vivid illustration of this process unfolding as the *völva* looks into the past to interpret the coming to be present of the now (she is *not* looking into the future). As the container, the well, fills up with the past *Ragnarök* unfolds. The scoring which is done on behalf of or by the *normir* keeps track of the process at *Urðarbrunnur* through the observation of the lunar cycles.

Norse mythology tells us of the human being as created from tree, and as the living tree it is informed and destined by the well, nurtured by history:

The Germanic privileged moment is different from both the Christian one and from that which Eliade describes [as sacral or primal time]; what Eliade has called 'duration' and 'history' from the essence of the 'sacral' moment in Germanic thinking. The Norns speak the *örlög* and sustain the tree *hvern dag* 'every day'. These paradigmatic gestures do not look back to some primal moment, to some original act that is to be reenacted or commemorated; rather, they empower and create the present! For Eliade, the past is primary; so, too, for the Germanic past. [P160] That past, however, is not distant, inaccessible, or purer than the present, nor is it in the process of deteriorating through duration or through the accumulation of time. The opposite is the case: The past grows and becomes more powerful through duration and the flow of time. It does not recede; it is unremittingly near and 'hot', in Lévi-Strauss's sense. Eliade's past is fullest in its primal state; the Germanic past is always fullest 'now'. (151/2)

If we want to empower the present, be it for the sake of healing or some other important reason, then it is mandatory in this worldview to connect with the past, to seek counsel at *Urðarbrunnur* from the *normir*. Our brief personal stories, and our discussion of *Ragnarök* were given in this context of the power of the past and its unrelenting heat as our personal wells fill, and as the communal well fills. If we want to understand the coming to be present more deeply, then, as the Norse traditions tell us, we could employ the services of those who are especially adept at looking into the past and seeing the threads of *örlög*, the *völvur* and *vitkar*; or we could seek such insight ourselves in ceremony by connecting with the ancestral spirits during *útisetá*.

## 8. Walking across *Bilröst*: *Seiður*, *völvur*, and *vitkar*

<i>Heiði hana hétu</i>	<i>Heiður</i> was called
<i>hvars til húsa kom</i>	in homes abundant
<i>völu velspáa</i>	wide seeing <i>vala</i>
<i>vitti hún ganda</i>	winding her staff
<i>seið hún hvars hún kunn</i>	everywhere <i>seiðing</i> <sup>[11]</sup>
<i>seið hún hugleikin</i>	<i>seiðing</i> in ecstasy
<i>æ var hún angan</i>	ever enchantment
<i>illrar brúðar</i>	to evil women
<i>(Völuspá 22)</i>	

This stanza is from *Völuspá* following the description of the burning of *Gullveig* and the first war between the tribes of *Æsir* and *Vanir*. It is a powerful illustration of a *völva* whose name means both shining and heathen, she from the high hills (heaths, *heiðar*). There are many stories in the Sagas about the practitioners of *seiður*, the *völvur* and their male counterparts, *vitkar*, but SNORRI has this to say about the origin of *seiður*: "The daughter of Njörður was *Freyja*; she was a *gyðja* of sacrifices; she was the first to teach *seiður* to the *Æsir*, such as was custom among the *Vanir*" (*Ynglingasaga*, 4).

After first describing the great shamanic powers of *Óðinn*, such as *hamskipti* or shape-shifting, his

ability to distinguish fire and calm the sea and turn the winds, his relationship to the wise head of *Mímir*, his power to raise the dead and his great knowledge about runes and the poetry which he calls *galdur* (from the verb *gala*, which means to sing or call out)<sup>[12]</sup>, SNORRI then writes:

"Óthin had the skill which gives great power and which he practiced himself. It is called *seið* (sorcery), and by means of it he could know the fate of men and predict events that had not yet come to pass; and by it he could also inflict death or misfortune or sickness, or also deprive people of their wits

or strength, and give them to others. But this sorcery is attended by such [P161] wickedness [*ergi*]<sup>[13]</sup> that manly men considered it shameful to practice it, and so it was taught to the priestesses" (*Ynglingasage*, 7; HOLLANDER, 1964, 11)

From this we can clearly see, not only that *seiður* was originally practiced by the *Vanir*, and came from them to *Óðinn*, but also that it belonged to the women, the *gyðjur*. The shameful of men practicing a woman's kind of sorcery is made clear in *Lokasenna*, where *Loki* and *Óðinn* accuse each other of having committed the ultimate *ergi*. *Loki* says:

<i>En þik síða kóðu</i>	But you once practised <i>seið</i>
<i>Sámseyju í,</i>	on Samsey,
<i>ok draptu á vétt sem vödur;</i>	and you beat on the drum as witches do,
<i>vitka líki</i>	in the likeness of a wizard
<i>fórtu verþjóð yfir,</i>	you journeyed among mankind,
<i>ok hugða ek þat args aðal.</i>	and I thought the hallmark of a pervert
( <i>Lokasenna</i> , 24)	(LARRINGTON, 89)

Before we get into a discussion about the particularities of this stanza, let us look at the idea presented to us about this most powerful of all skills, the *seiður*. First we learn that it was a custom among the *Vanir*, obviously thought worthy of study by the *Æsir*, since *Freyja* taught it to them. The fact that *Óðinn* himself practices it, in spite of its danger to his manlyhood, is another indication of its importance. Secondly, it is made clear that it is a woman's skill, only safe for women of a certain rank or education, i.e. the *gyðjur*, the *Vanadís* herself, and the ones who work with her and represent her. On the other hand, we learn that it is most shameful and dangerous for men to practice it, and although it has a positive or *heilla*- (wholeness, fortune) aspect in the seeing, remembering and prophesizing, a great emphasis is put on the destructive side (even in *Völuspá* we see that view represented in the last line "ever enchantment to evil women").

STRÖMBÄCK's *Sejd* (1935) remains the authoritative text on this mysterious magic, despite the many years which have elapsed since its publication. He distinguishes between so-called "white" (sic!) and "black" (sic!) *seiður*, the "white" being the divinatory aspect (142), and the "black" the cursing part or the kind that was aimed at a person's spiritual life and psychological wellbeing (150). Since we are here concerned with the healing aspect of *seiður*, we will not discuss its potentially destructive aspects, instead we focus on the healing involved in the seeing and dreaming, the connection to the great wisdom, the *auður* of the great well, *Urðarbrunnur*, the *auður* that nurtures the tree, and to which the *völva* or *vitki* gets access through the *seiður*. STRÖMBÄCK lists the many references to "white *seið*" in the old literary sources, which he sees as remarkably consistent in their central aspects (142 - 144). In line with what SNORRI says about the *gyðjur* learning or practicing the *seiður*, the great majority of the "white" *seið* practitioners mentioned in the literature are women. Their title is not *gyðja*, however, but most often *völva*, although the *völvur* of Iceland go more by the names *spákona* (prophetess), *vísindakona* (woman of science), *seiðkonar*, or are called *fjölknunugar*, i.e. knowledgeable. *Fjölkyngi* is the word most often used for the kind of higher knowledge or wisdom that includes *seiður*, *galdur* or other forms of shamanic endeavors. An interesting paradox is that during the burning times in Iceland in the 17th century, almost all the victims convicted and burned for *fjölkyngi* were men practicing *galdur* with runes (SEAMUNDSSON, 1996). The etymology of the word *völva* is worth investigating: It has been thought to be related to her staff or *gandur*, called *völur*. That her name is derived from that [P162] of the staff, as SIMEK (1993) and MAGNUSSON (1989) suggest, is, however, unlikely. It would make more sense that the word, or both words, are related to the Latin *volvere*, to turn, and the English 'evolve', and that *völva* is actually the same word as the English 'vulva' (KRESS, 1993, 35; PÁLSSON 1997). The origin of *seiður* is also mirrored in the different ideas about its etymological roots. MAGNUSSON gives us a few different possibilities. (1) West German *saitchamiae*, which is a name for Old Germanic mother goddesses (*Nerþuz?*), which is also related to Lith. *saitas* 'magic';

(2) could be related to *sími* and *seiður* meaning fetters or threads and could in that way relate to the web; (3) related to Old Indian *saman-*, meaning song or poem, from the IE *\*sei-* *\*soi-*, to sing or sound. All explanations sound appropriate in our context, and so does the Icelandic meaning of the word kept in the folk tradition, where *seiður* means *álfatöfrar* or elfmagic (MAGNUSSON), or any kind of enticing magic or effect.

In *Völuspá hin skamma* (5), a poem partly based on the old *Völuspá*, we find the author's idea of the ancestry of the different *seið*-practitioners:

<i>Eru völvur allar</i>	<i>Völvur</i> all come
<i>frá Viðólfvi</i>	from <i>Viðólfur</i>
<i>vitkar allir</i>	<i>vitkar</i> all
<i>frá Vilmeiði</i>	from <i>Vilmeiður</i>
<i>seiðberendur</i>	<i>seiðberendur</i>
<i>frá Svarthöfða</i>	from <i>Svarthöfði</i>
<i>jötnar allir</i>	giants all
<i>frá Ymi komnir.</i>	from <i>Ymir</i> come.

The author of the poem seems to have been primarily concerned with the phonetic correlation between the different *seið* practitioners and their ancestors. However, in this poem we find another word worth exploring: *seiðberendurr*. It which has been thought to mean *seið*-carriers, and pertain to *seið*people of both genders, but is according to PÁLSSON, STRÖMBÄCK and STRÖM related (although not etymologically) to *völvu* in the following sense: *berendi* (the singular) is an old word for the womb, related to *bera* (to birth) and usually used for mammals, but also known to be used for women (STRÖMBÄCK, 1935, 29-31). We will leave it to the reader to speculate what the womb and vulva had to do with the practice of *seiður*, apart from being the bodyparts that distinguish women from men (sexuality and sexual rites [STRÖM, 1954] obviously played an important part in the *Vanir* culture). However, let us note that two of the words used for *seið*women have direct a relationship to their sexual organs, and that might have been enough to scare a man away from having anything to do with the art. *Vitki*, however, is probably directly derived from the verb *advita*, related to German *wissen*, and the English witch and wicca, although MAGNUSSON connects it to Old English *witig* 'wise' and *wit(e)ga* 'prophet or 'wise man'.

*Jötnar* or giants, the descendants of *Ymir*, are among the *seið*-people according to the above poem. As mentioned earlier, *jötnar* and *tröll* are among the words often used for the Finns or Sámis in the old literature (PÁLSSON, 1996; 1997). The Sámis were known for their powerful *fjölkyngi*, their ability to shapeshift and evoke the powers of nature in ways no other people could. Their shamanic journeying with the help of drumming was also well known to the authors of the old literature, whether myths or Sagas. It is therefore not surprising to find that the majority of the *völvur* mentioned in the Sagas and poems are either Sámi or have a close connection to the Sámis (with the exception of those coming from the Hebrides<sup>[14]</sup>). Although *Freyja* was the first teacher of *seiður*, she was by no means the last. Neither was *Óðinn*, although all those who teach and practice the art of *seiður* now would have to follow the mythological instructions and journey to the realm of *Urðarbrunnur*, where those two are said to be sitting in council every day. The numerous stories of Norse women and men (mostly women) who were sent to Finnmark or Hálogaland in the northernmost part of [P163] Scandinavia to study with the Sámis (PÁLSSON, 1997), are ample evidence for the close connection there was between the Sámi and Norse people in matters concerning *seiður*.

Now we can return to *Loki's* derogatory remarks about *Óðinn*, which includes a possible reference to drumming. STRÖMBÄCK (1935) has thoroughly examined the words "*draptu á vétt sem völvur*" and has come to the conclusion that *Loki* is referring to *Óðinn's* shamanic drumming practice. '*Draptu á*' comes from the expression '*aðdrepa á*', and means 'to knock or beat' and *vétt*, which can mean otherworldly being, can be related to *vitki* (in the next line), but also means "lid" or "shield" (STRÖMBÄCK, 1935, 24; PÁLSSON, 1997,98; MAGNUSSON, 1989); we also know that lids were used among the Sámis as drums. Whether the drumming in this instance was a part of a *seið* practice or some other form of *fjölkyngi* we do not know, but the words *sem völvur* clearly mean "as *völvur* do". From the descriptions we have of *völvur* practicing *seiður* in Norway, Iceland, the

British Isles and Greenland, we find certain characteristics that seem to have been an essential part of the *seiður*, but drumming is only mentioned in *Lokasenna*.

Five commonalities stand out among the elements mentioned in many of the *seiður* stories: (1) The *völva* is *sitting high* while she practices (above the crowd) (2) She carries a *staff*, her *völur*, which is often adorned with precious stones. (3) She has a *group of people* (women, see *Eiríks Saga*) form a protective circle around her. (4) *Singing* seems to have been an essential element for the tranceinduction of the *völva*, a prerequisite for the 'seeing' or connecting with ancestors, the objective of *seiður*. She did not sing herself, but usually had a group of people (occasionally only one person) singing special spirit calling songs (STRÖMBÄCK, 124-139). Some *völvur* were well off and had a group of people traveling with them; this is described in *Örvar Odds Saga (Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda, II., 1954, see STRÖMBÄCK, 1935, 96)* where we find the story of the *völva Heiður* (as in *Völuspá*) who travelled around with a *raddlið* (voiceteam) of 15 young men and 15 young women. She must have been quite successful in her work, since this kind of luxury is not mentioned in other stories. This can be explained by the time and place when the story took place, which was Norway before or at the beginning of the general condemnation of these women, first by heathen and then Christian patriarchy (KRESS, 1993). We should note that the name of this *völva* is *Heiður*, like that of the *völva* in *Völuspá*. The one mentioned in *Eiríks saga, Þorbjörg lítilvölva*, is said to be the last of nine sisters, who together had travelled with their practice. When she comes to the house of *Porkell* she is alone and she has to rely on the singing of somebody in the household. It turns out that *Guðriður*, a young Icelandic Christian woman, has learned the spirit calling song, *Varðlokur*, from her fostermother, who was of Celtic ancestry, and, although hesitant, she finally agrees to do the singing. After the woman's song, the *völva* suddenly is able to connect to all kinds of beings and knowledge that before were hidden from her. (5) *Dreaming* or entering a *solitary state of deepened awareness* is another common facet of *seiður*. When the *völva* arrives in *Eiríks Saga*, she is greeted with respect by everyone and given all kinds of special food thought fit for a woman of her trade. She is then asked to proceed with the *seiður*, but she requires a night's sleep in *Porkell's* place before doing so (*Eiríks saga rauða*, JONSSON, 1954; Í.S.I, 334). From this and other stories [P164] (see PÁLSSON, 1997, 92-94 and 130; *Fóstbræðra Saga*, 243; *Orkneyinga Saga*, 92; ) we see that dreaming was considered an important part of the preparation for *seiður*, and it is looming large in the *seiður* itself, which consisted mainly of divination and dream interpretation.

*Útiseta*, even though maybe not necessarily an aspect of the preparation for *seiður*, is closely linked to it as is dreaming. It was and is a way to connect with the wisdom of ancestors, the *goðs* and other good spirits or *vættir*.

<i>Ein sat hún úti,</i>	Alone sat outside
<i>þa er hinn aldni kom</i>	when the old one arrived
<i>yggjungur ása</i>	the anxious Ás
<i>ok í augu leit.</i>	and into eyes gazed.
<i>Hvers fregnið mig?</i>	What do you seek from me?
<i>Hví freistið mín?</i>	Why do you tempt me?
<i>(Völuspá, 28)</i>	

*Útiseta* is a way to travel to *Urðarbrunnur* and the tree, to seek council. The importance of this act is clearly illustrated in an Icelandic manuscript of the church from the 12th century, where it says about necessary confessions to a priest: "...or commits blasphemy or takes a woman and rapes her, or *sits out to acquire knowledge* or commits *galdra* or other things that are heathen.." (PÁLSSON, 1997,123). The grave character of the crime becomes clear from the fact that the matter of punishment for such heathen behavior was to be attended to by the bishop. On the other hand, the very man who decided that the Icelanders should accept the new custom of Christianity in the year 1000 used a form of *útiseta* to come to that conclusion. *Þorgeir Ljosvetningagoði*, the most honored of the heathen chiefs at the time, lay under his skin for two nights and days at *Alþingi* before announcing that Icelanders should all have one custom, one belief. "Supported by *fríður* and *farsaela* (*ár*) in the country of our fathers [sic!], united in one agreement and law, for you may believe me that the moment we divide the law the peace among us will vanish" (*Flateyjarbók I*, 1944, 495-96). He then announced further that the old laws allowing the eating of horsemeat and exposure of infants, would still hold and *blót* was not punishable if done in private. Here *Þorgeir* has made up his mind

after sitting in council with his ancestors, the *goð*. Afterwards he sacrificed his *goð* to the waterfall in the form of carved idols, it since bears the name *Goðafoss*. He had learned that peace (*friður*) and prosperity (*ár, farsæld*), and unity among all the people were more important than the customs they follow. Despite his acceptance of Christianity he respected the laws that give nurturance (*fæða*) to the poor, as well as the practice of infant exposure used in those days when families or single mothers could not have *fætt* (raised, nurtured) their children (regarded as a kind of sacrifice to the *goðs* in hopes that *álfar* or other *vættir* would find and raise them); he also respected the need of the individual to sit with (*úttiseta*) and sacrifice to (*blóta*) her or his spirits, *goðs* and *vættir*.

*Blót* is a word used generally about any ritual connected with heathen customs (Aðalsteinsson, 1997) although it literally means sacrifice or offering. It indicates that an offering was always a part of connecting to the ancestors, *goðs* or spirits. There were also certain feasts called *blót*, where the offering or sacrifices were accompanied by eating, drinking and in some cases fertility rites. In the literature we find two kinds of *blót* that can be placed at a certain time of the year. *Álfablót* was a private family gathering during midwinter (probably still living on in the great emphasis on *jól* or *yule* - at wintersolstice - in the Nordic countries). *Dísablót* or *dísarblót* - probably in spring - on the other hand, was a community gathering, a *blót* for *ár og friður*, dedicated to the *Vanadís* (STRÖM, 1954). Here the *dísir*, *valkyries* or *gyðjur* are said to have rejoiced in love with the people.

The sacrifices and the accompanying feast, which may have included the killing of animals (or even humans on occasion), were clearly thought to bring peace and good harvest, *ár [P165] og friður*, to the communities, and thus prevent deaths in war or famish. The connection between *blót* and *seiður* can be seen in the food given to *Þorbjörg lítivölva* in Greenland. She was given "pudding from goatmilk and prepared hearts of all the animals existing there" (JONSSON, 1954; *Eiríks saga rauða*, Í.S., I., 336). GRIMM has commented on the connection between sacrifice and healing: "The distinction between sacrifice and healing would perhaps be stated most correctly by saying, the one was aimed at sickness threatened, the other at sickness broken out" (1976, 1152). The *völva* in Greenland is called upon because of a famine that was destroying the community. After her visit everything turned to the better, and the woman *Guðríður*, who inspite of her Christian faith made the offering of singing a heathen song for the sake of the community, was granted good fortune and much *hamingja* by the *vaettir* whom the *völva* called forth with her help. Here we have an example of healing aimed at sickness already broken out, although the *seiður* also prevents further suffering. In *Ynglingasaga* we find the other example, that of sacrifice at sickness threatening. SNORRI follows the story of the life and death of the *díar Njörður* and *Freyr*, who both were great *blótgoðar* in *Ásgarður*. During the reign of *Njörður* and *Freyr*, there was *ár og friður*, and it remained for three years after *Freyr's* death. "During that time Freyja kept up the sacrifices, for she was the only one among the *goðs* who was still living, and became the most famous one" (*Ynglingasaga*, 10).

The mythological image of the world tree and the well together with the attendant beings presents a sense of completeness or wholeness (despite much missing information and shifting meanings). The same cannot be said of our image of the most ancient Norse practices recorded. *Seiður*, *blót*, and *úttiseta* seem to be the remaining fragments of a ceremonial system, which must have been more complex and more obviously interconnected (e.g., it is easy to image a sequence of preparatory *úttiseta*, preparatory *blót*, the seeing and dreaming in *seiður*, subsequent healing activities using herbs and other means, closing *blót*). The singing, chanting or sounding connection between *seiður* and *blót* (*qua* etymology) is worthy of note, since it relates these practices to Sámi and other northern Eurasian ceremonial proceedings. Nonetheless, as our explorations show, we do find interconnections amidst the scant and biased descriptions of these proceedings. They are structurally significantly related to the process around the well and the tree we have described. Healing practices like herbalism, spirit retrieval, bone setting, and others may either have been explicitly connected to these three ceremonies and their cosmology, or they may have been embedded in the well and the tree in a different manner. It is important to remember that women continued these practices into more recent centuries (and were then prosecuted as witches in the Middle Ages in continental Europe), and, of course, we also find remainders of all these practices today.

## 9. Healing and cosmology: Recovery of indigenous mind

This article has been written in a format which is illustrative of the cosmology of healing we are concerning ourselves with in this reconstructive effort. Such effort can, of course, be viewed in the same light as healing activities arising from the tree and well. By attempting to relinquish a distancing view to the *Vanir* cosmology we are engaging in, we are placing ourselves at the tree and are trying to look into the well, so to speak. Thus we are engaging in a process which seeks wholeness, a burgeoning coming to be present with the ancestral knowledge we have, we are remembering, and we are reconstituting. Completeness in the sense of indigenous consciousness means the engagement with all the different dimensions of life in a holistic, integral sense - indigenous conversation of *criar y dejarse criar* and *að næra og [P166] vera nærð*. Participation in the phenomena is inevitable in this view, but our struggle for awareness of participation in all its aspects and with all the implications is the desire for wholeness in the knowing process. While we can give a variety of philosophical justifications for this stance or desire, it nonetheless remains to be acknowledged that such knowing process is always personal with no truth of objectifying and distancing epistemologies anywhere in sight. We similarly have to acknowledge the entanglement with the historical moment, even as we are striving to be aware of it in terms of Norse mythology. From thereon in, moving along with *Verðandi*, we may recover what it means to live in *Vanir* indigenous consciousness of the coming to be present, which cannot, will not, and should not be the *Vanir* consciousness of the past.

The exchanges about healing endeavors between contemporary indigenous peoples and peoples in a modernist, eurocentered paradigm (to use a useful, albeit fictitious clean dichotomy here) have increased in recent decades, prompted by either side. On numerous occasions the result has not been increased understanding, but profound misunderstandings and even clashes. The profound difference in paradigms encountering each other on such occasions can be succinctly described as follows (again using fictitious clean dichotomies): Indigenous persons who are traditional in the sense of an unbroken or reconstituted deep involvement in their native conversation arrive with a sense of all which is carried in this conversation, particularly ancestors and sense of place; eurocentered persons who are modern in the sense of involvement with progress thinking and the imperialistic management of reality arrive with a self sense of monadic individuals. Consequently, the former talk about healing as a part of a larger conversation (if they are willing to talk about healing), while the latter talk about healing in the sense of the technical application of certain techniques. To be sure, the reality of all the gray shades easily defeats such dichotomous model, but it is useful to highlight that, while both talk about healing, they talk about quite a different healing. And none of this says anything about the efficacy of the healing interventions (both may be efficacious or not). Yet, a lot is said about the reality in which these different qualities of interventions happen. The eurocentered strand, however archaic the healing technique may look, furthers a particular dissociative conversation of progress and reality management (whether in the medical, psychological, socio-political, ecological, spiritual, or any other dimension). The indigenous strand makes different value judgements and creates a different conversation which embeds healing activities in an integral understanding of the physical, psychological, and all the other dimensions. The resultant healing is different, even though the persistence or change of symptomatology may look identical.

Cosmologies are inevitably implicated in any healing activity, but our attempts to be aware of such cosmologies, and, even more so, our attempts to participate in them in an indigenous sense are a matter of choice, commitment, and presence. Two significant things follow from this: 1) If people engage with an indigenous paradigm in a non-indigenous fashion then they continue to perpetrate some form of colonial behavior by acting out the imperialistic nature of eurocentered knowledge acquisition. 2) Healing endeavors offer a choice of the quality of conversation one wants to create for the future (indigenous vs. eurocentered), regardless whether one's indigenous roots are present, recent, or have to be sought in the distant past amidst a crisscrossing entanglement of cultural, genetic, and other heritages.

Our reconstructive inquiry into Norse mythology has shown, as we were going around the circle of

participating in what we seek to understand, that the *Vanir* conversation requires that we become present to the tree and the contents of the well, that we remember ourselves through the layers of history - be that famous *völvas*, or be that the Nazi abuse of the word *heil*; be that *blót*, or be that the history of Christianization and witch hunts. All this may allow [P167] us to move our process to that place where we bring enough of our ancestry with us that *Heimdallr* may deem the moment right to let us cross into greater depth of our own indigenous conversation. Such fullness of presence may allow us to honor indigenous healing practices more profoundly because we now can participate in what we previously attempted to grasp.

## 10. Discussion

Although this article covers much ground, it is but a tiny piece of the puzzle which Norse mythology presents, and it is but a small attempt to work through the conundra of a reconstitutive *Vanir* indigenous conversation (if such bold words may even be written). Within these limits we nonetheless hope to have presented a model taste for a recovery of indigenous mind which is neither mere theatrics nor romanticization nor limited by the borders conventional scholarship establishes by virtue of its disengagement from conscious participation. The revival of shamanism presents, at least so it seems, a profound desire for integral knowing and being; the interest in goddess cultures, ecology, mythology, Asian spiritual practices, etc. are all expressions of this desire. The extent to which these trends will become real depends on the reality and completeness of the conversation they create. Such conversation needs to include the memory of the historical breaches which created the lacks which lead to the modern desire for shamanic experiences, connection with the land, well told stories, etc. There is no way to leap back to anything, but the possibility to be nurtured from *Urðarbrunnur* exists - and it contains many things ranging from feminism, to the fights against classism and racism, the history of colonialism, the ideals of the civil society - and on... We cannot allow ourselves to avert the gaze from anything. Here we have focused on the *Vanir*, but we still have to struggle with the darker figure of *Óðinn*, and the *Æsir* in general, or the use of *seiðr* to kill or make ill. While the recovery of indigenous mind does not inevitably lead to political action, it nonetheless implies a profound critique of modern societies, as it implies an ecological critique, as it challenges a number of understandings of gender and gender roles - and on. It is radical ideology critique of modernity from an indigenous perspective - with the possibility of a future indigenous conversation which facilitates the mutual witnessing of the twisted roads human beings have walked. Maybe out of the tears about the grievous things our ancestors have suffered and committed, amidst all their achievements, then will arise laughter and appreciation as the joy of the local truth ceases to be a call for dominance.

## 11. Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Diese partizipatorische Untersuchung der Beziehung von Kosmologie und Heilung beginnt mit der Beschreibung des methodologischen Ansatzes, den die Begriffe *recovery of indigenous mind* (Wiedererinnerung des indigenen Bewußtseins) und *reconstructive indigenous science* (rekonstruktive indigene Wissenschaft) benennen. Die Epistemologie des indigenen Gesprächs wird als eine reziproke Aktivität, an dem alle Mitglieder einer Kommunität (ob Mensch, Tier, Stein oder Geist) teilnehmen, beschrieben. Dies ist ein Prozess, den die Quechua und Aymara sprechenden andinischen Indianer *criar y dejarse criar* (ernähren und ernährt werden) nennen und dessen prozessorientiertes Ziel als Balance zwischen den verschiedenen Lebensdimensionen bezeichnet werden kann. Die Rekonstruktion der mythologischen *Vanirs* (Wanen) auf der Basis der vorliegenden altnordischen Dokumente ist darüberhinaus vom Wissensaustausch mit zeitgenössischen indigenen Völkern, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Samen, beeinflusst. Der altnordische Komplex der *Vanir*geister ist von besonderem Interesse, da wir [P168] hier in die grösstmögliche Nähe der indigenen und schamanistischen Schicht der präindoeuropäischen Zeit kommen.

Die methodologischen Ansprüche partizipatorischer Untersuchungen verlangen Klarheit über die relevante persönliche Geschichte der Autoren sowie den geschichtlichen Kontext des Unterfangens;

diese wird durch kurze Selbstdarstellungen und mythologische Interpretation der Gegenwart als *Ragnarök* versucht zu geben. Etymologische Untersuchungen zu den Begriffen heilen, genesen und ernähren erlauben eine Interpretation als Heilung als Rückkehr zum Ursprung, ein Verständnis, das wir bei diversen indigenen Völkern in ähnlicher Weise vorfinden. Diese Rückkehr zum Ursprung wird in einer Geschichte, die in Analogie zum *Gylfaginning* der *SNORRI Edda* erzählt wird, zusammenfassend dargestellt. Die nachfolgenden Abschnitte des Artikels analysieren wesentliche Aspekte des dargestellten Prozesses.

Die altnordischen Worte *auðr*, *örlög* und *nornir* werden aus etymologischer und mythologischer Perspektive untersucht. Auf diese Weise wird das schicksalhafte Material mit dem die Nornen Leben bestimmen genauer verstanden. *Auðr* ist ein komplexer Begriff, der sowohl positive wie negative Qualitäten enthält (z.B. Reichtum und Leere, Tod und Leben). *Örlög* ist das Schicksal, das Individuen zugeteilt wird. Die Nornen werden hier als astronomische Beobachter der Mondzyklen interpretiert. Die Zuteilung von individuellen Schicksalen ist von daher nicht mehr auf der simplen Linie Vergangenheit-Gegenwart-Zukunft zu verstehen, sondern als ein wesentlich komplexeres Geschehen.

Der Baum des Lebens oder Weltbaum endet in der Brücke *Bilröst*, die in die Welt der Geister führt. Der Weltbaum ist das altnordische Ebenbild der indigenen Konversation des Ernährens und Ernährtwerdens. Der Geist *Heimdallr* wird hier sowohl als möglicher Geist der *Vanir* interpretiert auch als *axis mundi*; er wird als der solare und stellare Aspekt des Schicksalsfeldes verstanden. *Bilröst* wird als Weg beschrieben über den die Vorfahren mit Hilfe der Geisterschiffe reisen, tags dem Regenbogen und nachts der Milchstrasse folgend. *Heimdallr* ist der Wächter an der Brücke *Bilröst* und stellt sicher, daß nur Personen, die aus indigener Sicht vollständig sind, sich über sie bewegen.

*Freyja* wird als zentrale Gottheit des nordischen Pantheons insbesondere in Hinsicht auf ihre heilenden Aspekte diskutiert. Ihre Nähe zum Stern Venus, den *dísir*, *nornir* und *valkyrjur* sowie zu *Heimdallr* ist dabei von besonderer Bedeutung. Die Herstellung des heilungskräftigen *Brisingamen* wird als Unterweltsreise interpretiert und das goldene Material des Halsbandes als Bernstein verstanden (und somit als Frucht des Weltbaumes).

Der Prozeß der Heilung - wie des Lebens überhaupt - wird dann hinsichtlich der altnordischen Dichotomie Vergangenheit versus Gegenwärtigwerden beschrieben. In dieser Interpretation des Weltbaums und der Urquelle gewinnt die Vergangenheit immer mehr an Bedeutung und zieht sich nicht zurück, sondern bleibt immer unnachgiebig heiß und dem Gegenwärtigwerden nahe.

Die Beschreibungen von *seiður*, *blót* und *útisetá* erlauben uns leider nicht das gesamte zeremonielle System der altnordischen Mythologie zu rekonstruieren (von den *Vanir* als isolierte Schicht ganz zu schweigen). Jedoch zeigen sie eine klare Beziehung zu dem Bild des Weltbaumes und der Urquelle sowie den dazugehörigen Wesen. *Seiður* ist im positiven Sinne eine Zeremonie des Sehens und Träumens, in der insbesondere die Seherin (*völva*) sich unter Singen in eine Trance begibt um mit den Vorfahren und anderen Geistern Kontakt aufzunehmen. *Útiseta* ist das individuelle Analog zu *seiður*. *Blót* ist eine festliche Zeremonie des Opfers. *Seiður* und *blót* sind durch die Benutzung des Singens miteinander verbunden. Es gibt Hinweise dafür, daß *seiður* auch die Benutzung einer Trommel beinhaltete. Hiermit finden wir einige lose Verbindungen zu anderen Traditionen des nördlichen Eurasiens.

Der Artikel schließt mit einer Diskussion des Kontrastes zwischen indigenem und eurozentriertem Heilungsverständnis und betont die Notwendigkeit des indigenen Bewußtseinsprozesses als Voraussetzung für einen egalitären Wissensaustausch mit indigenen Völkern. Die kosmologische Bewußtheit im Heilungsprozeß indigener Völker wird mit dem eurozentrierten dissoziativen Fortschrittsbewußtsein kontrastiert. Die Autoren betonen, daß jegliche rekonstruktiven indigenen Prozesse Romantisierungen oder Idealisierungen durch eine Konfrontation mit den Schattenseiten der Geschichte vorbeugen müssen. Das gegenwärtige Bedürfnis der Wiederherstellung indigener

Konversationen, wie es sich z.B. im Neoschamanismus zeigt, kann sich auf diese Weise nicht nur als tiefgreifende Gesellschaftskritik äußern, sondern auch nach erfolgter Trauerarbeit und der Wertschätzung des historisch Vergangenen wieder am lokalem Wissen ohne chauvinistische oder nationalistische Tendenzen erfreuen.

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[1] Unless indicated otherwise, Icelandic texts are quoted from the Íslendingasagnaútgáfn edited by Guðni Jónsson, 1953-4. Translations are by Valgerður H. Bjarnadóttir unless indicated by translator and year.

[2] We are using the modernized or adapted old Norse spelling (commonly used for contemporary editions of Norse texts) for all terms from Norse mythology.

[3] Since the words god and goddess are words commonly associated with more stratified societies approaching or representing forms of monotheism, we shall use the word spirits (commonly used by indigenous peoples when the English language is used), as in divine spirits (*Vanir* and *Æsir*), *Vanir* spirits, *Æsir* spirits, dwarf spirits (*dvergar*), elf spirits (*álfar*), giant spirits (*jötnar*), etc. This is notwithstanding such exception as the *Diné* (Navajo) "Talking God" for *Haashch'éélti'í*, etc. It is worthy of note that *goð* (neuter) was used by SNORRI to refer to the pre-Christian Norse divine spirits; *goði* (masculine) and *gyðja* (feminine) were used as terms for pagan priests and priestesses.

[4] SNORRI Sturluson was a Christian scholar in Iceland in the 13th century; his scholarship (SNORRA Edda and *Heimskringla*) is foundational for any understanding of Norse mythology.

[5] All of this is not to say that the later layers are not important or even that they should be neglected for the purposes of recovery of indigenous mind - on the contrary. This also means that our reconstruction of an Old Norse indigenous conversation is only partly completed, since complete reconstruction includes the awareness of all the different historical layers.

[6] Dictionaries consulted, even when not mentioned explicitly: OED (the compact edition of the Oxford English Dictionary), DE VRIES (1977), SHIPLEY (1984), MITZKA (1960), and MAGNUSSON (1989). They will usually be referenced without year.

[7] Quechua: *kauan pachari kawsachkauchik, kawsaynuichikunawau, uywaypaqmi wywanakuckkanchik* - "at this time we are sharing with all our family relations, we nurture to be nurtured ourselves" (MACHACA, 1996; MACHACA & MACHACA, 1994); Aymara: *nayasa kollo achachilampi uywaysasissta* - "I am letting myself be nurtured by the *apu* - the spirit of the mountain - as I am nurturing the spirit of the mountain" (JIMÉNEZ, 1996a & b).

[8] Colure is defined as: "Each of two great circles which intersect at right angles at the poles, and divide the equinoctial and the ecliptic into four equal parts. One passes through the equinoctial points, the other through the solstitial points, of the ecliptic." OED

[9] Additional support for these assumptions can be found in SNORRI's statement that "woman is now referred to in terms of stone and all words for stone" (FAULKES, 94). - This is not the place to pursue this line of thinking further to mead, manna, honey, soma, and other interesting things; cf. DUMONT, 1992.

[10] We have changed BAUSCHATZ' language to conform to contemporary understandings of sexism. - It should be noted that BAUSCHATZ' analysis is based on later sources (*Beowulf* in particular), but the whole context of our discussion should have made it clear that his interpretations can reasonably be applied to earlier times also.

[11] The word *seiðing* used here is derived from the verb *að seiða*, which appears here in past tense, singular feminine, as '*seið hún*' meaning 'she performed *seiður*'

[12] It would be tempting to write about all of these aspects of *ffjölkyngi* or magic, not least the runes and the poetry of *galdur*, but the subject is too great to attempt even to touch it in this article, and secondly, it does not seem to be a part of the original *Vanir* layer, although that is not entirely certain.

[13] *Ergi* (verb) and *argur* (noun) are concepts used for the condition of men, who are either homosexual, emotional, cowardly or lustful (to use the words found in dictionaries (such as MAGNUSSON), or who in any way show their feminine sides in a manner that was thought unmanly and shameful, as well as wicked, at the time of Snorri and probably in the patriarchal order of the Aesir.

[14] We will not deal here with the Celtic ancestral heritage which obviously influenced most of the Icelandic writers of the past, since so many of the landsettlers in Iceland were either of Celtic origin or had spend a good deal of their life on the isles. Among them was *Auður djúpiðga* and her two brothers and two sisters. The reader would do well to keep in mind that there is still another layer to this complex story hidden in the mysterious history of the Celtic people and those who lived in the British Isles before them, such as the *Tuatha de Danaan* and the Picts.