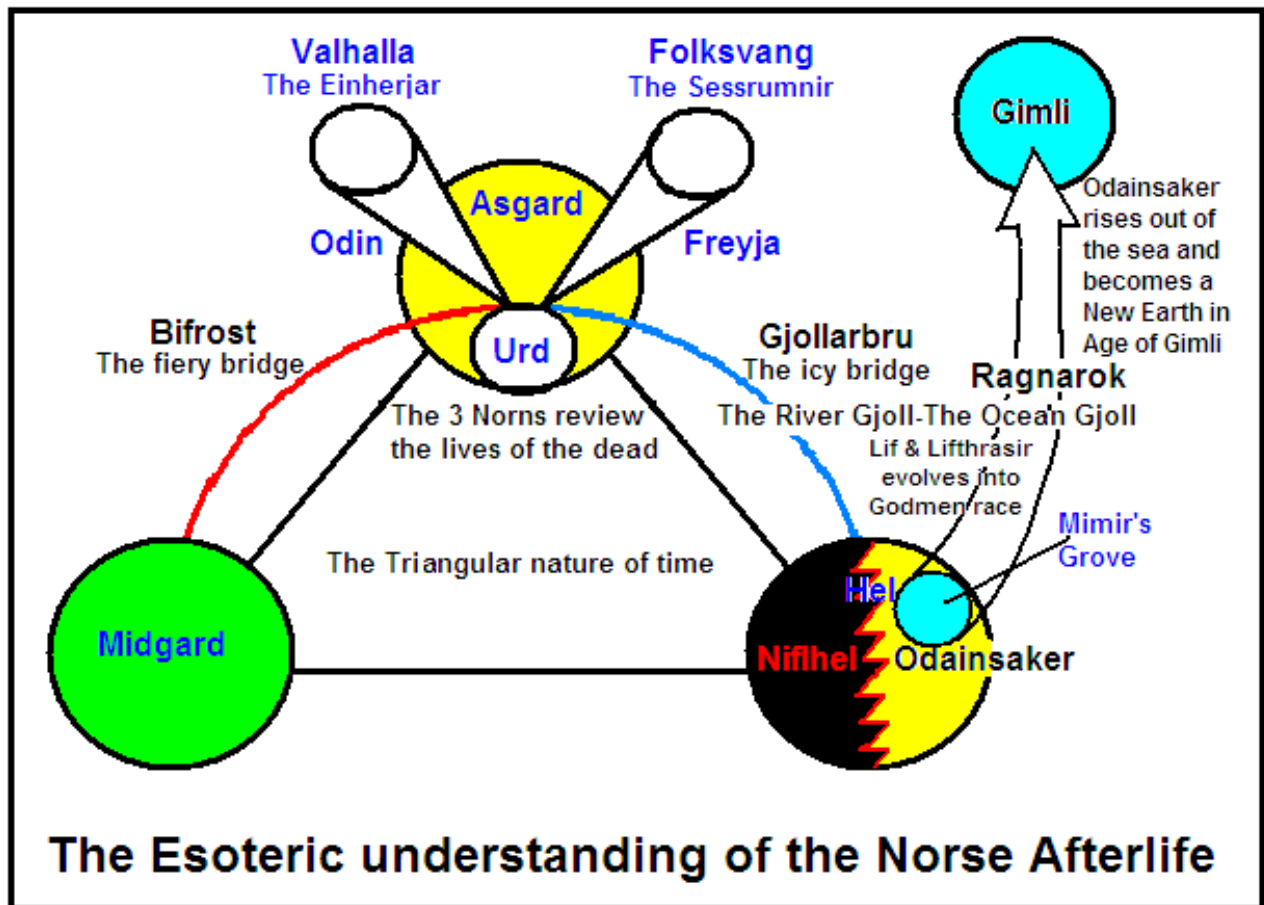


THE AFTERLIFE AND GERMANIC HEATHENISM

The monotheistic religions teach that God placed man on earth to test him, and that after he (or she) dies, he will be judged at some later date. In other traditions, in the Far East, there are notions of reincarnation in which the life you lead now will determine the life you will lead in you next incarnation; life is then a series of incarnations in this world, never-ending unless you attain the impossible state of Nirvana. In the Heathen tradition, the notion of the afterlife might seem complex, but it really is not. It can be summed up simply: The life you lead in Midgard echoes in eternity. There are no notions in this of “sin” or transgressions against “God’s Law.” You do not have to worry about returning as a cockroach or slug. There is no burning damnation. There are consequences for your actions in this life, but those choices are completely in your hands. The type of life you lead in this manifestation (in Midgard) will be waiting for you in the next. And you have complete control over what that afterlife is by the conscious decisions you make in this life. To understand how this works out, we need to understand the nature of reality in the Northern Heathen understanding of life and death, which is by the way compatible to our understanding of time and space as described by modern-day physicists.



First of all, we need to understand that time and space are unified. The Past, Present, and Future exist side by side, and not in a dialectic progression. The triangular representation in the diagram reflects the unity of time and space. This triangular representation of time and

space is also representative of the Yggdrasil with its Asgard-Midgard-Hel Axis. Uniting all three is a bridge which is an avenue of travel along the axis. Half of this bridge connects Midgard with Asgard in a fiery dimension known as Bifrost. The other half unites Asgard and Hel and is an icy representation known as Gjollarbru. There is a great ocean between the three realms that I refer to as the Sea of Gjoll. The river by the same name which flows under the bridge Gjollarbru empties into this sea

When people die, they travel to the Well of Urd, by their individual Valkyrie, where they stand before the Norns, who review their lives. If they lived a heroic life, they are taken by their Valkyries into Asgard. There Freyja takes those who have lived lives improving the spiritual condition of man to Freyja's Hall, Sessrumnir, in Folkvang. Since there is no recorded name in the Myths for these souls, we might refer to them as the *Sessrumnir*, after Freyja's hall. The rest go with Odin to Valhalla, and are known as the Einherjar

The rest of the dead travel on from Urd's Well, across the bridge Gjollarbru to Hel. There they are further divided. There are those who have lived virtuous lives, dedicating themselves to a higher ideal, and thus are aligned with the Gods, representing a minority within society. Then there are those who lived lives of chaos, filled with evil intent, engaging in corruption, displaying degeneracy, and aligned with the Giants. In the Netherworld, the latter are sent to the region of Hel known as Niflhel. There the dragon Nidhogg devours them, and they are consigned to oblivion. The former go to the region of Hel known as Odainsaker, the Realm of Virtuous Souls. Balder and his wife Nanna rule over this paradise. It is a land of peace and light, where they drink from the waters fed by Mimir's Well, and for this reason it is also known as Mimir's Grove. These souls are known as the Asmegir. After Ragnarok, Odainsaker will rise from Hel and manifest itself in the Age of Gimli as the New Earth, and the Asmegir who live there will be reborn as a new race of Godmen, endowed with the secret knowledge stored in the waters of Mimir's Well. But the vast majority of people, who have lived mundane, pointless lives of mere existence, constitute a third class, and will occupy Hela's hall. This realm is one of mere existence. There is no punishment, but neither is there hope of further spiritual evolution. Those who occupy this region of the Netherworld will have an afterlife much like their life in Midgard: a meaningless existence. Their existence is somewhere between the non-existence of Nidhogg and the bliss of Odainsaker. Many of these people will be trapped within an illusion that served them in this life. It might be an event that they obsess over and that they will relive over and over, never achieving a satisfying conclusion to whatever dilemma presented itself in Midgard.

THE VALKYRIES

One of the more iconic figures in Norse Mythology is the Valkyrie. The image of a beautiful, powerful woman, battle maidens, young and beautiful, with dazzling white arms and flowing golden hair, decked out in Norse battle gear, riding through the skies on horse back, waves their weapons and crying their battle songs as they swoop down on battle fields, scooping up the souls of fallen warriors, and taking them to Asgard, where they spend the afterlife in Odin's great hall—Valhalla. This image of the Valkyrie, while not incorrect, and made popular in the 19th century

by the German composer of Music Drama, Richard Wagner, is but incomplete and falls far short of the true meaning of these messengers of the Gods.

The Valkyries are Odin's special attendants, and usually described as Odin's offspring, though there are tales of human women who transcend to the rank of the Valkyries after death. They are sometimes thought to be the offspring of Odin and human females, and become demi-gods and are both invulnerable and immortal so long as they remain virgins and loyal to the Troth. Their steeds are thought to be the personification of the clouds and their weapons the lightning flashes, and believed to watch over the Norse warriors as they went out to sea and into battle.

As *choosers of the slain*, they swept through the battlefield to choose among the slain ONLY those heroes worthy to taste the joys of an afterlife in Valhalla. But the reality is somewhat different. It is true that the Valkyries choose only those worthy to spend the afterlife, not just in Valhalla, but in Asgard. But the Valyries do not do the choosing. Everyone individual has a Valkyrie who serves as a guardian spirit. And upon one's death, your Valkyrie takes you over the Bifrost, the bridge made of fire, air and water and bridges the gulf between Midgard and Asgard, before the Well or Urd. There, the Gods and Goddesses gather every day and hear the judgement of the Norns, who review your life. Upon their judgement of what type of life you have led in Midgard, your destination in the afterlife is determined by the Gods. Among those who have just died, Freyja takes first pick and those she chosed go with her to her hall, Sessrumnir in the region od Asgard known as the Folksvang. Next Odin take his portion of the dead to come and join him in Valhalla, where they join the ranks of the Einherjar, destined to ride out with Odin during Ragnarok. The rest are sent across the Gjallarbru, the bridge made of ice and earth and expanses the vast river of Gjoll and leads to Hel, the Netherworld.

Once in Hel, the dead are separated into three groups: those who have led a mundane life, those who have led an evil and destructive life and those who have master the magic given to us by the Gods and spiritually have evolved.

But before we speak of their destination, let's return to the subject of the Valkyries.

Throughout the world, there are many traditions that speak of dwellers in the angelic realms of consciousness, but it is only in the Northern tradition that these dwellers, which are known as Valkyries, not only serve as messengers between the Gods and mortals, but are teachers, who have the ability to convey to us sacred knowledge that can transform us, especially on the spiritual level, so that we might evolve into semi-divine beings, and take a special place in the afterlife.

Besides appearing as battle maidens, they also appear in the form of a swan, and were called *Swan Maidens*. The swan has the ability to transverse three worlds: to fly through the air, to swim amjestically on water, and with its long neck to search the realms hidden below the surface. So does the Valkyrie move as she communicates between the three principle realms on the Northern World Tree, Asgard-Middle Earth- Hel.

The ancients wrote of the Valkyrie as divine beings who teach humans the many secrets of the higher realms, particularly skills in runecraft as illustrated in the *Saga of the Volsungs*. In the *Volsung Saga* we can read the exchange between Sigurd (or Siegfried) and the Valkyrie, Brunhilde. Sigurd rides through a ring of fire to awaken Brunhilde from an enchanted sleep placed on her by Odin. Only the bravest hero, who has no fear of the fire can penetrate the flames and free the Valkyrie from the spell cast upon her by the All-Father. Here we see the Valkyrie residing within our subconscious, and only the most dedicated, who is not afraid to discover truths about one's self that we tend to hide from our conscious self, can awaken this divine entity sent by Odin to teach us how to evolve. The following dialogue from the saga illustrates the role of the Valkyrie as wise teachers:

Sigurd said: *"Teach me the lore of great counsels"*

Brunhilde answered: *"With my thanks will I teach thee, if there is aught to know that may please thee, either of runes or other things which pertain to men's fate. May the gods grant us a fair day, so that thou mayst gain use and fame from my wisdom; and may thou remember later what we have said."*

After lengthily instruction on many rune charms, Sigurd comments: *"Never was there wiser woman in all the world than thou, teach me more counsel!"*

Brunhilde answered: *"Fitting it is to do according to thy will and give thee sage counsel according to thy request and desire for wisdom."*

In Northern Mythology the Valkyrie is personified as female. She is an independent spirit capable of going forth on her own and acting in ways the ordinary person is unaware. Everyone should read the Volsung Saga if you wish to gain a deep understanding of the nature of the Valkyrie.

No modern thinker has contributed more to our understanding of symbols and symbol-making than the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung. Jungian psychology holds that as our bodies bear the genetic imprint of our primordial ancestors, so too does our psyche. Archaic remnants of this dim-past dimension being penetrate our rational consciousness as images which Jung termed *archetypes*.

The Valkyrie is an archetypal image that the rational mind uses to comprehend complex energy constructs within the individual psyche and the universe of soul, in this case those having to do with the function of messenger, protector, guardian, and teacher.

With the new understanding offered to us by modern inquiry from our contemporary principles such as quantum physics and from morphogenetic theory is that the ancients knew things about the animate universe that we have long since forgotten. From direct experience conveyed to them by the Gods, instead of laboratory analysis, they identified the attributes of universal energy constructs and they named them. One of these named personifications is the Valkyrie.

When Odin discovered the reality of Ragnarok and the death of humanity and the Gods, after drinking from the Well of Mimir, he was devastated, but being the All-Father, and being *Odin*, and not just Woden, or Wotan, lesser manifestations of himself with limited perspectives, he discovered and set into motion the process by which the Gods and mankind could survive death and be reborn into an evolved state of existence. A race of men and women who could cheap death and pass over into the Afterlife, with their souls intact and whole. This literally means that the *Lyke* or physical form does not die, but passes over to the other side. He has given us the Valkyries to teach us our relationship to any form of energy, or "beingness," within transpersonal realms of consciousness, which is the key to communicating with it and gaining benefit from its energies. In fact, if you are able to achieve a true understanding of relationship, along with the ability to assume that relationship at high level of intensity, can replace several hours of magical ritual, ceremony and fruitless searching for connection with the Valkyrie, or even other higher Beings in the underworld.

The Valkyrie can best be understood as a guiding and guarding spirit personifying that in the soul which is closest to the All-Father or Odin, within, as both her intensity and mystical wisdom indicate.

At the end of the Volsung Saga, Sigurd is killed, and his body is burned. Brunhilde, his Valkyrie immolates herself, by jumping onto Sigurd's funeral pyre, which unleashes his spirit, so that she can guide him to Asgard, and to Odin.

The Valkyrie has a direct link with another inner construct called the *Fylgja* or in Old English, the Fetch. While the *Fylgja* is connected to an individual for life through an invisible genetic energy code within the blood, the Valkyrie is an independent Being capable of going forth on her own. Unlike the *Fylgja*, which is not always female and represents the will of the mortal individual, the Valkyrie's relationship is not bonded, and ultimately she represents the will of the Divine or the Gods.

HEL AND THE JUDGMENT OF THE GODS

Hel is the name of the realm of the dead. Traditionally it is believed that people who die a "straw death" go there after death. But this idea of a straw death does not mean anyone who does not die in battle. A straw death is a reference to the type of life one lived—a "straw life," one that was bland and undefined—a dull and mundane existence. There is an old saying: That most people really do not *live*, they just exist. They go through the motion of existing every day, their lives really don't have any real higher sense of purpose. It is just such people that usually ask such questions: *What is the meaning of life?* Or; *Why are we here?* During the Heathen era, Hel was not a place of punishment, nor was it a place of dread. Like the Hellenistic concept of Hades (before Christianity corrupted the word Hades) it was a place of peace and rest--so to, is Hel. According the Heathen sources, had several realms within it. Hel only takes on characteristics of a place of punishment similar to the Christian concept of hell in the High Middle Ages in the description of Snorri and Saxo, as well as in the later Eddic lays.

In the Heathen tradition, it was believed that the worlds of the living and the dead had to be separated. It is important that the living and the dead did not mix. There are legends of the

draugr, who are the living dead that led very real lives in Midgard after they had died, rising out of their burial mounds and causing mayhem for the living. *Draugr* is derived from a very ancient Indo-European word *dreugh*, which meant a “harmful spirit.” The draugr is a cross between a vampire and a zombie, who could only be killed by cutting of its head and placing it on its buttocks and burning the corpse. The reason Odin leads the Wild Hunt across the lands is to collect the spirits of those who died, but had lost their way and never reached the afterlife. For some reason, they had lost contact with their Valkyrie, who duty it is to lead the souls of the dead across the rainbow bridge to the Well or Urd, where the Norns pass judgment on what type of life the recently departed led.

Once a person died, their individual Valkyrie leads the person away from the realm of the living, across Bifrost, the rainbow bridge, to the Well of Urd in Asgard. There, the three Norns meet with the Gods and Goddesses of Asgard every morning and review the life of each person brought to them. This is known as the Thingstead. At the Thingstead it is determined to what destination the person is to be sent to. Those who stood before the divine members of the Thingstead were expected to accept their destination in silence, unless they possess knowledge of *mal-runes*. In *Sigrd-rifu-mal Saga*, we read: *Speech-runes (mal-runes) you must know, if you do not wish that the strong one with consuming woe shall requite you for the injury you have caused. All those runes you must wind, weave, and place together in that Thing where the host of people go into the full judgments.* Malrunes are runes that enhance memory, mental ability, and speech. They are Ansuz, Ehwaz, Eihwaz and Dagaz. Those who have lived exalted lives, who dedicated their lives to a higher idea, or sacrificed their lives for a greater cause, and theoretically fell in the battle against malignant forces remained in Asgard. They are divided between Freyja and Odin. The former having first choice of who will join her in her hall, Sessrumnir in the Folksvang, while the remainder joins Odin in Valhalla. The rest of sent over the bridge known as Gjallurbru that leads from Asgard to Hel, passing over the River Gjoll, whose currents are laced with the blades of weapons. It take nine nights to reach Hel.

They pass through a gate known as Helgrindr, and is guarded by the fierce dog known as Garm. It is Odin's will that the dead remain within the Netherworld and not escape, for if the living and the dead should mingle, it would contribute to the forces of Chaos throughout the multiverse. There are cases of the dead appearing to the living, but this is always with the consent of the Odin, and his ward, Hela, whom he placed in charge of the Netherworld.

Once the departed reach Hel, they come before the Quenn of the Netherworld, Hela, or simply Hel. She is the daughter of Loki and Odin took her as his ward and placed her in charge of the realm of the dead. She has been given the charge of making sure that the realms of the dead and the living remain separated. She does betray her adopted father at the end of time, when Loki escapes his fetters and leads the forces of Chaos against Asgard. She flings open the gates of Hel and permits the dead to join Loki in his attack on Asgard.

When Odin placed Hela in charge of Hel, he toppled an older ruler of Hel from his place as ruler of the realm of the dead. His name was Helreginn and he was also a Giant.

Hel is actually three different realms, or should we say, it is separated into three parts. Hela's hall is called Eljudnir, which means, the damp place, and her servant is Ganglati, who

moves so slow that one can't even notice any movement. This is an indication that time has no meaning in Hel. Hela's threshold is Fallen-da-ford, which means the stumbling block, her bed is Kor, which means illness, and bed curtains are named Blik-janda-bolr, which mean bleak misfortune. There is a question whether these names are contributed to Hela by the Christian chroniclers or not. But what we can take as truth is that Hela's hall is a dreary place, just like the lives that those come to join her there lived during their stay in Midgard.

The second realm is known as Niflhel. Hiflhel is not to be confused with Niflheim. Many have confused the two, but the former is a hall in Hel, while the latter is a separate world onto itself and one of the nine worlds that make up the Yggdrasil. Within Niflhel is the hall known as Nastrond, the shore of death. Its doors face north and from its roof venom drops from the thousands of serpents that live there. Within Nastrond is the terrible serpent, or dragon, known as Nidhogg. Nidhogg gnaws on the roots of the Yggdrasil. His name means the one striking full of hatred. Those who were judged to have lived evil and destructive lives are sent to Nastrond. There they suffer a terrible "second death." Their blood is sucked out by Nidhogg and he finally feasts on their flesh and bones. Their fate is oblivion—non-existence. The third realm is one of bliss and peace, where Balder and Nanna reside. This is the Glittering fields, and is a kind of Elysian fields, and here those who have lived virtuous lives dwell. Within the Glittering Fields is Odainsaker. It means, field of the living—those who have not truly died dwell there with Balder. More will be spoken of Odainsaker later.

In the Lay of Balder's death, we are told that Odin rode to Hel to speak with the Volva. On his way he came first to Niflhel. While he was still there, he met on his way a dog bloody about the breast, which came from the direction where that division of the lower world is situated, which is called Hel. Thus the rider and the dog came from opposite directions, and the former continued his course in the direction whence the latter came. The dog turned, and long pursued Odin with his barking. Then the rider reached a *foldvegr*, that is to say, a road along the grass-grown plains. The way resounded under the hoofs of the steed. Then Odin finally came to a high dwelling shows that it was situated in Hel, not Niflhel. This latter realm of the lower world Odin now had behind him ever since he reached the green fields, and since the dog, evidently a watch for the borders of Hel and Niflhel, had left him in peace. The high dwelling was decorated as for a feast, and mead was served. It was, as Odin learned, the abode where the *Asmegir*, longingly waited the arrival of Balder.

It is important to note that the Myth of Balder's death distinguishes distinctly between Niflhel and the rest of the Netherworld--Hel. Niflhel is part of the Netherworld, but is not the abode of Hella, nor that of the *Asmegir*. Balder did not wine up in Niflhel.

When Odin rides through the Netherworld, he comes to green pastures (*the foldegr*) filled with light. There he found a hall decorated for festivity, and he ask the Volva: *For whom are the benches strewn with rings and the gold beautifully scattered through the rooms?*

The Volva answers: *Here stands for Balder mead prepared, pure drink; shields are overspread, and the Asmegir are waiting impatiently.*

Thus there stands in the lower realm a hall splendidly decorated awaiting Balder's arrival. As at other feasts, the benches are strewn with costly things, and pure wonderful mead of the lower world is already served as an offering to the God. Only the shields which cover the mead-vessel need to be lifted off and all is ready for the feast. Who or what persons have, in so good season, made these preparations? The Volva explains when she mentions the *asmegir* and speaks of their longing for Balder. It is this longing which has found utterance in the preparations already completed for his reception. Thus, when Balder gets to the lower world, he is to enter the citadel of the *Asmegir* and there be welcomed by a sacrifice, consisting of the noblest liquid of creation, the strength-giving sacred mead-drink of Teutonic mythology.

In the *Olaf Tyr-gue-son's Saga*, King Haron's skald, Einar Ska-lag-lam says: *And the asmegir required in war, turn themselves to the sacrificial feasts. The mighty promoter of the meeting of the red target of the goddess of war has honor and advantage thereof. Now grows the earth green as heretofore.* Rydberg ask—who is the God of the red target? In mythological language, red-target means the sun. The sun-god is of course Balder.

ODAINSAKER

In the *Erik Vidforle Saga* as well as in the *Fornald Saga*, there is described a realm in the Netherworld of the existence of a realm of joy, from which sorrow, pain, blemishes, age, sickness, and death were excluded. This place was called *Odainsaker*, the-acre-of-the-not-dead, *Jord lifanda mamnaa*, the earth of living men. It was situated not in Asgard, but below, in the Netherworld known as Hel.

Both sagas tell of the journey a petty Norse king by the name of Erik who vowed to seek out *Odainsaker*, and the fame of it over all of Norway. In the company of a Danish prince, also named Erik, he set out, first to Miklagard, where the king told him how to find *Odainsaker*. In was told that it laid in the east, beyond Jotunheim and was surrounded by a wall of fire. Erik and his Danish companion' and a troop of warriors, set out, traveling east until they reach the edge of the world. There they entered a country where the stars shone all day in a dark sky. They came to a river with a bridge made of gold and ice, that crossed it, but they could not see the far bank of the river. On the bridge they saw a dragon that was the Midgard Serpent. Its wide jaws block passage. Erik grabbed one of his warriors with one hand and with his sword in the other, he rushed straight into the jaws of the dragon and disappeared. The Danish Erik and the rest of the warriors refused to follow and made their way back to their native lands.

Erik and his companion moved through the Midgard Serpent and found themselves passing through thick mist that rose up from Hel. But eventually the mist parted and they found themselves upon a great plain lit up by the sun and covered with flowers. And though it was always daylight, the stars shined in the sky. It is never dark in this country, and objects cast no shadows. The companions travel deeper into this land to find any inhabitants. They soon found a tower that was suspended in midair, without any pillars or foundation. A ladder led up to the tower and they found a great room inside, carpeted with velvet. There was a table with delicious food in silver dishes, and wine in golden goblets. There also were splendid beds. They fell fast asleep. When they woke, they found a young man who claimed he was sent to guide Erik on his journey and told him he had reached *Odainsaker*. He told Erik that *Odainsaker* was

not the Christian Paradise, for only the dead could reach the latter. Erik agreed to return to his native land and when he did and told of his exploits, he was named *Erik Vid-forli* the far-travelled.

In the *Hervor Saga*, Odainsaker is once again mentioned. Gudmund was the name of a king in Jotunheim. His home was called Grund, but the district he lived in was known as the Glittering Plains or Odainsaker. He was wise and mighty, and in a heathen sense pious, and he and his men became so old that they lived many generations. The heathens believed that Odainsaker is a realm where everyone is so healthy that sickness and age depart, and no one ever dies there. Gudmund is mentioned in both Herrod's and Bosc's sagas as the ruler of the Glittering Plains, who was very skillful in the magic arts. Both Gudmund and the Glittering Plains are mentioned by Saxo Grammatius.

Odainsaker and the Glittering Plains are mentioned in many Medieval sagas as a heathen realm of bliss and eternal life. The location of Odainsaker as partly in Jotunheim and the Netherworld can be confusing, but Jotunheim is partly on the surface and partly occupies a subterranean realm. One of the three roots of the Yggdrasil extends down to Jotunheim, where Mimir stands guard over it and is known as Mimir's Well. Mimir is a giant. Another well, known as Urd is also guarded by giants known as the Norns.

In Erik's saga he crosses a bridge and descends downward through the Midgard Serpent through the mist of Hel to Odainsaker. He also crosses a bridge over a vast river much like Gjallar bridge (made of ice and rock) leading to Hel. Viktor Ryeberg, in his monumental work of the 19th century known as *Teutonic Mythology*, explores the meaning of Odainsaker and the Glittering Plains. He believes Gudmund is actually Mimir.

In Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* (The History of Denmark) we also hear of the Glittering Plains referred to as Odainsaker and ruled by Gudmund. We are told that there are several other realms adjoining Odainsaker, but separated by rivers. One is where the dead dwell and the other is where the evil are consigned. In the former, they dwell and are never able to reach this realm of bliss. We can surmise that this is Hela's dwelling where the vast majority of people dwell after they die. They are people who lived dull and meaningless lives. In the latter those who were evil in this life are sent to be devoured by Nidhogg. This is the realm of Nastrond, the shore of death, where a great hall exist and from its roof venomous snakes drop and within dwells Nidhogg the great serpent that awns on the roots of the Yggdrasil and sucks the blood and eats the flesh of the dead sent to him.

In the *Gorm Saga* within Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*, we read that Odainsaker is a place of bliss within the Netherworld where those who lived exceptional lives in Midgard go and are not really dead. For they are destined to be reborn after Ragnarok. This will be explained shortly. The second dwelling is Hela's domain where the average, populous dwell. For them, existence is as dull and meaningless as their lives were in Midgard. And the third realm is Nastrond where the truly evil are consigned to a second death in the jaws of Nidhogg and will face non-existence after great suffering. But Saxo explains that Odainsaker is ruled by Mimir.

According to *Hervor's Saga*, *Gorm's Aaga* and *Hadding's Saga*, Odainsaker is a separate place within the Netherworld. All three heroes, Hervor, Gorm and Hadding, are shown around the Netherworld by Gudmund (or Mimir) but are not permitted to enter Odainsaker. They are told there is a golden bridge that leads to Odainsaker and within the walls that surround it dwells Balder, and with him are the chosen who will rise from the Netherworld with him after Ragnarok to form a new and superior race of humans.

Ryeberg wonders just whom these chosen are in this *Teutonic Mythology*, page 229: *"All the sagas are silent in regard to who those beings are for whom this wonderful enclosed place is intended. Its very name Arce-of-the-not-dead (Odainsaker) and The-field-of-the-living (Jord Lifanda manna), men who sprain from Lif, however, makes it clear that it is not intended for the souls of the dead. The Erik Vidforle's saga is also able to state, inasmuch as it makes a definite distinction between Odainsaker and the land of the spirits, between Odainsaker and Paradise. If humans or other beings are found within the bulwark of the place, they must have come there as living beings in a physical sense; and when once there, they are protected from perishing, for disease, age, and death are excluded."*

Some consider Odainsaker as a Christian construct imposed on heathen sagas, but Ryeberg points out: *"In the Christian group of ideas there is no place for Odainsaker. An underground place for physically living people, who are there no longer exposed to aging and death, has nothing to do in the economy of the Church. Was there occasion for it among the ideas of the heathen eschatology?"*

GUDMUND'S INDEMNIFIED WITH MIMIR

Mimir is a Giant, who is the uncle of Odin. He rules over a grove that transcends the realms of Jotunheim and Hel. His well is the Well of Knowledge and not even Odin may drink of it without Mimir's permission. For a drink, Mimir requires he surrender one eye. After Mimir is killed by the Vanir, his head is preserved and becomes a device which Odin uses to confer with and seek advice. Mimir's head represents divine knowledge and the sum-total of all knowledge that those who die take with them to the Netherworld. Thus, the Netherworld is not a realm of darkness, but of lost knowledge, one in which but mortals and Gods seek to communicate with the find answers to question they need answered.

As a result, there is a deep friendship between the All-Father and Mimir. This firm relationship between the All-Father and this strange Giant of the underworld was formed in time's morning while Odin was still young and underdeveloped and continues until the end of the Gods. He trusts to Mimir with the safeguard of the remnants of the human race. Mimir is the collector of treasures. The same treasures as Gorm and his men found in the land which Gudmund let them visit are, according to Mythology in the care of Mimir. The wonderful horn that warns of the approach of Ragnarok, the sword of victory, and the ring, as stated in Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*. All these points of the middle age Saxo's *Gesta Danorum*, and the heathen Myths are identical according to Ryeberg. *"In Gudmund's domain there is a splendid grove, an enclosed place, from which weaknesses, age, death are banished—a Paradise of the peculiar kind, that it is not intended for the souls of the dead, but for certain lifandi menn, yet inaccessible to people in general. In the myth concerning Mimir we also find such a grove."*

MIMIR'S GROVE–LIF AND LEIFTHRASER

The grove is called after its ruler and guardian, Mimir's or Treasure-Mimir's Grove (*Mimis holt*–Younger Edda, Upsala). In the Deluding of Gylfi (*Gylfaginning*–The Prose Edda) describes that during Ragnarok: “*two persons are concealed in Treasure-Mimir's Grove. Their names are Lif and Leifthraser, and they feed on the morning dews. From them come so great an offspring that all the world is peopled.*”

In the Myths, Odin and Vafthrudner put questions to each other and among Odin's questions: “*What human persons shall still live when the famous Frimbul-winter has been in the world?*”

Vafthrudner answers: *Life and Leifthrasner; they are concealed in Hodd-Mimir's grove. They have morning dews for nourishment. Thence from Hodd-Mimir's grove this human pair are born new in a new race of man.*”

Thus from those who take refuge in Mimir's Treasure Grove within the trunk of Yggdrasil, a new race of man will emerge after Ragnarok. This is, beyond doubt, in accordance with mythic views. But mythologists and heathens, who have not paid sufficient attention to what The Deluding of Gylfi's source has to say on the subject have drawn a conclusion which implies a complete misunderstanding of the traditions in regard to Hodd-Mimir's Grove and the human pair therein concealed. Viktor Rydberg writes in his *Teutonic Mythology*:

“They have assumed that Lif and Leiftrhaser are, like all other people living at the time, inhabitants of the surface of the earth at the time when the conflagration of the world begins. They have explained Mimir's grove to mean the world tree, and argued that when Surt's flames destroy all other mortals this one human pair have succeeded in climbing upon some particular branch of thw world-tree, where they were protected from the destructive element. There they were supposed to live on morning dews until the end of Ragnarok, and until they could come down from their hiding-place in Yggdrasil upon the earth which has roisen from the sea, and there become the progenitors of a mere happy human race.”

According to this interpretation, Yggdrasil is a tree with branches that humans could grasp with their hands, climb into, sit without fear of the end of the world happening all around them while “eating” dew. Too many mythologists and heathen-reconstructionists take things too literally. For the Myths plainly states that this human pair are in perfect security in Mimir's Grove, while a long an terrible winter, a Fimbul-winter, visits the world and destroys its inhabitants. This winter could properly refer to another Dark Ages, where civilization breaks down. And after the collapse of civilization, the forces of chaos and order engage in conflict upon Vigrid's plains; and the end result will be the destruction of order and most of humanity, if not all of it, is destroyed. But after this terrible conflict those who survived in Mimir's Grove, tucked within the protection of the roots of the Yggdrasil in the Netherworld, rise to procreate a new race.

Consequently Líf and Leifþrasir must have had their secure place of refuge in Mimir's Grove during the fimbul-winter and all the following episodes that unfold during Ragnarok, they must have drawn on the knowledge that fills the Well of Mimir to assure their survival, just as they relied on the wisdom and magical knowledge taught to them by their Valkyries—the teachers and guardians sent by Odin to choose the elect to join with Balder in Odainsaker, as well as with him in Vahllá and Freyja in Sessrumnir.

Their source of nourishment is the dew that forms on the branches and leaves of the world tree—which is formed by the Gods, out of the chaotic life force, Vril, at the beginning of time. The morning dew, according to the Myths, is a sweet and wonderful nourishment possessing strange qualities of revitalization. The dew forms from the water from the three wells, which are fed by the life-force flowing utter of Audhumla. This water is sprinkled from the three wells on the roots of the world-tree that coalesce into living-giving dew which is an elvyr of life, wisdom, and magical knowledge.

Myths have meanings on multiple levels. As in all magic *as above, so below*. That which exist on the macrolevel, so to exist in the microlevel. Just as Ragnarok, Líf and Leifþrasir, rebirth is relevant regarding the cosmological order, so too it is mirrored regarding our inner evolution spiritually. Ragnarok can be the formula for *many turning of the ages*, including the death of the Self within you, once you have had an epiphany and thus you are transformed by practicing the Magic given to us by the Gods, just as Gandolf dies in Moria, fighting the horror of the Balron, and Gandolf the Grey dies, only to be replaced by Gandolf the White, so too our old Self is destroyed once we have established a personal contact with the Gods through out Valkyrie, and our old self is replaced by a new spiritual evolved Wode-Self.

Human beings survive Ragnarok, for Líf and Leifþrasir are destined to become the connecting link between the present human race and the better race destined to be born after Ragnarok. Thus death is not an end, just as the death of the Old Self is replaced by the birth of a new, spiritually evolved Wode-Self, so too is a new race to be born from those who survive in Odainsaker. The Myths tell us that after Ragnarok, Balder rises from the Netherworld, and with him a new race of humanity is born from Líf and Leifþrasir. Is Líf and Leifþrasir metaphor for those humans who transcend death and pass into the afterlife fully alive and dwelling with Balder in Odainsaker, waiting for the day to give birth to a new race? Is the Valkyrie Odin's agent to teach us how to join the ranks of those destined to survive Ragnarok within the walled refuge of Odainsaker? Within the Myths is the fundamental idea that the life of the new era, known as Gimli, is to be a continuation of the present life, purified and developed to perfection, and from the standpoint of this fundamental idea Líf and Leifþrasir are necessary.

THE ASMEGIR

Unlike the Judeo-Christian-Islamic view of life and death, which is lineal, with a dialectic beginning with birth and ending with death, the heathen view of life is cyclical, with birth-death-rebirth. Fundamental to the idea of life and death in the heathen worldview is regeneration into a new creation—a new age. If this was not so, then the Myth about Líf and Leifþrasir would be unnecessary. There would be no need for Gimli, a new era and a continuation of the present life purified and developed to perfection, not just for humans but also for the Gods.

Rydberg believes that the idea of improvement and perfection are most clearly held forth in regard to both the physical and spiritual condition of the future world. In the Voluspo stanzas 62 it states: *Then the fields unsowed bear ripened fruit, All ills grow better, and Balder comes back: Balder and Hoder dwell in Odin's battle-hall, And the mighty Gods.* In stanza 64 it states: *More fair than the sun, a hall I see, Roofed with gold, on Gimli it stands; There shall the righteous rulers dwell, And happiness ever there shall they have.*

In that perfection of nature the fields unsown by men shall yield their harvests. To secure the restored world against relapse into the faults of the former, the myth applies radical measures—so radical, that the Aesir majesty himself, Odin, must retire from the scene, in order that his son, the perfectly blameless Balder, may be the center in the assembly of the chosen Gods. But the mythology would fail in its purpose if it did not apply equally radical measures in the choice and care of the human beings who are to perpetuate our race after Ragnarok; for if the progenitors have within them the seed of corruption, it will be developed in their descendants.

From the standpoint that there must be a logical harmony in the Mythological system, it is necessary to conclude the following:

1) That Lif and Leifþrasir when they enter their asylum, Mimir's Grove, are physically and spiritually uncorrupted persons.

2) That during their stay in Mimir's Grove they are protected against; a) Spiritual degeneration—they dwell within a realm in which they are separated from those who take part in the events of the world with all its corrupting influences; b) Physical degeneration—that the grove in the Netherworld, while primarily for the dead, is separated from the rest of the Netherworld where the dead dwell, for they have transcended death and their Lyke, as one component of the Soul matrix lives on after death as part of the complete Soul in the Netherworld; c) Against everything threatening their very existence—which means that the destructive events that make of Ragnarok cannot touch them. Within the Grove, they are shield against both the icy winds of Fimbul-winter and the flames of Surtr's fire. They survive so that they can repopulate the world with a new and semi-divine race.

They are known as the Asmegir! Asmegir means—*The Human Sons of Odin!*

The Asmegir are human beings excluded from the surface of the earth, from the mankind which dwell in Midgard, and are inhabitants of the lower world, which resides a splendid castle kept by the Light Elf by the name Delling, and enjoy the society of Balder.

In Grimnismal stanza 31, it says that men live under the roots of the Yggdrasil: *Three roots do spread in threefold ways beneath the ash Yggdrasil: dwell etins beneath one, beneath the other, Hel, beneath the third; Midgard's men.*

Rydberg writes about the Asmegir; *Thus, it is also demonstrated that the asmegir are identical with the subterranean human person Lif and Leifþrasir and their descendants in Mimir's Grove. The care with which the mythology represents the citadel of the asmegir kept,*

*shown by the fact that the elf Dwelling, the counterpart of Heimdall in the lower world, has been entrusted with its keeping, is intelligible and proper when we know that it is of greatest importance to shield Líf and Leifþrasir's dwelling from all ills, sickness, age, and moral evil. It is also beautiful poetic thought that it is the elf of the morning dawn—he outside of whose door the song of awakening and bliss is sung to the world—who has been appointed to watch those who in the dawn of the new world shall people the earth with virtuous and happy races. That the *asmegir* in the lower world are permitted to enjoy the society of Balder is explained by the fact that Líf and Leifþrasir and their offspring are after Ragnarok to accompany Balder to dwell under his scepter, and live a blameless life corresponding to his wishes. They are to be his disciples, knowing their master's commandments and having them written in their hearts.*

It is interesting that this subterranean race of superior humans, possessing divine knowledge, waiting to rise and herald in a new golden age, are identical to the race of *Vril-ya* that the Rosicrucian, George Edward Bulwer-Lytton describes in his esoteric 19th century novel, on the eve of the first revival of Odinism, *Vril and the Power of the Coming Race*.

