CHAPTER 8

Asatru – An Academic Religion?

The relation between Germanic Neopaganism and academia is highly ambiguous. While knowledge of primary sources as well as academic theory plays a foundational role for a-racist and many ethnicist Asatruers, the majority of these Heathens have little first-hand knowledge of those sources and the Old Norse or Latin languages that they are written in. Their knowledge comes mostly from fictional literature, Neopagan popular interpretations, and other popularized accounts of Norse mythology, as well as from Internet sources. Asatruers who are able to cite sources and discuss academic theories about them are imbued with considerable symbolic capital within the Asatru community. Most importantly, though, references to scholarship have served to successfully repudiate allegations of any right-wing political involvement of Asatru. This strategy of immunization against the political instrumentalization of Asatru has been fairly effective in recent years. At the same time, we cannot overlook the fact that certain strands of scholarship dealing with Old Norse mythology and culture have themselves been deeply involved in various political or ideological identity projects. Germanic philology, folklore, history of religion, anthropology, and pre-historic archaeology were all concerned with the search for pure, pre-historical origins and have contributed to the mythologizing of scholarship and

1 A former board member of the Danish Forn Siðr thinks that the information he received from the popular children's book series on Erik Menneskesøn (Erik, Son of Man) by Lars-Henrik Olsen sufficed for him to become a Godi. Cf. Interview H.

2 René Gründer, Blütgemeinschaften (128f) observes, with regard to German Asatru, that the knowledge of basic Eddic texts constitutes a hidden norm for the social acceptance as an Asatruer within the community, but that most of his interview partners name Heathen interpretations of the sources and popular retellings as the immediate foundations of their knowledge and beliefs. Looking back at “Three Decades of the Ásatrú Revival” Stephen McNallen lists a number of mistakes, including “Lack of philosophical depth”: “[...] until we can hold our own in debate with the Jesuits or the pages of the New York Times Review of Books, we will not be taken seriously. [...] verses from the Hávamál will not suffice to express our beliefs to a sophisticated world.” (McNallen, “Three Decades of the Ásatrú Revival in America,” 217f.) And Kurt Oertel, Warden of the Lore in the German Eldaring, compares Neopagans’ ignorance of translation problems and source criticism with the attitudes of “self-proclaimed lay preachers in evangelical communities.” (Selbsternannte Laienprediger evangelikaler Gemeinschafen,” Kurt Oertel, “Denn es steht geschrieben...’ Neue Heiden und die Quellenkunde,” Heidnisches Jahrbuch 2 (2007), 37).
the ‘scientification’ of myth.³ While we have already discussed some 19th century contributions to the widespread popular image of Germanic myth and religion in Chapter 1, and a few particular interactions between theories of religion and the formation of new religions in Chapter 5, this chapter focuses on the use Asatruers make of primary sources and investigates the interfaces between Germanic Neopaganism and the disciplines that have contributed to 20th and 21st century notions of a Germanic or Nordic faith.

How Heathens Relate to their Sources

“The Edda” is the most frequent spontaneous answer Asatruers in just about any country offer when asked about the main ‘original’ sources for their belief. The two most-quoted Eddic poems attracted much attention during the Romantic era, and have remained central to popular ideas about Norse mythology ever since. The poem Völuspá is renowned for its cosmological vision of the origin and order of the world, and its decline in the oft-cited Ragnarök. The wisdom-poem Hávamál is cherished for its practical advice, upon which Asatruers like to build their ethics. Its account of Odin hanging in a tree and attaining runic knowledge contributes to its popularity in Pagan circles.⁴ Depending on their country of origin and the availability of translations, some also include the most well-known ancient and medieval renderings of pre-Christian Germanic mythology and history in their source list, namely Tacitus’ “Germania,” Saxo Grammaticus’ “Gesta Danorum,” and Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People.⁵ Others stress the importance of folklore, as well as material sources such as archaeological finds. In any case, sources do not speak in unmediated ways. This warrants the question: through which lense is the mythological knowledge perceived?

³ Cf. Ingo Wiwiorra, “Germanenmythos und Vorgeschichtsforschung im 19. Jahrhundert,” in Religion und Nation, Nation und Religion. Beiträge zu einer unbewältigten Geschichte, ed. Michael Geyer and Hartmut Lehmann (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004).

⁴ All of the field research done on Asatru in different countries in the last years comes to the conclusion that the Hávamál in particular is considered an almost sacred text in modern Asatru, regardless of ideological variety. See e.g. Jonsson, “Ásatrú á Íslandi við upphaf 21. aldar,” 142; Gregorius, Modern Asatro, 135–137; Blain and Wallis, “Heathenry,” 418. The same is true for Asatruers themselves who write about the basis of their faith, such as Jennings, The Norse Tradition, 51, who claims “one must live as closely as possible to the Havamal,” and the interviews I conducted with Norwegian and Icelandic Asatruers.

⁵ See Chapter 1.
The significance Asatruers ascribe to written, folkloristic, and material sources varies widely. It ranges from the conviction that a hidden continuity of Heathen traditions once existed, which had been transmitted orally or through practices for generations, particularly in rural areas, and which simply needs to be re-discovered and revived; to the realization that the available sources are highly unreliable, and can only serve as a starting point for the creation of a new, contemporary religion. The attitudes toward different sources vary from country to country as well. This indicates that the construction of modern Asatru is closely connected to the role that Old Icelandic literature and an interest in a pre-Christian past have played in the media and institutions of the nations in question since the 19th century.

Of the countries studied here, Iceland is the one where the idea that Asatru continues an existing, albeit multiply broken tradition, is most widespread. An older Asatruer takes exception to the claim that Asatru is a reconstructed faith:

Asatru has always lurked underneath the surface. It has always been there. It was life-threatening to profess to it, earlier. But it has never disappeared. One can see it in ‘low religion’ in particular, which has existed side-by-side with Christianity. It has been frowned upon, but the church has not succeeded in extinguishing it.

Icelandic Asatruers display a strong confidence that it is possible to build directly upon the available sources, connect them to a coherent whole, and tie these readings to a living tradition. Icelandic Asatruers are generally in

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6 This observation aligns well with an argument Piotr Wiench, “A Postcolonial Key to Understanding Central and Eastern European Neopaganisms,” makes regarding Central Eastern European Neopaganism. He explains the tendency to resort to the founding myths of allegedly “native religions” in post-Soviet states with these countries’ quasi-post-colonial status. Having reached independence from Danish rule only in 1942, of the countries discussed in this book, Iceland is the one which comes closest to exhibiting features of a post-colonial condition.

7 Interview U: “Asatroen har altid luret lige under overfladen. Den har altid været der. Det har været livsfarligt at bekende sig til den. Tidligere, ikke? Så den er aldrig forsvundet. Man kan se det på lavreligionen specielt. Som har eksisteret side om side med kristendommen. Den har været ugleset, men det har ikke lykkedes kirken at få det udryddet helt.”

8 Hence the widespread sentiment that the Hávamál in particular can easily be related to by old and young people. Cf. Interview with Jóhanna Harðardóttir (Ásatrúarfélagið). This text is even used to spread information about Asatru actively: The Ásatrúarfélagið contributed to the edition of the poem that appeared with Iceland’s premier publisher Íslandska bókmenntafélagið in 2007.
agreement with leading scholars in their country when they assume the existence of Pagan remnants in medieval sources. Furthermore, the idea that Iceland is the only country where Pagan practices have survived in an unbroken manner has in fact become a stereotype that is confirmed even by otherwise highly critical scholars, such as the historian of religion Friedrich H. Tenbruck, who contends in a footnote: “Only in Iceland, where religion remained a private matter, was the Germanic religion preserved up until today.”

The reception of scholarship in Icelandic Asatru follows a pattern applicable to Asatru groups in other countries as well, and for which René Gründer, in his analysis of German Heathenism, has identified two different strategies of authenticity: the alleged historical authenticity of the written sources, and the authenticity of subjective experience. In the case of Iceland, these strategies merge and support one another. This allows Asatrue to acknowledge that “the roots are in this primitive religion,” but that it has to be “further created: We don’t want to go [back] there, we are living today.”

Claims to a more or less unbroken religious continuity also exist in other Scandinavian countries. Danish Asatruer Gudrun Victoria Gotved assumes that Asatru has survived in folklore and customs up until today, claiming that:

\[\text{the faith has never been dead, it has at most been dormant. Now we have taken it up again in full force, we are no longer ashamed to admit that Odin and Thor are close to us. Neither are we embarrassed of that which used to be called superstition, because it is something natural.}\]

9 Among them are, to name just a few recent examples, the late folklorist Jón Hnefill Adalsteinsson and his successor Terry Gunnell, who have tried to identify descriptions in the Eddas and sagas as reverberations of older religious practices. Cf. Jón Hnefill Adalsteinsson, Under the Cloak. A Pagan Ritual Turning Point in the Conversion of Iceland, 2. extended ed. (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 1999). An article by Terry Gunnell on Icelandic Folkloristics can be found on the prison outreach site for the “Alternative Religions Educational Network,” http://www.aren.org/prison/documents/Asatru/iceland.pdf, last accessed August 27, 2014.

10 Tenbruck, “Die Religion im Maelstrom der Reflexion,” 55: “Nur in Island, wo die Religion Privatsache blieb, hielt sich die germanische Religion bis heute.” Unfortunately, he neither cites evidence for this claim, nor does he question the problematic assumption of a “Germanic religion” or address the question of how he uses the term ‘private’ here.

11 Interview T.

12 Gotved, Asatro. De gamle guder i moderne tid, 20: “Alt dette viser, at troen aldrig har været død, den har højst vært slumrende. Nu har vi taget den op for fuld kraft igen, vi er ikke længere flose over at indrømme, at Odin og Thor står os nær. Heller ikke det, der før blev kaldt overto, er vi flose over, for det er noget naturligt.”
The sense of an accessible and palpable unity of pre-Christian traditional heritage with one's own experience goes hand-in-hand with the popular acknowledgment that Christian influences play at least a minor role in the poetic Edda. Downplaying the fact that the preserved manuscript dates back to the 13th century, more than 250 years after Iceland's Christianization, most Icelandic and some Scandinavian Asatrurers consider it a genuine source, free of Christian influences. Others proceed a little more cautiously when asked about the role Old Norse texts play in their belief, such as this Norwegian Asatruer:

They are pretty important to me, but at the same time, I don't stare myself blind on them, because I have studied some of this, and I know that the majority is written in the 12th and 13th century, and by then, Christianity had dominated for a hundred or two hundred years and there is nobody who had had to deal with Paganism in a concrete way, it has just become oral tradition. Nevertheless I think there is a core of truth.

Skeptical attitudes like this can have two consequences. They can either lead to a confident, eclectic handling of medieval sources, an attitude that is denounced by others as an arbitrary and frivolous “anything goes” approach. Or, the Eddas and sagas remain central and binding fundaments, “the scriptures,” as one Danish Asatruer put it, which are used to keep beliefs and practices “pure” through the application of a “rigorous source criticism” – a phrase which, in this case, implies the identification of any Christian influence and its subsequent removal, the source thus arriving at a Pagan essence.

In Norway, and particularly in Sweden, there has at times been a more overt split between those who take their inspiration from written sources as well as from academic and literary writings on those sources, and those who believe in

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13 Frequently, it is contrasted with Snorri's Edda, which holds a somewhat more contested place, being considered the concoction of a Christian scribe by some (Interview U) and a valid basis by others (Interview T).

14 Interview Q: “For meg så er de ganske viktige, [...] men samtidig ser jeg meg ikke blind på dem, fordi at jeg har jo studert en del av dette her, og jeg vet jo at mesteparten er jo skrevet på elleve – og tolvhundretallet og da er det jo...da har jo kristendommen dominert i hundre – tohundre år og det er ingen som lever da som har hatt noe med hedendommen på kroppen, lissom, det er bare blitt muntlige overleveringer, men likevel tror jeg at det er en del kjerne av sannhet der.”

15 Interview I.

16 Interview V, with a Danish Asatruer, July 2010, Denmark.
a line of rural folk customs and traditions they perceive to be more authentic and reliable. The Swedish group Samfälligheten för Nordisk Sed here appears as the most radical in its complete rejection of alternative religious and New Age approaches. Generally speaking, however, the trend in Norway and Sweden tends more toward a reconciliation between the two factions of a-racist Asatru. The renaming of Sveriges Asatrosamfund’s to Samfundet Forn Sed, and the growing understanding between Norwegian Bifrost and Foreningen Forn Sed, are institutional indicators that a compromise has been reached between the different interpretations of the sources.

The notion that Norse mythology is an integral part of a Scandinavian cultural and religious heritage, and that Scandinavians thus have a more legitimate claim to the Old Norse sources, periodically leads to the devaluation of other countries’ claims, in particular those of American Asatruers. Some Scandinavian Heathens blame their American counterparts for integrating obscure esoteric readings of Norse mythology into their beliefs, of being too heavily influenced by Wicca, or of “having seen the light in Asatru,” leading them to “therefore gorge on all imaginable source materials.” This quote points to an awareness in Scandinavian Asatru of the existing sources’ unreliability. It also highlights that, in countries outside of Scandinavia, Asatru cannot use Norse mythology as an integral, self-evident part of a national cultural heritage. In England, for example, Celtic myth (or what is considered as such) and Arthurian legend have been much more foundational for a national mythology, and the Wicca movement dominates modern Neopaganism in England and America to a much larger degree than in the Scandinavian countries. Sure enough, Asatruers in these countries cite the same sources as their Scandinavian counterparts. In order to justify the use of Scandinavian sources as part of their own national mythological heritage, they rely mostly on the construction of an Anglo-Saxon and partly Viking legacy. Pete Jennings, co-founder of the a-racist English Odinshof and long-standing, now-retired president of the Pagan Federation,

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17 Cf. Gregorius, Modern Asatro, 111–113.
18 Jannik Thalbitzer Thiberg, “Hvad skal vi udbrede? Hvad står man for i asatro?,” Valravn. Hedensk tidskrift om samfund og kultur 11 (2004), 15: “de nyreligiøse amerikanere, som åbenbart har set lyset i asatroen, og derfor æder alt kildematerialet råt.”
19 The debates about authenticity, continuity and the use of sources is a problem Asatru shares with other Neopagan denominations, for example Wicca, which had originally claimed to revive a pre-Christian, old-European mystery and fertility religion that allegedly existed in an oral and initiatory lineage since before the Christianization of Europe. The majority of Wicca has by now abandoned this claim of an unbroken line of tradition. This is discussed at length in Hutton, The Triumph of the Moon.
asserts that the Anglo-Saxons brought a “religion of Teutonic origins” to England, and that Icelandic sources can therefore be used as a basis for this religion. Jennings implicitly relies on the assumption of a ‘Germanic’ or ‘Teutonic’ unity. He claims that folk customs can be used to supplement this written evidence because they preserve a knowledge of Heathen beliefs and practices that is otherwise lost. As mentioned in Chapter 1, both Anglo-Saxon ideology in the 19th century and Neopaganism (including Wicca) in general rely heavily on the Romantic theories of a pre-Christian folk heritage that were developed by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm and others. This is true for Scandinavian Asatru as well. Here, however, the idea that one can take up one’s own tradition by examining Norse mythology is much more naturalized, as this mythology forms an integral part of the respective Scandinavian national histories. Therefore, the constructed nature of such concepts is less visible. Asatrurers in other countries have to invest more into theoretical explanations of their choice of source material and its applicability. Hence, it comes as no surprise that American and German Asatru both depend strongly on Jacob Grimm’s Teutonic Mythology. It is considered to be an almost primary source because it integrates Scandinavian, Continental, and Anglo-Saxon written, linguistic, and folkloristic evidence in the holistic construction of a German(ic) mythology.

In German Asatru, the discussions about the status of the various sources hover around similar topics. Here, different groups stand for different attitudes towards the same basic sources, namely Old Icelandic literature, folklore, and archaeological finds. In Ariosophic groups such as the Armanen-Orden, the Edda in particular is read in the tradition of Guido List and his followers, as a revelation of secret truths that can be decoded with the help of esoteric and occult knowledge by initiates. The ethnicist Germanische

20 Jennings, The Norse Tradition, 7–9.
21 Ibid., 40f.
22 Nevertheless, Scandinavian Asatrurers share the underlying dilemmas in many ways. We might, for example, ask if the perception of the medieval Icelandic sources as ‘Nordic,’ and as immediate reflections of a ‘national’ or ‘native’ Swedish or Danish mythological heritage, is not the expression of a cultural imperialist move as well, which could be compared to the German appropriation of Scandinavian sources as Germanic for a construction of a German national mythology. (Cf. Maja Hagerman, Det rena landet. Om konsten att uppföna sine förfäder (Stockholm: Prisma, 2006)). And we could ask where the idea that Asatru can build on a quasi-natural “cultural current” – as one Asatruer from Denmark put it – actually comes from. Cf. Interview K.
23 The Armanen-Orden insists that the Edda originated between the last Ice Ages, and that it was recorded in an encrypted form by the Icelandic Heathen priest Saemundr, who only pretended to be a Christian priest in order to protect his knowledge and save it from
Glaubensgemeinschaft attests to the status of Eddic literature as an authentic and ancient source as well, saying “we take the Eddas seriously as religious sources and do not see any Christian influence in them.” This claim is countered by a member of the a-racist Eldaring, who emphasizes both the validity of taking a certain cultural context seriously and basing one’s modern faith on a dialogue with both the sources themselves, and the academic theories surrounding them:

We scarcely have secure sources for how a blot was held back then. And we live in the twenty-first century. [...] We do not play with certain historical periods, but live our faith today. On the other hand, ‘traditional’ can maybe also mean to take our faith seriously, to try to live up to it in a certain sense, to consider it a closed system that originates in a specific cultural context and doesn’t avail itself arbitrarily as it seems fit, to appreciate the discourse with the surviving sources but also with the current research on them. In this way we would very much like to be traditional.

In the Eldaring, there is a theoretical consensus, which has been adopted from the American mother organization The Troth, supporting the use of Eddic sources as a “system of orientation and reference,” and supplemented by readings of popularized academic summaries.

persecution and elimination. This theory allows for the conclusion to consider the Edda as Germanic, and most of all, German property. Schnurbein, Religion als Kulturkritik, 43, cf. 40–43.

24 Géza von Neményi in an interview, see Ravn, “Interview med Géza von Neményi den Tyske Allherjargode,” 10.

25 “Interview med Tim Peters fra Eldaring,” Valravn. Hedensk tidskrift om samfund og kultur 14 (2005), 8: “Vi har næppe sikre kilder for, hvordan et blot foregik den gang. Og som sagt lever vi i det 21. århundrede. Et nutidigt ritual må imødekomme nutidsmenneskers behov. Vi leger ikke med bestemte historiske perioder, men lever vores tro i dag. På den anden side kan ‘traditionel’ måske også forstås på den måde, at vi tager vores tro alvorlig, at vi forsøger at leve efter den i den beskrevne mening, at betragte den som et lukket system, som stammer fra en ganske bestemt kulturel kontekst og ikke betjener sig på må og få, som det nu passer, – at vi sætter stor pris på diskursen med de overleverede kilder, men også med den aktuelle forskning dertil. På den måde vil vi meget gerne være traditionelle.”

“Orientierungs- und Bezugssystem,” Correspondence with Kurt Oertel (Eldaring).

26 For example by Maier, Die Religion der Germanen; Simek, Religion und Mythologie der Germanen, Jan de Vries, Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte (Berlin/Leipzig: de Gruyter, 1935–37).
In recent years, we can identify a shift in emphasis from Scandinavian to continental sources within German and American Asatru. This shift has led to a renewed interest in folkloristic, as well as archeological, evidence. The latter in particular is considered more reliable by some Asatruers, because it seems older and less tainted by Christian influences than the textual evidence. However, the usefulness of folkloristic evidence as proof of the survival of pre-Christian beliefs and practices seems to be more contested in German Asatru than in other countries. Kurt Oertel, the Warden of Eldaring, generally rejects the use of folkloristic sources, claiming them to be unreliable, because they tell us nothing about Germanic traditions, and they do not give any corroboration that modern traditions reach back into a pre-Christian past. [...] The way one arbitrarily explained festivals and customs whose Christian origin was not immediately visible as ‘Pagan-Germanic’ and took for granted an unbroken continuity, had nothing whatsoever to do with any scholarly standard.

Another member of the Eldaring asserts the contrary:

An essential part of the old traditions go back to pre-Christian roots. Also in our region, continuities are likely. For me, the cautious reserve of some folklorists towards this approach has always been astonishing. Especially because with some scholars it takes on the dimension of a fanatic denial. [...] Apparently, what must not be, cannot be. Of course, in this connection there is never offered a conclusive explanation of what such customs might go back to instead.

28 See for example McNallen, “Three Decades of the Ásatú Revival in America,” 216.
29 Cf. for example Interview F.
30 Correspondence with Kurt Oertel (Eldaring): “weil sie [...] keinerlei Bestätigung dafür erbringen kann, dass neuzeitliches Brauchtum in vorchristliche Zeit zurückreichen würde. [...] die Selbstverständlichkeit, mit der man dort vor 1945 Feste und Bräuche, deren christlicher Ursprung nicht sofort ins Auge sprang, willkürlich als ‘heidnisch-germanisch’ zu erklären und eine ungebrochene Kontinuität vorauszusetzen versuchte, hatte mit Wissenschaftlichkeit nichts zu tun.”
31 Tiurik Alvisson, “Brauchtum und Heidentum – eine Annäherung,” Herdfeuer. Die Zeitschrift des Eldaring e.V. 3, no. 9 (2005), 6: “dass ein wesentlicher Teil alten Brauchtums auf vorchristliche Wurzeln zurückgeht. Auch bei uns sind [...] Kontinuitäten wahrscheinlich. Die vorsichtige Zurückhaltung einiger Volkskundler gegenüber diesem Ansatz ist für mich immer wieder erstaunlich. Vor allem, da sie bei vielen Wissenschaftlern das Ausmaß
Although the attitudes towards specific sources vary between countries and groups, we can conclude that they share similar patterns and an interest in finding some measure of unity and continuity for their faith and convictions.

This warrants a closer investigation into the scholarly sources Asatrüers make use of, as well as into their historical contexts and the interactions between scholarship and new religions in (re)constructions of ‘Germanic’ or ‘Nordic’ religion and culture. After all, as the previous chapters have already shown, Asatrüers were not the first to invest in the business of historical reconstruction in the service of a cultural and religious renewal.

**Völkisch Scholarship and Germanic Faith**

Germanic Neopagan adaptations of scholarship can be understood as popularizations of academic approaches in the tradition of Romanticism, with which Neopagans have at times shared goals, dreams, and convictions. Such approaches strongly emphasize intuition and psychology. They bear witness to the desire to spur a national spiritual rebirth by going back to ancient sources in which an untainted origin is sought. This method and ideology has not been limited to Germany. It also appears in both the construction of a Nordic Viking Age\(^{32}\) and of an Anglo-Saxon past for England.\(^{33}\) As Allen J. Frantzen has so astutely observed, the underlying method “relies on a belief in the fragment, or part, as that from which the system of the whole can be reconstructed.”\(^{34}\) This type of holism obviously lends itself to Reconstructionist religions and has in fact a mythic quality itself.\(^{35}\)

The first wave of productivity in the search for a national identity in Germany and other European countries unfolded in the 19th century, when,

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\(^{32}\) Cf. Hagerman, *Det rena landet. Om konsten att uppfinna sine förfäder.*

\(^{33}\) Frantzen, *Desire for Origins;* Allen J. Frantzen and John D. Niles, *Anglo-Saxonism and the Construction of Social Identity* (University Press of Florida, 1997).

\(^{34}\) Frantzen, *Desire for Origins,* 110.

\(^{35}\) Wiwjorra, “Germanenmythos und Vorgeschichtsforschung im 19. Jahrhundert,” 368f.
in the wake of Herder and the brothers Grimm in particular, a collection of new scholarly disciplines emerged, including Germanistik, Anglo-Saxon-Studies, and folklore. A second wave took off in the late 19th century with the emergence of the völkisch study of the Germanic, which gained its strongest momentum in the 1930s and early 40s in Germany. From the outset, the study of ‘Germanic antiquity’ was an interdisciplinary endeavor, to which the established fields of Germanic linguistics, philology, and history contributed. It also provided opportunities for new disciplines to move from the margins of academia to the center. One of them was German archaeology, or prehistory, which tried to establish itself in competition with the archeology of Greek and Roman antiquity in the late 19th century. Its central proponent, Gustaf Kossina (1858–1931), attempted to prove that independent Teutonic and Indo-European culture had its origins in Northern regions and spread from there. Other new disciplines which managed to establish themselves around the same time were physical anthropology, in particular its incarnation as ‘race science,’ folklore, cultural anthropology, and the history of religions. This interdisciplinary Germanenkunde (literally: Lore of the Germanic), or Germanische Altertumskunde (Lore of Germanic antiquity), was set in opposition to the study of Roman and Greek antiquity, which dominated not only the universities but also the curricula of the Gymnasium, the German classical high school. Ingo Wiwjorra points to the ideological origin of this field and identifies three central issues that were at stake in this

36 Cf. Heiko Steuer, ed. Eine hervorragend nationale Wissenschaft. Deutsche Prähistoriker zwischen 1900 und 1995, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2001).

37 Cf. Ingo Wiwjorra, Der Germanenmythos. Konstruktion einer Weltanschauung in der Altertumsforschung des 19. Jahrhunderts (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006); Heinz Grünert, Gustaf Kossina (1858–1931). Vom Germanisten zum Prähistoriker. Ein Wissenschaftler im Kaisersreich und in der Weimarer Republik, vol. 22, Vorgeschichtliche Forschungen (Rahden (Westf.): Verlag Marie Leidorf, 2002) (see also the critical review by Ingo Wiwjorra, “Review of Heinz Grünert: Gustaf Kossina (1858–1931),” Ethnographisch-Archäologische Zeitschrift 44 (2003)). Heiko Steuer, “Das ‘völkisch’ Germanische in der deutschen Ur- und Frühgeschichtsforschung,” in Zur Geschichte der Gleichung ’germanisch-deutsch.’ Sprache und Namen, Geschichte und Institutionen, ed. Heinrich Beck, et al., RGA Sonderband (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2004), 383f, draws attention to the fact that archaeology was considered to be an eminently national science, also in other European countries, including Scandinavia, and that the intertwinement with racial science could be found amongst Swedish archaeologists of the era as well.

38 Cf. Wiwjorra, Der Germanenmythos. Konstruktion einer Weltanschauung in der Altertumsforschung des 19. Jahrhunderts, 28f.
“construction of a Weltanschauung.”39 This multidisciplinary enterprise aimed at proving the great antiquity of a Germanic culture, its high level of development, and its origin in either Germany, Northern Europe, or even Atlantis – all of which are located in the North as opposed to the Orient, from where Christianity had supposedly brought “the light” or spiritual enlightenment.40

One source of inspiration for both Scandinavian (in particular Danish) and German scholarship on Germanic myth and culture was the Danish historian of religion Vilhelm Grønbech, with his book The Culture of the Teutons (1909–1912).41 Grønbech used a particular interpretation of the Icelandic sagas to offer a panoptic reconstruction of the mentality of “the Germanic peoples,” beginning with the era of Tacitus and tracing through to the late Middle Ages. With his German contemporaries, he shared the goal of proving the existence of a highly developed, independent, ancient Germanic culture. He thus hoped to gain insight into the ‘reality’ of ‘the ancestors’ through the reconstruction of their ethics, cosmology, anthropology, and culture.42 In Grønbech’s eyes, this past can and should be re-constructed in order to identify the roots that gave ‘our ancestors’ their strength, perhaps providing inspiration for contemporary cultural life. Peace,43 honor, kin and clan, hamingja, revenge, and fate emerge as key concepts in his writing.

Vilhelm Grønbech was inspired by late 19th century historians of religion and their interest in ‘primitive’ religion and animism, particularly James George Frazer. Just as Frazer provided the impetus for research into pre-Christian religion and practices of English Paganism, especially Wicca,44 Grønbech’s theories served as an inspiration for scholars and enthusiasts of a

39 “Germanenmythos und Vorgeschichtsforschung im 19. Jahrhundert.”
40 For academic and esoteric speculations about Atlantis and the north or the ice as the cradle for all higher culture see, for example, Joscelyn Godwin, Arktos. The Polar Myth in Science, Symbolism, and Nazi Survival (Kempton, IL: Adventures Unlimited Press, 1996); Franz Wegener, Das atlantidische Weltbild. Nationalsozialismus und Neue Rechte auf der Suche nach der versunkenen Atlantis (Gladbeck: kfVR – Kulturförderverein Ruhrgebiet e.V., 2001).
41 Cf. Grønbech, Vor Folkeæt i Oldtiden. The English translation appeared in 1931, cf. The Culture of the Teutons.
42 Vor Folkeæt i Oldtiden, 151.
43 Peace appears as a “hard” ideal, which works inwards towards one’s kin; it is an activist concept that calls for blood revenge against anybody who threatens it from outside the clan.
44 Cf. Hutton, The Triumph of the Moon; Lanwerd, Mythos, Mutterrecht und Magie.
neo-Germanic religion.\textsuperscript{45} In contrast to many of his followers’ overt Germanophile political predilections, Grønbech’s holistic imagination is untainted by direct political agendas. This fact, allied with the accessibility of English and German translations of his work after 1945, enabled the enthusiastic reception of his work, not only in Scandinavian but also American and German Asatru as well. Although he makes an honest attempt to envision Old Norse society with the help of an intuitive grasp of the sagas’ essence, his texts are nonetheless permeated by the life-philosophy of his own era. By basing his interpretations on categories such as experience (including mystical experience), wholeness, and authenticity, he gives his readers the chance to alloy their own life-philosophical ideals with the \textit{Weltanschauung} of ‘their ancestors.’ The ensuing mirror effect of recognition gives contemporary Pagans the illusion of being able to connect with the historical depths of their ancestral religion.

Vilhelm Grønbech’s work inspired a number of scholars, who turned from Eddic literature to saga literature as central sources for mythology in the first third of the 20th century. For them, as for Grønbech, these texts seemed to provide an authentic and realistic depiction of their Germanic ancestors’ lives and worldviews. Central protagonists of this school were Swiss scholar Andreas Heusler (1865–1940), who served as chair of Germanic Philology at Berlin University from 1914–1919, and afterwards at the University of Basel; Gustav Neckel (1878–1940), Heusler’s successor in Berlin; and Bernhard Kummer (1897–1962), Neckel’s temporary colleague and assistant.\textsuperscript{46} Together with other enthusiasts for the renewal of a Germanic faith, such as Arthur Bonus, the eloquent supporter of a “Germanization of Christianity,”\textsuperscript{47} and Otto Siegfried Reuter, the founder of the \textit{Deutschgläubige Gemeinschaft}, the three scholars depicted Germanic religion as an immanent religion in which the divine manifests in man, nature, folk, or race. Claiming that “gods and men form a

\textsuperscript{45} This has also to do with Frazer’s and Grønbech’s rejection of an evolutionism which depicted the ‘primitives’ as backward. Cf. Jørgen Prytz-Johansen, \textit{Religionshistorikeren Vilhelm Grønbech} (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1987), 107. The immense impact of Grønbech’s ideas and categories for 20th century Scandinavian literature (for example on Johannes V. Jensen and Aksel Sandemose) are well known, although considerably under-researched.

\textsuperscript{46} The following arguments on Heusler, Neckel, and Kummer are further developed in Schnurbein, ‘Religionsforskning og religionsfornyelse i ‘nordisk’ ånd i Tyskland etter første verdenskrig’ and ‘Nordisten und Nordglaube. Wechselwirkungen zwischen akademischen und religiösen Konzepten von germanischer Religion,’ in \textit{Germanentum im Fin de siècle. Wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Studien zum Werk Andreas Heuslers} ed. Jürg Glauser and Julia Zernack (Basle: Schwabe, 2005).

\textsuperscript{47} Bonus, \textit{Von Stoecker zu Naumann}.
community of fate” and that the “Nordic gods are ideal images of Nordic man,”48 the works incorporated images of Germanic heroism, individualism, fatalism, and the fulltrúi belief of Germanic fealty discussed in Chapter 3.

Before addressing the common background to the striking similarities between the concepts of these in fact quite ideologically and temperamentally divergent scholars, some of the fundamental differences in their views of Germanic religion must be addressed. Andreas Heusler was strictly and often controversially opposed to any attempt at reviving a Germanic religion. He dismissed any alleged national sentiment in Germanic mentality that, according to his description, distinguished itself by its anti-state individualism.49 While both Neckel and Kummer worked actively for the establishment of a neo-Germanic religion,50 their views of the god Odin could not have been more different from each other. For Neckel, Odin appeared as a Dionysian character, the embodiment of a dynamic spirit of war and poetry.51 Kummer, in his cultural pessimist dissertation “Midgards Untergang” (Midgard’s Decline), described the cult of Odin as a symptom of the deterioration of Germanic culture, as a foreign influence pioneering degenerate Christian morals of sin and redemption.52

All of these concepts are idealized and ideological images of a Germanic antiquity that was set against an allegedly degenerate (Christian) modernity. All the aforementioned scholars also directed their criticism against

48 Bernhard Kummer, Die germanische Weltanschauung nach altnordischer Überlieferung. Vortrag, gehalten im Auftrag der ‘Vereinigung der Freunde germanischer Vorgeschichte’ in Detmold am 10. Juni 1930 (Leipzig: Adolf Klein, 1933), 29: “Götter und Menschen bilden eine Schicksalsgemeinschaft” … “die nordischen Götter sind Idealbilder nordischer Menschlichkeit”.

49 Cf. Andreas Heusler, Germanentum. Vom Lebens- und Formgefühl der alten Germanen (Heidelberg: Winter, n.d. (ca. 1942)), 38, where he claims: “There was no Germanic sense of community” – “Es gab kein germanisches Gemeinschaftsgefühl.”

50 Kummer was a member of the Nordisch-religiöse Arbeitsgemeinschaft (cf. Fritz Heinrich, Die deutsche Religionswissenschaft und der Nationalsozialismus. Eine ideologiekritische und wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Untersuchung (Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2002), 186–200; “Bernhard Kummer (1897–1962). The Study of Religions Between Religious Devotion for the Ancient Germans, Political Agitation, and Academic Habitus,” in The Study of Religion under the Impact of Fascism, ed. Horst Junginger (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008)), and Neckel joined the appeal to found the Deutsche Glaubensbewegung in 1933. Cf. Breuer, Die Völkischen in Deutschland, 259.

51 Gustav Neckel, Die altgermanische Religion, Zeitfragen deutscher Kultur Heft 2 (Berlin: Wendt, 1932), 11.

52 Kummer, Die germanische Weltanschauung nach altnordischer Überlieferung, 36.
well-known ‘enemies’ who, according to widespread popular right-wing opinions, were made responsible for this downfall of Germanic values: the Roman world, revolutionary France, the Socialist workers’ movement, the Capitalist West, as well as the Jews, who were suspected to lurk behind all of the above. They also shared the goal of a Germanic rebirth: a mostly spiritual notion for German Faithlers, but understood as a revival of German national self-confidence by Germanists and Scandinavianists. A volume edited by Hermann Nollau in 1926\(^5^3\) summarizes this popularized academic agenda in its title – “Germanische Wiedererstehung: Ein Werk über die germanischen Grundlagen unserer Gesittung” (“Germanic Revival: A Study of the Germanic Foundation of our Culture”). In his preface, Nollau denounced the plight of the German people, attributing it to the “excessive permeation of our original nature by foreign cultural thoughts.” He then called on German scholars to assist in the “revival of the Germanic past in our people’s knowledge.”\(^5^4\)

The concept of religion with which both Neckel and particularly Kummer operated was provided by Jakob Wilhelm Hauer (1881–1962). Hauer was chair of the department for the history of religions at the University of Marburg, and was one of the founding fathers of this discipline, which provided a sustainable academic impetus for the formation of an institutionalized neo-Germanic religion. The indologist and student of Rudolf Otto (1869–1937) shared with his teacher the belief that all religion originates in inner, non-rational experiences, and that the study of religion can only be approached properly through a scholar’s own religious feelings.\(^5^5\) In order to explain the major differences

\(^5^3\) Hermann Nollau, ed. Germanische Wiedererstehung. Ein Werk über die germanischen Grundlagen unserer Gesittung (Heidelberg: Winter, 1926). It is the volume in which Andreas Heusler’s above-quoted essay was published.

\(^5^4\) Ibid.: “übermäßige[.] Durchsetzung unseres ursprünglichen Wesens durch fremde Kulturgedanken” – “Wiedererstehung der germanischen Vergangenheit in dem Wissen unseres Volkes.”

\(^5^5\) The early promoters of the field of history of religions and the phenomenology of religion, such as Rudolf Otto, Jakob Wilhelm Hauer, and Mircea Eliade were subsumed by what Rainer Flasche has aptly called a “prophecy-syndrome.” Cf. Burkhard Gladigow, “Religionsgeschichte des Gegenstandes – Gegenstände der Religionsgeschichte,” in Religionswissenschaft. Eine Einführung, ed. Hartmut Zinser (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1988), 7; Heinrich, Die deutsche Religionswissenschaft und der Nationalsozialismus, 105. In this context, it would be interesting to follow the trajectory Peter van Roojen has suggested in his critical discussion of concepts of secularization. He put forward the thesis that what has been called “secularization” in the early 19th century could more aptly be described as a “relocation of religion,” which is related to the replacement of confessional states with nation-states. “Whereas the social and political practices of the confessional state had located religion in a visible and hierarchical social order, the practices of the
between religions, which, according to these theories, were all based on fundamental ecstatic experiences, Hauer turned to racial anthropology, in particular to the ideas of Hans F.K. Günther (1891–1968).56

Their common interests in a national revival occasionally motivated the aforementioned scholars to collaborate with religiously motivated lay scholars, sometimes involving themselves actively in the Germanic Faith Movement. Even the a-religious, anti-nationalist Heusler was captured by the spirit of Germanic revival and inspired by the dilettante Arthur Bonus, a former Protestant minister and active promoter of a “Germanized Christianity.” Heusler’s successor, Gustav Neckel, frequently quoted Herman Wirth and Wilhelm Teudt, two lay scholars whose work he initially publicly endorsed and who have remained important references for Germanic Neopagans up until today.59

56 Günther was to become a leading race-theorist of the National Socialist era. Günther was engaged in the revival of Germanic religion on racial grounds as well, and he supported the existence of a ‘racial soul’ as the prime form-giving category or Gestalt-Idee. Cf. Nanko, Die Deutsche Glaubensbewegung, Horst Junginger, Von der philologischen zur völkischen Religionswissenschaft. Das Fach Religionswissenschaft an der Universität Tübingen von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zum Ende des Dritten Reiches, vol. 51, Contubernium. Tübinger Beiträge zur Universitäts- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1999), 57, 166f; Emberland, Religion og ras, 55–57.

57 Cf. Zernack, Geschichten aus Thule, 3, for a discussion of Bonus and his engagement for the popularization of saga literature. For a discussion of Bonus’ religious ideas and activities see Lächele, “Germanisierung des Christentums.” See also Chapter 1.

58 Cf. Heinrich, Die deutsche Religionswissenschaft und der Nationalsozialismus, 186–200; “Bernhard Kummer.”

59 Cf. Hunger, Die Runenkunde im Dritten Reich, 333.
Herman Wirth (1885–1981) was a Dutch-born philologist, historian, musicologist, and national-Romantic enthusiast for a pan-German ‘matriarchal’ ideology,\(^\text{60}\) as well as author of the cultural-pessimist “Der Aufgang der Menschheit” (“The Rise of Mankind”).\(^\text{61}\) He dedicated his life to the study of a supposed ancient Atlantic civilization, which had, he claimed, inspired all the world’s cultures. Wirth was especially interested in this culture’s symbols, in particular the runes, which he thought to be the origin of all other symbolic systems. With his growing collection of signs and ornaments from all over the world, he aimed to spur a “rebirth of the Nordic race” and with it the liberation of mankind from the curse of civilization.\(^\text{62}\) Wirth’s method did not show a single trace of source criticism, and when he insisted on the authenticity of the so-called “Ura-Linda-Chronik” (also known as the “Oera-Linda-Book”), his status as both an academic charlatan and a cultural icon became firmly established.\(^\text{63}\) Ousted by academic colleagues, Wirth found supporters in leading circles of the National Socialist party after 1933, and co-founded the ss research institution Deutsches Ahnenerbe (Ancestral Heritage) together with Heinrich Himmler and Walter Darré in 1935.\(^\text{64}\) Prior to his removal from his post as Ahnenerbe director in 1937, he was able to organize an expedition to Sweden and Norway, where he was able to disseminate his ideas in extreme nationalist, racist, and anti-Semitic circles in Sweden, especially through his lectures held at the neo-Gothicist Manhems Association.\(^\text{65}\)

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60 See Chapter 7.
61 Wirth, Der Aufgang der Menschheit.
62 Cf. Hunger, Die Runenkunde im Dritten Reich, 186–191; Michael H. Kater, Das ‘Ahnenerbe’ der ss 1935–1945. Ein Beitrag zur Kulturpolitik des Dritten Reiches (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1974), 12f.
63 The Oera-Linda-Book is an allegedly ancient history of a Frisian family, published in the Netherlands in 1872 and exposed as a forgery shortly after. It presents a “racially pure and matriarchal” utopian society, “which is credited with the creation of European culture,” and constitutes a “curious combination of Germanophile racism, a Romantic ideology of motherhood, and liberal constitutional concerns.” Davies, “Männerbund’ and ‘Mutterrecht,’” 89f. Wirth used this allegedly “oldest testament of the North” as support for his own ideas. Cf. also Hunger, Die Runenkunde im Dritten Reich, 181.
64 For Wirth’s brief activities in the Ahnenerbe see Kater, Das ‘Ahnenerbe’ der ss 1935–1945, 11–42; Hunger, Die Runenkunde im Dritten Reich, 180–202; Anka Oesterle, “The Office of Ancestral Inheritance and Folklore Scholarship,” in The Nazification of an Academic Discipline. Folklore in the Third Reich, ed. James R. Dow and Hansjost Lixfeld (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 202–205.
65 Cf. Luitgard Löw, “På oppdrag for Himmler. Herman Wirths ekspedisjoner til Skandinavias helleristninger,” in Jakten på Germania. Fra nordensvermeri til ss-arkeologi, ed. Terje
Another lay scholar promoted by Heinrich Himmler was the former protestant minister and völkisch folklorist Wilhelm Teudt (1860–1942). Teudt combined his Germanophile religious interest with speculative theories about an ancient Germanic high culture. In the 1920s, he took up a number of older, unfounded speculations about the peculiar rock formation known as Externsteine near Detmold and the Teutoburg Forest. Teudt claimed to have found the site of a “Germanic Stonehenge,” the location of the sacred Saxon column, Irminsul, and the center for an ancient Germanic sun cult destroyed by Charlemagne.

Excavations were undertaken in 1932, but no traces of an ancient observatory or of its destruction by Charlemagne were found that could have confirmed Teudt’s theories. During the National Socialist regime, Heinrich Himmler adopted Teudt’s ideas about Externsteine and developed plans to re-install a site of worship there.

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66 The bizarre and impressive rock formation contains a medieval Christian chapel. Speculations about the existence of a pre-Christian site of worship go back to the 19th century, but have still not been verified up until today. Schockenhoff, “‘Stonehenge’ contra ‘Störrische Kuh’”; Uta Halle, ‘Die Externsteine sind bis auf weiteres germanisch!’ Prähistorische Archäologie im Dritten Reich (Steinhagen: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2003).

67 Cf. ‘Die Externsteine sind bis auf weiteres germanisch!’, 116–125. As mentioned in Chapter 6, Teudt was inspired by the theory of ley lines advanced by the founder of geomancy Alfred Watkins in the early 1920s, and promoted the idea of the Externsteine being the crossing point of “cultic lines” connecting major ancient religious sites in Europe and Egypt.

68 Cf. ibid., 118–122; “Die Externsteine/Kr. Lippe. Ein Natur- und Kulturdenkmal im Spannungsfeld rechter und esoterischer Ideologie Stuttgart,” in Das Denkmal als Fragment – Das Fragment als Denkmal. Denkmale als Attraktionen. Jahrestagung der Vereinigung der Landesdenkmalpfleger (VdL) und des Verbandes der Landesarchäologen (VdLA) und 75. Tag für Denkmalpflege 10.–13. Juni 2007 in Esslingen a. N., ed. Regierungspräsidium Stuttgart – Landesamt für Denkmalpflege (Stuttgart: Landesamt für Denkmalpflege, 2008), 122.

69 Cf. Erich Kittel, Die Externsteine als Tummelplatz der Schwarmgeister und im Urteil der Wissenschaft (Detmold: Naturwissenschaftlicher Verein Detmold, 1965).
excavation during 1934/35 under Teudt’s mentorship, which interpreted the findings as proof of Teudt’s theories.70

Kummer, Wirth, Teudt, and others who moved in their circles were inspired by the ideal of an agrarian, rural, family-centered racial Germanic society in the 1930s. An altogether different vision was developed by the Scandinavianist and Germanist Otto Höfler (1901–1987), the supporter of the Männerbund theory discussed in Chapter 7. Like his antagonist Bernhard Kummer, Höfler’s multi-disciplinary holistic approach to Germanic cult and culture was inspired by Vilhelm Grønbech, with whom he shared an interest in the application of contemporary ethnological research into the minds of ‘the primitives’ to matters Germanic. Höfler developed this holistic concept further into what he called ‘cultural morphology,’ a method that allegedly allowed him to grasp the Gestalt of Germanic culture.71 In contrast to Grønbech, he did not reject folklore as a valid source for such inquiries, but instead included research on folk customs, in particular those of the alpine region, together with analyses of linguistic, textual, and pictorial evidence, into his set of methodologies.72 He followed in the footsteps of Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Mannhardt, whose Romantic ideas of an imagined continuity between “Germanic antiquity” and contemporary folklore were taken to new heights by the Vienna school of Germanistik. Within this academic school, two factions competed for

70 The archaeologist Julius Andree, the head of the excavation, never managed to present satisfactory material proof for these conclusions. In later years, this has led to speculations that the state museum in Detmold was deliberately suppressing and distorting evidence of a Pagan site of worship. Cf. Halle, ‘Die Externsteine sind bis auf weiteres germanisch!’ 507, as well as “Die Externsteine/Kr. Lippe,” 122. Today, the site is popular amongst Neopagan groups of all persuasions. This is not the least due to a popular book on alleged ancient ritual sites by Gisela Graichen, Das Kultplatzbuch. Ein Führer zu den alten Opferplätzen, Heilig tümern und Kultstätten in Deutschland (Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe, 1988). Cf. Martin Schmidt and Uta Halle, “On the Folklore of the Externsteine – or a Centre for Germanomaniacs,” in Archaeology and Folklore, ed. Amy Gazin-Schwartz and Cornelius Holtorf (London/New York: Routledge, 1999), 161–164.

71 Cf. Julia Zernack, “Kontinuität als Problem der Wissenschaftsgeschichte,” in Kontinuität in der Kritik. Zum 50jährigen Bestehen des Münchner Nordistikinstituts: Historische und aktuelle Perspektiven der Skandinavistik, ed. Klaus Bölzl and Miriam Kauko, Rombach Wissenschaften – Reihe Nordica (Freiburg i.Br.: Rombach, 2005), 68f.

72 For the fundamental methodological differences between Grønbech and Höfler see Heinrich Beck, “Zur Rezeption von Vilhelm Grønbuchs Werk im deutschen Sprachraum,” in Verschränkung der Kulturen. Der Sprach- und Literatur austausch zwischen Skandinavien und den deutschsprachigen Ländern, ed. Oskar Bandle, Jürg Glauser, and Stefanie Würth (Tübingen/Basle: Francke, 2004), 341.
authority of interpretation. One side saw its roots in myth, and the other focused on ritual as the source of religious and völkisch cultural continuity.73 Belonging to the ‘ritualists,’ together with his teacher Rudolf Much and his colleague Lily Weiser, Höfler also made use of theories developed in a branch of German folklore studies (Volkstunde) in the 1920s which had an acute interest in religion. This variant of folklore explicitly understood itself not merely as an antiquarian endeavor. Rather, it formulated its goal as being “to glimpse the divine power which is eternal and leads man time and again to the same original experiences.”74

Höfler’s theories were not utilized by proponents of a Germanic religion initially, and Höfler himself connected his ideas less to a religious renewal than to political and cultural goals.75 His work inspired a considerable number of other scholars in Germany and Scandinavia, among them Stig Wikander (1908–1983), of Sweden. Wikander further developed Höfler’s ideas in his thesis on the Aryan Männerbund76 and harbored fascist sympathies himself.77

73 Olaf Bockhorn, “The Battle for the ‘Ostmark.’ Nazi Folklore in Austria,” in The Nazification of an Academic Discipline. Folklore in the Third Reich, ed. James R. Dow and Hansjost Lixfeld (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994).

74 Eugen Fehrle in his series editor’s preface to Lily Weiser, Althärfische Jünglingsweihen und Männerbünde. Ein Beitrag zur deutschen und nordischen Altertums- und Volkstunde, ed. Eugen Fehrle, Bausteine zur Volkskunde und Religionswissenschaft 1 (Bühl (Baden): Konkordia, 1927): “die göttliche Macht zu erschauen, die ewig ist und den Menschen immer wieder zu denselben Urerlebnissen führt.” Fehrle was one of the first to introduce Hans F.K. Günther’s concept of race into the discipline and later became the ‘chief ideologist’ of national socialist folklore. Peter Assion, “Eugen Fehrle und ‘The Mythos of Our Folk,’” in The Nazification of an Academic Discipline. Folklore in the Third Reich, ed. James R. Dow and Hansjost Lixfeld (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 113–115.

75 Höfler’s willing and active participation in a political instrumentalization of his theories in the 1930s and 40s is reflected, among other things, in his report about the “Development of the intellectual situation in Scandinavia,” which he wrote for the German Secret Service (the Sicherheitsdienst) in 1942. See Julia Zernack, “Nordische Philologie,” in Kulturwissenschaften und Nationalsozialismus, ed. Jürgen Elvert and Jürgen Nielsen-Sikora (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2008), 702.

76 Stig Wikander, Der arische Männerbund. Studien zur indo-iranischen Sprach- und Religionsgeschichte (Lund: Gleerup, 1938). Two Austrian scholars who worked in a similar line as Höfler were his “ritualist” colleagues, Richard Wolfram, Scherttanz und Männerbund (Kassel: Bärenreiter Verlag, 1935) and Robert Stumpfl, Kultspiele der Germanen als Ursprung des mittelalterlichen Dramas (Berlin: Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1936).

77 Cf. Lincoln, Theorizing Myth, 126; Stefan Arvidsson, “Stig Wikander och forskningen om ariska mänsförobund,” chaos. Dansk-norsk tidsskrift for religionshistoriske studier 38 (2002); Mihaela Timuș, “Quand l’Allemagne était leur Mecque...” La science des religions...
Höfler’s method is a prime example of the close collaboration between the disciplines of ancient history, archaeology, folklore, and (Germanic) philology that characterized National Romantic scholarship. It was revitalized in early 20th century (German) scholarship, and subsequently turned into official state-doctrine during the 1930s. It privileged a paradigm of continuity as well as the search for a unity of völkisch essence in the past and in customs of rural life. Not only did this approach lead to the exclusion of Continental Jewish folklore, urban life, and workers’ lives from the material to be studied, the field also developed a decidedly anti-Christian slant.

Höfler’s theories also influenced the Swiss scholar Martin Ninck. Ninck’s theories, which interpret Wodan as the expression of the Germanic racial soul, were one of the primary sources of inspiration for C.G. Jung’s essay, “Wotan.” Ninck found a theoretical-aesthetic framework in the life-philosophy of Ludwig Klages and followed a holistic approach similar to that of his forerunners, promising his readers a comprehensive overview (Gesamtüberschau), which would combine “science and life,” and consider philology a mere auxiliary method in this process of reconstruction. Reworking the concept of a Germanic fatalism, Ninck considered Wodan the “God in which the fate of a

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78 This was pointed out already by Hermann Bausinger in the 1960s in his critical discussion of National Socialist folklore. Bausinger’s seminal article is available in an English translation: Hermann Bausinger, “Nazi Folk Ideology and Folk Research,” in The Nazification of an Academic Discipline. Folklore in the Third Reich, ed. James R. Dow and Hansjost Lixfeld (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994).

79 Cf. Christoph Daxelmüller, “Nazi Conception of Culture and the Erasure of Jewish Folklore,” in The Nazification of an Academic Discipline. Folklore in the Third Reich, ed. James R. Dow and Hansjost Lixfeld (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994).

80 In spite of the continual competition and controversy between the ss Ahnenerbe and the Amt Rosenberg, the main institutional bearers of folklore, archaeology, and historical studies outside the universities during Hitler’s rule, the ideas of völkisch unity and continuity united the two factions and facilitated collaborations between researchers in both institutions. Cf. Wolfgang Emmerich, Zur Kritik der Volksstumsideologie (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1971), “The Mythos of Germanic Continuity,” in The Nazification of an Academic Discipline. Folklore in the Third Reich, ed. James R. Dow and Hansjost Lixfeld (Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 46, who points to the significance of Alfred Rosenberg’s anti-Christian, anti-Jewish ideology in this context.

81 Carl Gustav Jung, “Wotan,” Neue Schweizer Rundschau 111 (Neue Folge), no. 11 (1936), 665.

82 For Klages cf. also Chapter 6.

83 Martin Ninck, Wodan und germanischer Schicksalsgläube (Jena: Diederichs, 1935).
race, our race, has been decided.”

He attributed to the Germanic peoples two essential characteristics: male heroism, and Wanderlust, which led to numerous migrations and campaigns of conquest throughout the ages.

Deviating from Höfler and following Klages, he considered the “organic” fatalism that forms the core of Germanic religion to be a female force. The polar opposition between the Roman and the Germanic is decisive for Ninck, and he makes sure to emphasize that this type of fatalism has nothing whatsoever to do with the “Jewish Jahve-religion” which he conceptualizes as completely alien to Germanic religion.

Ninck supposes the survival of a Pagan belief in Wodan and fate in Gothic and other ‘Germanic’ architecture, joining his German colleagues in fashioning another of the theories of continuity and unity of Germanic culture that are so appealing to Neopagans.

The main components of the image of an ancient Germanic religion, including heroic fatalism; the idea of an immanent, worldly faith; concepts of fealty; and the idea of strong women and ecstatic warrior bands, which continue to shape large parts of the religious ideas of German and Anglo-American Asatruers, were thus formulated within and by a network of mainly German and Austrian scholars during the 1920s and 30s. In spite of their differences and controversies, they agreed that it was both possible and desirable to reconstruct an ‘Old Germanic’ worldview, religion, and social structure from written, folkloristic, and material sources. They were united by their sympathy for, if not their active support of, contemporary fascist regimes and ideologies. Höfler, Wikander, and other scholars contributing to these ideas could thus be called parts of what Cristiano Grottanelli has called “a vast European front,” a “cultural and trans-national Männerbund” of the totalitarian right, which

84 Ibid., 3: “eines Gottes, in dem sich das Schicksal einer Rasse, unserer Rasse entschieden hat.”
85 Ibid., 108.
86 Although Ninck relies strongly on Höfler, and Höfler reviews Ninck quite favorably, he criticizes Ninck’s emphasis on trance and the idea of the soul leaving the body in ecstatic states, because it can only capture the element of poetry and prophecy in Odin, but not the aspect of war which requires a much more orderly type of ecstasy. Cf. Otto Höfler, “Zwei Grundkräfte im Wodankult,” in Otto Höfler: Kleine Schriften. Ausgewählte Arbeiten zur germanischen Altertumskunde und Religionsgeschichte, zur Literatur des Mittelalters, zur germanischen Sprachwissenschaft sowie zur Kulturphilosophie und -morphologie, ed. Helmut Birkhan (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 1992 [1974]).
87 Ninck, Wodan und germanischer Schicksalsgläube, 334.
88 For a critique of such theories of “Germanic continuity,” which employ continuity as a "seeming answer" instead of questioning it critically in each case, see Kellner, Grimms Mythen, 9f.
furthermore “kept in contact or re-contacted each other” after the war and continued to influence the study of religion after 1945.89

**Remnants of Völkisch Scholarship after 1945**

Many of the scholars working at the fringe of official academia, such as Herman Wirth, Wilhelm Teudt, and to a certain degree also Bernhard Kummer, had already been discredited by their more established colleagues by the mid to late 1930s. This did not prevent their continued religious productivity after the war. The right-wing subcultural network of associations and publishing houses that emerged in post-war Germany90 ensured a largely unbroken continuity of völkisch myth.91 Groups such as the Deutschgläubige Gemeinschaft and the Artgemeinschaft continued to quote Kummer and Neckel,92 and Kummer himself remained active in Germanic religious circles.93 The works by Teudt and Wirth had even more impact on the formation of the worldview of more recent Asatru groups in countries other than Germany as well.

After 1945, and contrary to evidence, Herman Wirth and his followers often presented him as having been persecuted by National Socialism.94 This allowed him to pick up the threads of his pre-war activities after his return from Sweden. In 1954 he founded the Gesellschaft für europäische Urgemeinschaftskunde/Herman-Wirth-Gesellschaft (today called Ur-Europa e.V.) in Marburg and tried to raise money to establish a museum intended to hold his symbol collection.95 In the 1970s and 80s, the aging Herman Wirth gained new

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89 Cristiano Grottanelli, “War-time Connections: Dumézil and Eliade, Eliade and Schmitt, Schmitt and Evola, Drieu La Rochelle and Dumézil,” in The Study of Religion under the Impact of Fascism, ed. Horst Junginger (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008), 313.

90 Cf. Chapter 1.

91 Wiwjorra, Der Germanenmythos. Konstruktion einer Weltanschauung in der Altertumsforschung des 19. Jahrhunderts, 19.

92 The Artgemeinschaft sold the quoted essay by Andreas Heusler, as well as works by Neckel (Germanisches Heldentum), together with publications of their own authors (http://asatru.de/versand/main_bigware_29.php?bigPfad=22, last accessed September 13, 2014), and quotes Kummer in several articles published on their homepage www.asatru.de.

93 Kummer collaborated with Jakob Wilhelm Hauer in the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für freie Religionsforschung und Philosophie, resp. the Freie Akademie. Cf. Nanko, “Religiöse Gruppenbildungen vormaliger ‘Deutschgläubiger’ nach 1945,” 131.

94 Cf. Häke, Der Fall Herman Wirth – 1978–1981 – im Landkreis Kusel oder: Das verschüttete Demokratiebewußtsein; Kater, Das ‘Ahnenerbe’ der SS 1935–1945, 63; Eduard Gugenberger and Roman Schweidlenka, Mutter Erde, Magie und Politik. Zwischen Faschismus und neuer Gesellschaft (Vienna: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1987), 119.

95 Löw, “Völkische Deutungen prähistorischer Sinnbilder,” 221–224.
supporters in green-alternative circles, who were drawn to his theories about
Germanic matriarchy, as well as his ecological ideas.96 After World War II,
Wilhelm Teudt's theories were continually promoted by members of Germanic
and völkisch religious groups. In the 1950s, Teudt's former assistant, Ulrich von
Motz, espoused his theories in guided tours at the Externsteine rocks, where
he also sold brochures published by the infamous right-wing company Hohe
Warte, run by the Ludendorff Gesellschaft. Another lay scholar of the post-war
era, Elisabeth Neumann-Gundrum, connected Teudt's and Wirth's theories
with the phantasms of Jürgen Spanuth, who claimed that the German island
Helgoland is identical to Atlantis.97 Teudt's and Neumann-Gundrum's work on
the Externsteine has been continually promoted by a working group founded
by Walther Machalett, who was also active in the circles around the Armanen-
Orden and proponent of Guido List's ideas.98 In 2010, Matthias Wenger was
elected president of the association known today as the Forschungskreis
Externsteine e.V.99 Wenger has been a long-term activist in German Asatru. In
the mid-2000s, he publicly renounced his right-wing past.100 At the same time,
he has been writing for the research group's journal on a regular basis since

96 These contacts were facilitated by the fact that Wirth had considered Native Americans
as the inheritors of the lost high Atlantic culture. One of Wirth's adherents, Andreas
Lentz, a supporter of Native American spirituality in Germany, became active in the
Armanen-Orden, whose Ariosophic and racial esoteric teachings he adopted. Today, Lentz
runs the publishing company Neue Erde specialising in "spiritual ecology and nature phi-
losophy." Cf. Davies, “Männerbund’ and ‘Mutterrecht’,” 105; Gugenberger and Schweid-
lenka, Mutter Erde, Magie und Politik. Zwischen Faschismus und neuer Gesellschaft, 125–128.
http://www.neueerde.de/der-verlag, last accessed August 27, 2014.

97 Neumann-Gundrum was a member of the Herman-Wirth-Gesellschaft (Ureuropa e.V.) to
which she left all her property after her death in 2002. She contributed to the völkisch
Externstein research with the idea that the natural rock formations actually were giant
granitic sculptures and thus witnesses of the high culture of 'our ancestors.' Halle, "Die
Externsteine/Kr. Lippe"; ‘Treibereien wie in der NS-Zeit.’

98 Cf. Schnurbein, Religion als Kulturkritik, 218.

99 The original Walther Machalett-Forscherkreis für Vor- und Frühgeschichte der Externsteine
im Teutoburger Wald was renamed once before into Arbeits- und Forschungskreis Walther
Machalett.

100 Wenger was the co-founder of the right-wing radical Asgardbund, former member of
the Armanen-Orden and founder of the Gemeinschaft für heidnisches Leben in Berlin.
Cf. Schnurbein, Religion als Kulturkritik, 176. He later supported the German Rabenclan
in laying bare the right-wing esoteric connections within Ariosophy and Germanic
Neopaganism. See http://www.rabenclan.de/index.php/Magazin/MatthiasWengerGezavon
Nemenyi, last accessed August 26, 2014, and Matthias Wenger, "Meine politische Position
und ihre Entwicklung in 30 Jahren."
1996, as well as for the yearbook of Ur-Europa e.V.101 More recently, Wenger has started to promote the work of Teudt and others through the Forschungskreis Externsteine. In his online journal, Der Hain, he endorses theories by Herman Wirth and Bernhard Kummer, whom he considers pioneers of an alternative, matriarchal view of the Germanic past.102 Wirth's and Teudt's theories have also found supporters in the European New Right,103 as well as American and English Asatru contexts.104

These examples notwithstanding, their theories are contested in contemporary Asatru. Asatruers are increasingly aware of the political implications of such connections and tend to distance themselves accordingly. Instead, they rely on academic and popularized academic works available in the languages of their respective countries to shape their imaginaries of Germanic religion, in the hope of not falling prey to racist and völkisch distortions of their beliefs. However, such works are themselves frequently based on scholarship which emerged as a continuation of the Höfler school after 1945. Two other controversial scholars closely connected to him loom large within the fields of Scandinavian studies, Indo-European studies, and the history of

101 http://www.forschungskreis-externsteine.de/: “Rückschau” (last accessed March 24, 2011 – the link has since been removed from the Forschungskreis’ homepage). Cf. also Halle, “Die Externsteine/Kr. Lippe,” 129.

102 Cf. Wenger, “Patriarchalische Ideologie oder matriarchalisches Wertsystem.” For recent controversies around the activities of the Forschungskreis Externsteine, as well as the association Ur-Europa, which promotes the work of Herman Wirth, see http://www.hiergebli-eben.de/pages/textanzeige.php?limit=10&order=datum&richtung=DESC&z=1&id=32603 (last accessed August 26, 2014).

103 See Jakob Christiansen Sehnholt, “Radical Politics and Political Esotericism. The Adaptation of Esoteric Discourse within the Radical Right,” in Contemporary Esotericism, ed. Egil Asprem and Kennet Granholm (London: Equinox, 2012).

104 In an online article from 2008, the Odinic Rite wrote about the location of the Irminsul at the Externsteine, although without making direct mention of Wilhelm Teudt. (http://www.odinic-rite.org/main/the-irminsul-and-the-externsteine-from-yggdrasil-to-the-irminsul, last accessed August 26, 2014). The Norwegian site Kulturogan Skadinaujo discusses Teudt’s work on the Externsteine favorably. (Cf. Jørgen Exenberger, “Sarkofagsteinen i Externstein,” KultOrg (KulturOrgan Skadinaujo) 8, no. 1 (2008)). American Asatruers occasionally mention the forged Ura-Linda-Chronik or Oera-Linda-Book, which Herman Wirth promoted so adamantly as a testimony for his ancient ‘Atlantic’ religion. A list of Asatru prison resources (http://aren.org/prison/documents/Asatru.htm, last accessed August 26, 2014) contains a link to “Oera Linda Book Extracts (pub 1876, but derives from a diary between the periods of 560–558 BC, but written in 1256 AD)”: http://earth-history.com, last accessed August 26, 2014. A google search for “Oera Linda Asatru” gave 63,800 results in December 2011.
Chapter 8

religions – Georges Dumézil (1898–1986) and Mircea Eliade (1907–1986). Together with their collaborators, students, and followers, including Jan de Vries and Edgar Polomé, Dumézil and Eliade were to become important for both post-war Germanic studies as well as later Asatru constructions of Germanic religion. In the 1930s and 40s, Höfler, Dumézil, and Eliade all belonged to the “vast European front” of right-wing totalitarianism, and the foundations for their lifelong network of collaboration and friendship were already laid in this era.\(^\text{105}\)

Höfler’s post-war career started with his dismissal from his position at the University of Munich by the American military government in 1945. Although he was classified as a mere follower and nominal member of the National Socialist party (\textit{Mitläufer}), the controversy around his person, activities, and theories continued until 1954. That year, a new chair position was created for him in Munich, which he held until he was appointed at the University of Vienna in 1957.\(^\text{106}\) Höfler remained an authority in the study of Germanic myth up until his death in 1987, and continued to investigate the “consistency and continuity of state-building instincts and

\(^{105}\) The relationship between Höfler and Dumézil goes back as far as 1931, when the young French language instructor Dumézil met his German colleague Höfler and Stig Wikander at the University of Uppsala in Sweden. Cf. Bruce Lincoln, “Dumézil, Georges,” Encyclopaedia Iranica, http://www.iranica.com/articles/dumezil, last accessed February 06, 2015. Eliade’s contact to Dumézil was probably initiated some time before 1940, but the friendship between the two scholars of myth commenced in Eliade’s years in Paris after 1945. Beck, “Zur Rezeption von Vilhelm Grønbechs Werk im deutschen Sprachraum” (341) discusses Höfler’s debt to Eliade’s idea of epiphany and his anti-historicist thesis of man’s liberation from history through the repetition of archetypical actions. For a laudatory discussion of the close intellectual and personal connections between the three, from the perspective of a German historian who himself belongs to the New Right, see Karlheinz Weißmann, “Das Heilige ist eine unverlierbare Größe,” \textit{Junge Freiheit}, March 09, 2007. Cf. Arvidsson, \textit{Aryan Idols}; Grottanelli, “War-time Connections: Dumézil and Eliade, Eliade and Schmitt, Schmitt and Evola, Drieu La Rochelle and Dumézil.” See also Otto Höfler’s favorable review of Jan de Vries’ \textit{Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte} from 1959 where he makes positive references to both Dumézil and Eliade. Otto Höfler, “Rez.: Jan de Vries, Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte,” in \textit{Otto Höfler: Kleine Schriften. Ausgewählte Arbeiten zur germanischen Altertumskunde und Religionsgeschichte, zur Literatur des Mittelalters, zur germanischen Sprachwissenschaft sowie zur Kulturphilosophie und -morphologie}, ed. Helmut Birkhan (Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag, 1992 [1959]).

\(^{106}\) Zernack, “Kontinuität als Problem der Wissenschaftsgeschichte,” 49–55.
state-building institutions” which he now saw embodied in traditions of sacral kingship.

The fundamental innovation in the post-1945 study of Indo-European myth came from the French structuralist theorist of myth, Georges Dumézil. He aimed to shed light on the basic structures of thought which distinguished Indo-European religion and society. Following Höfler’s assessment that religion and social order were closely intertwined, Dumézil understood religion as a “coherent vision defined by a conceptual system that both organized [the social order] and informed the social body and the priestly class.” Dumézil’s analysis of myths from different parts of the Indo-European world brought him to the conclusion that a tripartite structure of a priestly, a sovereign, and a fertility function was characteristic of Indo-European religions and societies. In his post-war work, Dumézil took much more care than Höfler to point out the limits of his analyses. He called attention to the fact that his methods were helpful in identifying structures of thought, but not in reconstructing (pre)historical events or social systems as such, nor were they suitable for informing or legitimizing a contemporary political program. He lacked the enthusiasm for Indo-European ‘greatness’ that motivated some of

107 Weißmann, “Das Heilige ist eine unverlierbare Größe”: “Konstanz und Kontinuität der staatenbildenden Instinkte […] staatenbildenden Institutionen”.
108 Otto Höfler, Germanisches Sakralkönigtum (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1952). Höfler continued to pay tribute to Vilhelm Grønbech as well by promoting a German translation of Culture of the Teutons with the academic publishing house Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, for which he also wrote a new preface. For a scathing critique of the renowned academic publishing houses’ policy in this matter see Wolfgang Behringer, “Das ‘Ahnenerbe’ der Buchgesellschaft. Zum Neudruck einer Germanen-Edition Otto Höflers,” Sowi 27 (1998). For general critical discussions of Höfler’s career and theories of continuity see also Harm-Peer Zimmermann, “Männerbund und Totenkult. Methodologische und ideologische Grundlinien der Volks- und Altertumskunde Otto Höflers 1933–1945,” Kieler Blätter zur Volkskunde 26 (1994); Esther Gajek, “Germanenkunde und Nationalsozialismus. Zur Verfluchung von Wissenschaft und Politik am Beispiel Otto Höflers,” in Völkische Bewegung – Konservative Revolution – Nationalsozialismus. Aspekte einer politisierten Kultur, ed. Walter Schmitz and Clemens Vollnhals (Dresden: Thelem, 2005).
109 Cf. Bruce Lincoln, “Dumézil, Ideology, and the Indo-Europeans,” ZfR. Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft 6, no. 2 (1998), 221.
110 Maurice Olender, Race and Erudition, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2009), 35.
111 According to Lincoln, “Dumézil, Ideology, and the Indo-Europeans,” 221, a change in perspective in Dumézil’s work occurred in the 1950s.
112 Cf. Olender, Race and Erudition, 35, 181.
his colleagues and followers, and remained the most complicated and complex thinker among the scholars discussed here. While insisting on the purely linguistic nature of what he called Indo-European reality, he nevertheless supported a linguistic essentialism, claiming that “language involves much more than itself: it entails both a representation of the universe and the civilization that results from it.”

Such ambiguous assertions reflect the ambiguity of Dumézil’s involvement with right-wing politics, as well as the ambivalence of the discussions around these topics. Dumézil admired Charles Maurras; the right-wing extremist, anti-Semitic, royalist Action Française; and Mussolini’s fascism; but was critical of German National Socialism. What remains highly disputed is the question of how extensively such political sympathies formed his theories, and how Dumézil’s post-war involvement with protagonists and organizations of the French New Right, such as Alain de Benoist and G.R.E.C.E., as well as the journal Nouvelle École, should be assessed. What is clear is that the French New Right took inspiration from Dumézil’s comparative method and used his theories to justify their metapolitical visions of an Indo-European re-awakening, which would work against Judaism, Christianity, and Enlightenment ideals.

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113 Cf. Lincoln, “Dumézil, Ideology, and the Indo-Europeans,” 146.
114 Dumézil in an interview with Maurice Olender, Race and Erudition, 73.
115 In the 1980s, Arnaldo Momigliano, Studies on Modern Scholarship (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) and Carlo Ginzburg, Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989) accused Dumézil of harboring sympathies for National Socialism, which was effectively rebuked by Didier Eribon, Faut-il brûler Dumézil ? Mythologie, science et politique (Paris: Flammarion, 1992), Guy G. Stroumsa, “Georges Dumézil, Ancient German Myths, and Modern Demons,” ZfR. Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft 6, no. 2 (1998), and Lincoln, “Dumézil, Ideology, and the Indo-Europeans” who, on the other hand, produced ample proof of Dumézil’s sympathies for the French and Italian extreme right.
116 Olender, Race and Erudition, 46–48, mentions that Dumézil resigned from the sponsorship board of the Nouvelle École after the publication of a special volume on him in winter 1972/73 apparently because he was troubled by the vision for the future which Benoist derived from his work. Olender insists that Dumézil cannot be made responsible for promoting such theories of continuity and visions for the future. Bruce Lincoln, Theorizing Myth, 123 and 259, on the other hand, points out Dumézil’s ongoing fascination and involvement with right-wing movements and protagonists.
117 Olender, Race and Erudition, 40–66 mentions Jean-Louis Tristani, who combined an antimonothest, anti-Jewish ideology with his reading of Dumézil, who he thought provided “access to our first religious tradition” (ibid., 51) and Jean Haudry’s theses on the racial implications of an Indo-European continuity. Haudry and Jean Varenne were also involved with the right-wing French Front National. Haudry in particular is popular...
The third scholar in this trio, Mircea Eliade, joined the others in a search for “the source of the universally human phenomenon of the religious in an original relation of the human spirit to the Holy,” as Otto Höfler put it. He stressed the “significance of the archetypical, of the relations between culture and the original spiritual forms (geistige Urformen), of the entry of the cult into the transtemporal, and the ritual commitment of the historical orders of life to the numinous, the Holy and extra-temporal.”

Like Höfler, Eliade was politically engaged on the far right (in the Romanian fascist Iron Guard, for example) in his early years. Whereas Höfler and Dumézil focussed on social and political structure in their readings of myth, Eliade’s scholarly work was centered around symbolism and esotericism. He was influenced by theorists of the

\[\text{in Asatru circles with affinities to the New Right. The American} \text{ AFA sells his book,}\text{ The Indo-Europeans, in its online store } (\text{cf. http://www.runestone.org/store/index.htm, last accessed August 27, 2014). Stefan Björn and Romana Ulbrich, of the German} \text{ Arun-Verlag, quote him in a recent book on name-giving ceremonies (Björn Ulbrich and Romana Ulbrich,}\text{ Dein Name sei... Rituale und Zeremonien zu Geburt und Namensgebung (Engerda: Arun, 2009)}, 30, \text{where they also refer positively to a work by Richard v. Kienle,}\text{ Germanische Gemeinschaftsformen, ed. Forschungs- und Lehrgemeinschaft 'Das Ahnenerbe,' vol. 4, Reihe B:Fachwissenschaftliche Untersuchungen. Abteilung:Arbeiten zur Germanenkunde (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1939) on "Germanic Forms of Community," which appeared in a series edited by the}\text{ Ahnenerbe. To Haudry see also Lincoln,}\text{ Theorizing Myth, 121 and 285.}\]

In this context it seems significant as well that Stig Wikander, Höfler and Dumézil's colleague from their time in Uppsala, who seems to have shared Dumézil's appreciation of European fascism, although not necessarily of German National Socialism during the war, appears amongst the supporters of \text{ Nouvelle Ecole} in the 1970s. Cf. Arvidsson, \text{ "Stig Wikander och forskningen om ariska mannafördub."}

118 The quotes are by Höfler, cited in Weißmann, \text{ "Das Heilige ist eine unverlierbare Größe": "Quelle der gesamtmenschlichen Erscheinung des Religiösen in einer Ur-Beziehung des Menschengeistes zum Heiligen zu suchen" – "Über die Bedeutung des Archetypischen, über die Zusammenhänge der Kultur mit den geistigen Urformen, über das Hineintraten des Kultes in das Überzeitliche und die rituelle Bindung der historischen Lebensordnungen an das Numinose, das Heilige und Zeitenrückte, hat Eliade Einsichten eröffnet, die ihn in die Reihe der bahnbrechender Erschließer der historisch-überhistorischen Glaubensformen stellen."}

119 For Eliade's involvement with Romanian fascism see Wasserstrom, \text{ Religion after Religion, 306 and 308, as well as Norman Manea, \text{ "Happy Guilt. Mircea Eliade, Fascism, and the Unhappy Fate of Romania," New Republic, August 05, 1991 and Adriana Berger, \text{ "Mircea Eliade. Romanian Fascism and the History of Religions in the United States," in Tainted Greatness. Antisemitism and Cultural Heroes, ed. Nancy Harrowitz (Philadelphia: Gemple University Press, 1994).}}

120 Until the 1920s, he was involved with theosophy and occultism, an interest that he shared with the traditionalists René Guénon and Julius Evola. In the 1930s, he settled for
German Conservative Revolution, and he remained in close contact with Ernst Jünger, with whom he edited the journal *Antaios* between 1959 and 1971.\(^{121}\)

Most admirers of Eliade consider that he broke with his early political convictions and devoted his later academic life to an a-political study of religion, establishing the discipline history of religions in its unique form in the United States. However, critics identify continuities between his early political convictions and his later work\(^{122}\) as a respected professor at the prestigious University of Chicago and author of the widely praised book, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*,\(^{123}\) as well as other influential publications. Eliade’s “covert theology”\(^{124}\) followed the line of Rudolf Otto and other promoters of the primacy of experience, and considered inward experience and a Heideggerian ‘Ergriffenheit’ to be constitutive for all religion. *Ergriffenheit* in Heidegger’s sense denotes a kind of “primal ontic seizure” and is a key philosophical concept which includes the submission to the authority of someone or something that seizes.\(^{125}\) Eliade shares his affinity for the notion of *Ergriffenheit* with C.G. Jung,\(^{126}\) another theorist of “ontic depths.”

While Eliade's scholarly work on Germanic matters remains contested,\(^{127}\) his ideas on ‘continual hierophanies’ as the positive driving force for mankind

\(^{121}\) Cf. ibid., 320.

\(^{122}\) Wasserstrom and Benavides point to the continued rhetoric of violence in his work, and to the militant metaphors connected to his “rebirth model of sacrality.” They remind us of Eliade’s agitation for a “New Man” in the Romanian Legionary Movement, the *Iron Guard* (Cf. Gustav Benavides, “Heroic Deeds and the Extraction of Surplus,” in *The Study of Religion under the Impact of Fascism*, ed. Horst Junginger (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008), 266f) For a brief analysis of the fascist ideology of the Romanian Legionary Movement *Iron Guard* see Valentin Şandulescu, “Fascism and its Quest for the ‘New Man.’ The Case of the Romanian Legionary Movement,” *Studia Hebraica* 4 (2004). It found its continuation in his later writings on the rebirth of a New Man, and his “suspension of ethics in favor of ontic depths” implied in his model of totality (Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion*, 225, see also 18 and 132).

\(^{123}\) Mircea Eliade, *Cosmos and History. The Myth of the Eternal Return* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1954).

\(^{124}\) Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion*, 25.

\(^{125}\) Cf. ibid., 29–31.

\(^{126}\) Cf. Petteri Pietikäinen, “C.G. Jung, anti-Semitism, and racial psychology,” *Psykologia* 31, no. 2 (1996).

\(^{127}\) Eliade draws on Höfler and Dumézil in his analysis of the role of ecstasy and shamanism in Germanic contexts. See Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism. Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964).
and his assertion that the goal of the study of religion should be the “liberation of man from history”\(^{128}\) have had a considerable impact, both on the study of religion in general as well as on modern esotericism, New Age spirituality, alternative religion, and Neopaganism.\(^{129}\) It is most likely due to Eliade’s writings and activities that the ideas of his correspondent and collaborator Otto Höfler were so widely disseminated in American contexts.\(^{130}\)

We can conclude that scholarship of Germanic and Indo-European myth not only incorporates earlier oppositions of ‘Aryan versus Semitic’ religion,\(^{131}\) but also has direct ties to German völkisch, Conservative Revolutionary, and National Socialist scholarship, which was institutionalized in the ss research institution Ahnenerbe. The unifying element between the various academic attempts to understand Germanic or Indo-European myth and religion is their use of fragmented and temporally and spatially scattered sources of evidence, with the goal of reconstructing a common pre-Christian, Germanic, Nordic, or Indo-European worldview, mentality, religion, or social structure. Such attempts at constructing identity academically are dependent on the creation and exclusion of an ‘other,’ which in many cases is ‘the Jew’ or the Semite. They thus align themselves all too easily with an overt or latent anti-Judaism or anti-Semitism.\(^{132}\) Furthermore, they lead to a biased selection of sources from the respective eras, and to the de-contextualization of these sources from the eras in which they originated. Thus, in the case of medieval Icelandic literature, mythological texts are held in high regard and taken as expressions of an ancient Germanic essence, whereas the abundant hagiographic or Christian literature of the same era is more or less ignored as

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128 Gladigow, “Religionsgeschichte des Gegenstandes – Gegenstände der Religionsgeschichte,” 12.
129 This impact is probably only superseded by the influence of C.G. Jung with whom Eliade shared a number of interests and with whom he was connected through the Eranos conference group. (Cf. Wasserstrom, Religion after Religion).
130 To the contact between Höfler and Eliade see Timuș, “Quand l’Allemand était leur Mecque...”; Weißmann, “Das Heilige ist eine unverlierbare Größe.” Weißmann’s and others’ treatment of the relations between Höfler, Dumézil and Eliade shows that such connections today are actively propagated by the European and American intellectual New Right in order to give their way of thought a respectable academic foundation.
131 Cf. Arvidsson, Aryan Idols.
132 Dumézil is the only one of the scholars discussed here who has never been accused of anti-Semitism. Cf. Stroumsa, “Georges Dumézil, Ancient German Myths, and Modern Demons,” 131. For a discussion of the anti-Semitic implications of Eliade’s as well as de Vries’ thought cf. Stefan Arvidsson, Draksjukan. Mytiska fantasier hos Tolkien, Wagner och de Vries (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2007), 84, 94, 97.
secondary and derivative. The sagas of the Icelanders serve as testimonies of a Nordic or Germanic mentality, while the large number of sagas on knights and saints, as well as those dealing with fantastic material, are considered to be dependent on Continental, courtly literature and are thus also dismissed. This type of reconstructive scholarship lends itself to the belief that combining de-contextualized fragments from vastly different eras and regions can in fact lead to the identification of deep structures of a deep past in which the origin of one’s identity can be found. Such a reconstruction can then supposedly explain the present or help one’s own nation or group to regain a proper identity or essence. In other words: it is the construction of a unified, naturalized ethnic identity, which is set against a devalued ‘other.’ It is thus not surprising that scholars critical of this ideology have concluded that the whole discourse surrounding Indo-Europeans, as well as notions of a Germanic or Nordic wholeness, ought to be considered a “web of scientific myths.” Scholarship on Indo-European or Germanic myth has, in turn, lent itself to myth-making. Many of the scholars who have investigated this area harbor mythological, religious, political, or ideological agendas themselves. They have been primarily interested in the relevance of their historical findings for their respective societies’ identity projects. This explains the intellectual affinities and the personal, as well as institutional, connections between these scholars and political movements, which are interested both in constructing society on the basis of such essences, and in ‘curing’ or ‘purifying’ contemporary societies of the aberrations of a complex and ‘degenerate’ modernity.

Reconstructive approaches, including Dumézil’s work, are generally well received within Asatru contexts, with which they share a basic interest in reconstruction and religious or social renewal on the basis of ancient ‘truths’ or ‘essences.’ But this is certainly not the only, and perhaps not even the main, means by which Dumézil’s theories reach the majority of Asatru groups today. His influence can be attributed to his impact on other leading post-war Scandinavianists in the Netherlands, Scandinavia, and the

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133 The selection chosen for the German saga translations in the Sammlung Thule are a good example for this kind of discriminatory procedure. For a critical discussion see Zernack, Geschichten aus Thule, 3.

134 This is a position which has been supported by Poliakov, The Aryan Myth; Colin Renfrew, Archaeology and Language, The Puzzle of the Indo-European Origins (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987); Lincoln, Theorizing Myth and others. For a systematic summary and inquiry into the backgrounds of such criticism see Arvidsson, Aryan Idols.

135 Cf. also Stroumsa, “Georges Dumézil, Ancient German Myths, and Modern Demons,” 134.
English-speaking world, who are in turn consulted by Asatruers in their search for reliable popular academic sources. Among them are a number of scholars who used Dumézil’s theories to write comprehensive overviews of Germanic religion. One of them was the Dutch historian of religion, Jan de Vries (1890–1964), who himself belonged to a network of scholars with a strong connection to National Socialism during the 1930s and 40s.\(^\text{136}\) His comprehensive standard reference work, “\textit{Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte}” (Old Germanic history of religions), a “model of encyclopedic learning,”\(^\text{137}\) owes a debt to Grønbech,\(^\text{138}\) and was influential for Georges Dumézil’s view of Germanic myth and society. Its second edition, from 1956/7, was in turn inspired by Dumézil’s theory of the tripartite structure of Indo-European myth. The American and English Scandinavianists and historians of religion who popularized their summaries of Norse or Germanic religion, such as Gabriel Turville-Petre\(^\text{139}\) and Hilda Ellis Davidson,\(^\text{140}\) have relied heavily on Dumézil, employing his theories to work out extensive summations of Northern religion, which are widely read and remain well-respected today. They are still used extensively as basic Asatru readings as well.

Edgar Polomé (1920–2000) is another author frequently referred to by Asatruers. Polomé was an Indo-Europeanist of Belgian origin who served as a professor for comparative religion and languages at the University of Austin from the 1960s until 1997. His work is characterized by a tendency to idealize Indo-European culture and religion. Through his work as editor for the \textit{Journal for Indo-European Studies} from its inception in 1973, and as the co-editor for \textit{The Mankind Quarterly}, he has been actively involved in American-European right-wing and racist scholarship. Both journals were published by the Institute for the Study of Man funded by the Pioneer Fund, an institution dedicated to the financing of research on race difference and eugenics. The Fund’s founder, South African Roger Pearson, is a white supremacist, eugenicist, and ideologist of “Aryan purity” and “racial hygiene” who bases his ideas “largely on the

\(^{136}\) de Vries collaborated with the \textit{Deutsches Ahnenerbe}, Otto Hößler and others. Cf. Arvidsson, \textit{Draksjukan}, 72–98.

\(^{137}\) Lincoln, \textit{Theorizing Myth}, 125; de Vries, \textit{Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte}.

\(^{138}\) Cf. Beck, “Zur Rezeption von Vilhelm Grønbechs Werk im deutschen Sprachraum,” 339.

\(^{139}\) Gabriel Turville-Petre, \textit{Myth and Religion of the North} (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964).

\(^{140}\) Ellis Davidson has written a number of books on Northern religion between the 1960s and 1990s. See, for example, Hilda Roderick Ellis Davidson, \textit{Gods and Myths of Northern Europe} (Middlesex: Penguin, 1964), Hilda Ellis Davidson, \textit{The Lost Beliefs of Northern Europe} (London: Routledge, 1993).
thinking of notorious Nazi theorist Hans F.K. Günther.”  

141 William H. Tucker, The Funding of Scientific Racism. Wickliffe Draper and the Pioneer Fund (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 159. In the 1950s, Pearson launched a “Pan-Nordic” campaign in Britain through his Northern League and subsequently took his activities to the United States.

142 Mankind Quarterly was initially founded as the result of “new alliances between segregationists and racial scientists” (Gavin Schaffer, “Scientific Racism Again?” Reginald Gates, the Mankind Quarterly and the Question of ‘Race’ in Science after the Second World War,” Journal of American Studies 41, no. 2 (2007), 269) and “churned out a steady stream of justifications for racism.” (William H. Tucker, The Cattell Controversy. Race, Science, and Ideology (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 121).

143 Mankind Quarterly is also connected with Neue Anthropologie, the journal of the German eugenicist and racist Gesellschaft für biologische Anthropologie, Eugenik und Verhaltensforschung, which was chaired by Jürgen Rieger, the head of the German Neopagan Artgemeinschaft. Cf. Wetzel, “Die Maschen des rechten Netzes,” 171.

144 See Chapter 7.

145 The two journals were furthermore intertwined through an elaborate citation policy. Thus, articles in Mankind Quarterly regularly cite jies articles to provide objective, scholarly, reputable, scientific support for their views. The citation traffic rarely goes in the opposite direction and the fiction of independence is maintained. Cf. Tucker, The Funding of Scientific Racism; The Cattell Controversy, 120–128; Lincoln, Theorizing Myth, 123.

146 Currently, Mankind Quarterly is published under the umbrella of the Council for Social and Economic Studies, which also publishes the Journal for Social, Political, and Economic Studies, the third of Pearson’s journals from the 1970s. The latter aims for more direct political intervention (Cf. http://www.mankindquarterly.org/about.html, last accessed August 27, 2014). The Institute for the Study of Man does not appear here anymore, but on the website of the Journal of Indo-European Studies it is given as the address to which copies of manuscripts are to be sent. The Washington D.C. mailing address given here is the same as the one for the Council for Social and Economic Studies. In J.P. Mallory, from the University of Queens in Belfast, jies has found a well-reputed scholar as an editor. At the same time, Mallory has also authored at least one article for Mankind Quarterly. (J.P. Mallory, “Human populations and the Indo-European problem,” Mankind Quarterly 33, no. 2 (1992))
Indo-European studies and its organs of distribution have remained in precarious proximity to right-wing politics and racial science.

Indirectly, this applies to the Swedish historian of religion Åke Ström as well, whose Dumézil-inspired overviews of Germanic and Indo-European religion have been widely used as textbooks in Swedish schools, as well as by Asatruers. In his interpretation of Germanic religion, Ström insists on a polar opposition between Indo-European and Semitic religion. His main goal is to demonstrate that Germanic faith and its ethics were bearers of “true piety or religiosity” (echte Frömmigkeit), a claim for which he made ample use of Vihelm Grønbech’s ideas as well. He polemically labels “hypercritical” source criticism, which denies the existence of a unified Indo-European culture, a “disease.”

These examples notwithstanding, such political and religious dimensions do not play an overt role in the popular textbooks used as points of reference by Asatruers – a fact which makes them all the more useful for current a-racist Asatruers in their attempts to distinguish themselves from right-wing associations.

147 Cf. Åke v. Ström and Haralds Biezais, *Germanische und baltische Religion* (Stuttgart etc.: Kohlhammer, 1975), 11. For a critical discussion see Arvidsson, *Aryan Idols*, 109f.

148 For a discussion on the anti-Semitic cultural-protestant ideology of Ström’s colleague Haralds Biezais with whom he wrote the synopsis on Germanic and Baltic religion, cf. Iveta Leitane, “Haralds Biezais (1909–1995). Ein Religionshistoriker zwischen Theologie und Religionswissenschaft,” in *The Study of Religion under the Impact of Fascism*, ed. Horst Junginger (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008).

149 Much-used works are, for example, René Derolez’ overview over Norse myths and deities (René Derolez, *Les dieux et la religion des germains* (Paris: Payot, 1962)) and, even more so, Paul Bauschatz, *The Well and the Tree*. The latter is popular among Asatruers due to its attempt to reconstruct the worldview and concepts of time of “early Germanic culture.” The Belgian professor of English and Old Germanic philology, René Derolez (1921–2005), wrote a synopsis of the Germanic gods and myths in 1959, which was translated into French and German. (Derolez, *Les dieux et la religion des germains; Götter und Mythen der Germanen* (Einsiedeln: Benzinger, 1963)) Although relying on de Vries and Höfler as well, he is rather more careful in his conclusions regarding grand syntheses and theories of continuity, such as Höfler’s. (Cf. ibid., 102). Of the standard works currently used by Scandinavian Heathens as inspiration in their construction of Asatru, that of Swedish Britt-Mari Näström is the most favorable towards Dumézil’s approach. (Britt-Mari Näström, *Freyja. The Great Goddess of the North* (Lund: Department of History of Religions, 1995), 29f) Näström is primarily interested in the female deities of the Nordic pantheon, and she criticizes Dumézil mainly for his neglect of the goddesses. She suggests a combination of structuralist, comparative, and linguistic methods in her own effort to reconstruct the significance of Freyja as the “Great Goddess of the North.” Folke
Asatru Uses of Scholarship

Germanic Neopaganism has always been concerned with academic theories about the Nordic past, and there have long been regular exchanges between (lay) scholars and religionists. Post-1970, such exchanges were most intense in the Anglo-American world, where internationally read Asatruers also moved in academic contexts. The internationally influential a-racist group *The Troth* was founded by an academic, and it emphatically nurtured the idea of Asatru being ‘the religion with homework,’ of having to base one’s beliefs on ‘the lore,’ i.e., the available sources as well as academically acknowledged secondary literature. The reception of pre-1945 völkisch-tainted scholarship on Germanic antiquity and its transformation into scholarship on Indo-European antiquity has been most marked in Anglo-American Asatru contexts. From here, these concepts found their way back to Germany and, to an extent, Scandinavia as well.

The direct dissemination of these concepts of a Germanic antiquity, which were promoted by German scholars between 1910 and 1940, and later on by Höfler, Dumézil, Eliade, and their followers, can be attributed to the activities and writing of Stephen Flowers (aka Edred Thorsson), the circle around his *Rune Gild*, and the early *Ring of Troth*, to which Stephan Grundy/Kveldulf Gundarsson belonged as well. These two men, who were instrumental in the creation of the ‘lore’ of *The Troth*, can be considered central mediators between the fringes of the academic world and Asatru since the 1980s.

In his writings, Flowers frequently pays homage to his dissertation advisor, Edgar Polomé, as well as to Jan de Vries and Vilhelm Grønbech, who provided him with the holistic methodology required to reconstruct an allegedly ancient religion and understanding of the world:

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150 In a presentation of his esoteric as well as his scholarly development, Flowers also attributes his first acquaintance with the European New Right to Edgar Polomé, who had pointed him to the French Scandinavianist François-Xavier Dillmann, “an adherent of the so-called French New Right, whose chief exponent was Alain de Benoist” – incidentally a point of evidence for Polomé’s own right-wing connections as well. (Edred, *History of the Rune-Gild*, 111 (The Reawakening of the Gild 1980–2005), 73).
To understand an archaic culture one must learn to think as they did – this involves primarily learning of the culture’s cosmology (view of the world/environment) and psychology (view of one’s own self, or being). This psycho-cosmology is then applied to real artifacts (literary or otherwise) of the archaic culture.\footnote{151}

The quote illustrates the circular reasoning from which such methods emerge. The knowledge of the psycho-cosmology that is to be applied to the ‘real artifacts’ is first and foremost derived from these same artifacts, namely the source texts, which are separated from their medieval context.\footnote{152}

Having failed at building an academic career parallel to his engagement in Asatru, Flowers established the independent Woodharrow Institute to further his own version of Germanic Studies.\footnote{153} However, his main influence on Asatru dates back to his more popular esoteric publications on runes from the 1980s and 90s. Flowers also had a considerable influence on the young Stephan Grundy/Kveldulf Gundarsson, himself a student of Germanic Studies. Through his writings on runes, ecstasy, magic, and Odin/Wotan, Grundy/Gundarsson contributed to the espousal of Jan de Vries\footnote{154} and other scholars’ ideas to a broader Asatru audience. A chapter in Our Troth he edited sketches the (pre-)history of Asatru from the Stone Age, through Indo-European times, the Viking Age, and finally the “rebirth,” starting with Romanticism. This article is an instructive example of how reconstructionist, holistic assumptions are transferred into Asatru. It claims a “relationship between genetics, language, and culture” which together form “the heritage,” although “the nature of such connections is not entirely clear or indisputed.”\footnote{155} Consequently, “by studying this reconstructed [Indo-European] language, we can begin to understand how the Holy was regarded among our earliest cultural ancestors.”\footnote{156}

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\footnote{151}{Ibid., 70.}
\footnote{152}{Harm-Peer Zimmermann, “Männerbund und Totenkult,” 14, criticizes a similar circular reasoning and muddled relation between empirical evidence and “intuition” in Otto Höfler’s theories and concludes: “The insistence on ‘intuition’ as a basis for his research as a methodological trick to conceal and effectually launch ideological intentions.” (“Das Insistieren auf der ‘Intuition’ erweist sich als methodischer Kunstgriff, um ideologische Absichten zu kaschieren und wirkungsvoll zu lancieren”).}
\footnote{153}{http://www.woodharrow.com/woodharrow.html, last accessed August 27, 2014.}
\footnote{154}{Correspondence with Stephan Grundy.}
\footnote{155}{Gundarsson, Our Troth, vol. 1, 5.}
\footnote{156}{Ibid., 23. This approach reverberates Edred Thorsson’s ideas of a “culture grid” (see Chapter 4).}
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The guiding intellectuals, who were initially responsible for the attempt and demand to build modern Asatru on an academic basis and provided the material for this, emerged from an academic milieu with ties to the New Right and with roots in German and European völkisch scholarship. However, in the past fifteen years, the awareness of the problems underlying such methodologies has grown.\textsuperscript{157} Many of the new approaches within the study of pre-Christian Germanic religion have been gaining currency within Asatru in recent years. Jenny Blain, a British academic and \textit{Troth} member who has been actively involved with Diana Paxson's a-racist \textit{Hrafnar} in California, has been introducing more modern academic perspectives into the worldviews and practices of Asatru. The anthropologist is the first academic who has gone public about being a Heathen practitioner.\textsuperscript{158} Her book, \textit{Nine Worlds of Seid-Magic. Ecstasy and Neo-Shamanism in North European Paganism}, appeared with the publisher Routledge in English, while the German translation was published by the alternative religious \textit{Arun-Verlag}.\textsuperscript{159} This attests to her ability to bridge the space between (popular) scholarship and new religion. Together with Robert Wallis, Blain positions herself differently to her forebears with regard to the existence and possibility of an access to a deep past on which to build modern Asatru. She emphasizes the creative, forward-looking processes Neopagans employ to construct religious identities. The two scholars criticize approaches that conflate “peoples, languages, and geography – an ‘us versus them’ model that relies on apparently authoritative […] interpretations of culture and conflict.”\textsuperscript{160} At the same time, Blain’s heavy involvement with an outspokenly anti-racist and ‘queer’ variety of Asatru leads her at times to underestimate the broader impact of theories and ideologies that originate within the more racially or ethnicist-oriented spectrum and the New Right.\textsuperscript{161} Blain’s work could be characterized as that of a theologian invested in informing a broader public about

\textsuperscript{157} \textit{Our Troth}, for example, makes positive references to Vilhelm Grønbech’s and Otto Höfler’s premises it also alerts to some of the problematic sides of the Dumézilian method. (See ibid., 30, 129ff, 150ff) However, it does not go as far as to claim that a reconstruction of Indo-European myth or religion is methodologically unsound.

\textsuperscript{158} Blain teaches anthropology at Sheffield Hallam University and has published extensively on modern constructions of seid in academic as well as Asatru circles. Cf. \url{http://home.freeuk.net/jenny.blain/}, last accessed September 13, 2014.

\textsuperscript{159} See Chapter 2.

\textsuperscript{160} Blain and Wallis, “Heathenry,” 425.

\textsuperscript{161} Thus, while she strongly objects to racist groups within Asatru, aiming her critique mainly at the British \textit{Odinic Rite}, she mentions Stephen Flowers/Edred Thorsson quite neutrally as one of the formative scholars for \textit{The Troth} a couple of pages later. (Cf. ibid., 422 and 424).
her religion, creating a space for it in her society, and at the same time working to create a critical sense within her own religion – an illuminating approach which nevertheless leads to its own blind spots. Thus, she partially neglects problematic aspects of the history of scholarship behind central articles of creed in Asatru.

In recent years, another American Asatruer, Bil Linzie, has come forward with a critique of the misperceptions the Heathen community has about Germanic religion. He points out that neither the idea of a unified ‘Germanic’ culture nor ‘religion’ are concepts that can be applied to the old Heathen religion. Reconstruction for him “is an experiment pure and simple,” and he continues:

> The basis of reconstructionism is to reconstruct the ‘worldview’ of any group of people and apply it to gain experience. [...] what the reconstructionist is seeking to experience is not the religion, but the worldview, the mindset of the people in question, which gave birth to certain specific spiritual practices. [...] The reconstructionist is looking not for a religion but for that which underlies spiritual practice.162

A similar sentiment reverberates within Scandinavian Asatru. In the Scandinavian countries in general, the sense that Norse myth and the Viking Age are an integral part of one’s own cultural heritage, which one is connected to almost naturally, leads to a less urgent relation to academic research. Generally speaking, Asatruers here are as uninterested and uninvested in detailed academic disputes as their counterparts in other countries. They simply refer to the available comprehensive overviews of Norse religion written by respectable university professors, such as Gro Steinsland from Norway, and Folke Ström and Britt-Mari Näsström from Sweden.163 They also turn to more

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162 Bil Linzie, “Reconstructionism’s Role in Modern Heathenry,” Seidhman, http://www.angelfire.com/nm/seidhman/reconstruction-c.pdf, last accessed December 06, 2011.

163 Steinsland, *Norrøn religion*; Ström, *Nordisk hedendom*; Näsström, *Freyja. The Great Goddess of the North; Blot. Tro och offer i det förkristna Norden* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 2002). While Steinsland’s work is an important source of inspiration for many reconstructionist Asatruers in Norway, she offered a negative expert comment during the process of Asatru’s acknowledgement as an official religious association in Norway in the late 1990s. According to her, Asatru constitutes “a historical falsification,” and its acknowledgement would have “negative consequences for all serious activities concerning the Viking Age.” (Asprem, “Heathens Up North,” 58). This is an indicator of the fear that the field of history of religions would be devaluated by such official acknowledgements.
popular representations of Norse mythology, which directly aim at keeping “the old myths alive.” As in other countries, many Asatruers in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Iceland use academic knowledge as a basis and combine it with an experiential and experimental (re)constructionist approach. A founding member of the Norwegian *Bifrost* puts it this way:

Well, we have to [use research], we cannot go and do research ourselves, we don't have time for that. So we have to have permission to skim the cream of that which others have used hours and hours to find out. But we don't take everything any scholar writes at face value, because one knows that academics have their own agendas, they have their theories and their hobbyhorses, and they are not always right.

At the same time, an increasing number of students choose their field of study, mainly Norse philology, archaeology, or history of religion, because of their spiritual interests, using academic theory to develop their own faith. It remains to be seen what the consequences will be for both Asatru and these students’ respective academic fields if any should undertake academic careers.

For German Asatruers, the referencing of academic research has taken on a greater importance. Frequently, a-racist Heathens in this country use the fact of American, English, and Scandinavian Asatru claims to a basis in academic findings as a means of creating distance from the overt racial esotericism of

164 The quote is by Lars Magnar Enoksen, *Norrøne guder og myter*, 223, a Swedish-Norwegian author, illustrator, punk musician, glima wrestler (an Icelandic variety of wrestling whose adherents claim it has Heathen roots), and autodidactic runologist, whose work on runes is used in university courses. In a lavish volume on Nordic myths and gods, Enoksen promotes imaginations of a united ancient pre-Christian culture in the Scandinavian countries that has been suppressed by “foreign religions of dominance” (“utenlandske herskerreligioner,” ibid.).

165 Interview O: “Ja, vi må jo det, vi kan ikke sitte og forskere sjøl, vi har ikke tid til det. Så vi må få lov til å skumme fløten litt av det andre har brukt timevis til å finne ut av. Men vi tar det ikke for god fisk det enhver forsker skriver, for man vet jo at forskere har sine agendaer, de har sine teorier og sine hester å kjøre, og det er ikke alltid de har rett.”

166 The first Scandinavianist to draw the field’s attention to “students whose religious practices are rooted in extrapolated (re-constructed) pre-Christian European rituals” was Sandra Ballif Straubhaar, “Rezension: Hilda Ellis Davison. *Roles of the Northern Goddess*,” *Scandinavian Studies* 7, no. 3 (1999). My own observations from Scandinavian departments in Germany, as well as conversations with colleagues in other fields (for example archaeology or history of religion) and other countries, point to the fact that an increasing number of students combine religious and academic interests in this way.
Ariosophic groups, and to gain respectability in the eyes of a critical public. The reference to scholarship serves two goals. Firstly, it helps avert allegations of political agendas lurking behind Asatru religion. Secondly, it allows the groups to participate to a certain degree in the prestige of acknowledged scholarship, while simultaneously taking pride in their own contributions. Eldarining warden Kurt Oertel emphasizes the obligations that in his opinion derive from the problematic German history of reception of Germanic myth. He appeals to contemporary German Asatruerers to consider accepting post-1945 scholarship into Asatru, along with an “enlightening and de-mythifying” approach to sources such as Tacitus’ *Germania*. For Oertel, not only “contributions and book presentations in the journals of the associations and other Heathen publications such as the *Heidnisches Jahrbuch*, but also [...] lectures and workshops at the big meetings”¹⁶⁷ are means of honoring this obligation. This pride in an active engagement with the study of sources and relevant scholarship is shared by other German groups, for example the a-racist *Nornirs Ætt*, as well as the ethnicist *VfgH*, and is foundational for their group identities. Haimo Grebenstein, of the *VfgH*, claims:

At least a third, maybe even half, of our members have above-average knowledge regarding the actual state of academic theory, what scholarship is doing. We have people who do their own Edda-translations etc., who really have worked themselves into this as non-experts [...] with or without having studied Scandinavian Studies or related literature...that is indeed enormous.¹⁶⁸

The need to navigate between their insight into the necessity of a critical review of völkisch conceptions of the Germanic and a desire to find an accessible and more or less solid basis for their own religion leads to a number of contradictions within Asatru, and also within individuals themselves

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¹⁶⁷ Correspondence with Kurt Oertel (Eldaring): “Aufklärung und Entmythisierung [...] Die erfolgt in Form von Beiträgen und Buchvorstellungen in den Vereinszeitschriften sowie anderen heidnischen Eigenpublikationen wie z.B. dem *Heidnischen Jahrbuch*, aber auch in Vorträgen und Workshops auf den großen Vereinstreffen.”

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Haimo Grebenstein (*VfgH*): “Mindestens ein Drittel, eventuell sogar die Hälfte, unserer Mitglieder hat eine überdurchschnittlich hohe Kenntnis, was [der] tatsächliche Stand der Wissenschaft [ist], was Forschung macht. Wir haben Leute, die machen eigene Edda-Übersetzungen usw., die sich wirklich als Laien da eingearbeitet haben, [...] mit oder ohne begleitendes Studium der Skandinavistik oder einer verwandten Literatur...das ist schon enorm.”
regarding the use of certain types of scholarship. On the one hand, scholarly approaches emphasizing the Christian origin of, and Christian influence on, the written sources are heavily criticized by many. On the other hand, Asatruers can display an almost naïve trust in academic works that offer even minimal outlines of a pre-Christian worldview. Those who concern themselves with the academic foundations of the faith tend to receive books like these enthusiastically and promote them to ‘common’ believers in the groups. This leads to the downplaying of differences between divergent scholarly positions and the eclectic use of isolated results from comprehensive textbooks, or even a total disregard of academic controversies and differing schools. The reception of a recent book by Bernhard Maier in German Asatru is an instructive example. Maier deconstructs both the existence of “the Teutons” (die Germanen) as a unified ethnic entity and adamantly rejects the idea of a Germanic fatalism, a Germanic Männerbund, or other holistic, reconstructive concepts, such as those proposed by Vilhelm Grønbech. Fritz Steinbock, of the VfgH, partially embraces Maier’s skepticism, and recommends his book to everybody who is in danger of succumbing to an overly naïve zeal for Germanic culture and religion. However, he also reads Maier as someone who has been able to shed light on “inner” aspects of Germanic religion and cites Grønbech, whom Maier rejects, as an author who does

169 Unless they acknowledge such limits of written sources and consequently turn to archaeological sources as allegedly more reliable – an approach which creates rather more problems than it solves with regard to the reconstruction of religious aspects.

170 An instructive example of such more or less neglected differences is the use of two authors recommended by both the Eldaring (see http://asawiki.de/index.php?title=Portalt:Gesamtdarstellungen, last accessed August 27, 2014), the VfgH (see thread “Grimm: Germanische Mythologie” in the forum at www.vfgh.de, last accessed August 27, 2014) and Nornirs Ætt (see Interview with six members of Nornirs Ætt): Klaus Bemmann and Rudolf Simek. These two are currently the most successfully popularizing German-language writers on ‘Germanic religion.’ However, their approaches are as different as can be. In his book, which in the first edition appeared under the speaking title Der Glaube der Ahnen (The Faith of the Ancestors, Klaus Bemmann, Der Glaube der Ahnen. Die Religion der Deutschen bevor sie Christen wurden. (Essen: Phaidon, 1990)), Bemmann uncritically assumes the identity of contemporary Germans and “the Teutons,” to then present ideas about a unified Indo-European religion and its continuity, making frequent references to Vilhelm Grønbech’s image of a cohesive Germanic worldview, which he presents as unanimously affirmed academic knowledge. Simek, on the other hand, frequently and vehemently points to Christian influences in Old Norse mythological sources.

171 Cf. Steinbock, “Die Freiheit eines Heidenmenschen.”

172 Das heilige Fest, 20.
something similar, without addressing this apparent contradiction.\textsuperscript{173} The example shows that although they are at pains to integrate skeptical approaches like Maier’s into their own religious system, Asatruers remain dependent on supplementing the meagre findings of recent critical scholarship on a pre-Christian Germanic past by resorting to holistic academic theories about Indo-European culture and myth derived from Dumézil, de Vries, Höfler, Polomé, Eliade, or Grønbech – names which show up on all comprehensive bibliographical lists of German Asatruers. Inadvertently, they help to sustain and spread a type of scholarship characterized by problematic ideological backgrounds and implications.\textsuperscript{174}

We can conclude that the ‘theorists’ within Asatru make ample use of holistic ideas of a Germanic or Indo-European antiquity. This is one reason why they at times share a precarious proximity to Conservative Revolutionary or New Right thought. Obviously, this does not imply that Asatruers who revert to dated or questionable scholarship can be accused of adhering to right-wing ideologies, simply because of their intellectual interests. On the contrary, some are quite aware of such problematic intellectual alliances. The desire to have academically sound, popular, accessible, and affordable works at hand is widespread among Asatruers, but certainly not limited to Asatru. As the title of a recent examination of popular uses of history in Germany correctly tells us,

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\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{174} The most recent instructive example of the reception of such older, holistic scholarship is the career which one book has made, within Asatru and beyond: Kris Kershaw’s aforementioned book on Männerbünde. (Kershaw, \textit{The One-eyed God. Odin and the (Indo-) Germanic Männerbünde}.) Kershaw follows Höfler’s argument closely and uncritically, avoiding discussing the vastly different natures of the various sources in much the same way as Höfler did, and expands it to encompass other Indo-European sources. In this way, she offers the first generally accessible account of Höfler’s theses in English. The book has been enthusiastically welcomed by German Asatruers as a long-desired rehabilitation of Otto Höfler’s theories of continuity, as well as of Martin Ninck’s concept of a Germanic fatalism connected to Odin. For them, the fact that this book appeared in the monograph series of the “acclaimed \textit{Journal of Indo-European Studies}” serves as an argument for the academic soundness of both Kershaw and Höfler. (Cf. http://www.nornirsaett.de/asatru_forum/index.php?action=posts&fid=5&tid=146&hl=1&site=2, and Kurt Oertel’s thorough review on http://www.amazon.de/Odin-ein%C3%A4ugige-Gott-indogermanischen-M%C3%A4nnerb%C3%BCnde/dp/3866630190/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1300270855&sr=1-1, last accessed August 27, 2014). The abovementioned history of this journal warrants a less sanguine assessment, as does the fact that the German edition appeared courtesy of \textit{Arun Verlag} in a translation by Baal Müller. (For Baal Müller’s activities see Chapter 5.)
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“History sells.” The following quote by *Eldaring* member Christian Brüning concludes an article on völkisch esotericism and Germanic Paganism. It contains not only the common defensive appeal to other Heathens along with their academic observers and critics, but it also points out similarities between Asatru and popular, experimental approaches to history and archeology.

It makes sense that polytheistic Asatru, in all its experimental freedom, has agreed to build on experience based in scholarship. It is absolutely necessary as both support and a corrective, and this is how it is largely understood in Asatru circles. Academic scholarship should thus support Asatru, instead of excluding the new, polytheistic Heathenism rashly and undifferentiatedly as an occult, right-wing extremist current – if nothing else, then for the interest of scholarship itself. To attempt an analogy, today’s Germanic paganism is a kind of experimental archaeology, an experimental religion of experience, which has already understood much of the mythological knowledge through several generations.

Rather than singling out Asatruers as particularly prone to reconstructionist scholarly approaches, it is worth looking at the interest in the reconstruction of an ‘own’ pre-Christian religion and culture in general which they share with a broader public as well as with academics.

175 Wolfgang Hardtwig, ed. *History Sells! Angewandte Geschichte als Wissenschaft und Markt* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2009). This puts scholarly authors who cater to such general demands in a predicament – at least those who accept the idea that reconstructing a pre-Christian Germanic religion from the existing sources is next to impossible. It leads to somewhat ironic effects, as in the case of German Bernhard Maier. Maier adamantly rejects the existence of a Germanic unity, but, writing for a market which wants to be fed with identity-founding, holistic images of ‘our’ past, titles his book *Die Religion der Germanen*. (The Religion of the Teutons).

176 Christian Brüning, “Völkische Esoterik und germanisches Heidentum,” *Heidnisches Jahrbuch* 2 (2007), 350: “Es ist [...] sinnvoll, daß das polytheistische Asatru von heute bei aller experimentellen Freiheit sich darauf verständigt hat, auf wissenschaftsorientierte Erfahrung zu bauen. Sie ist als Rückhalt und Korrektiv absolut notwendig und das wird in Asatrukreisen weitgehend auch so verstanden. Die akademische Forschung sollte Asatru daher unterstützen statt das neue polytheistische Heidentum vorschnell und undifferenziert als okkulte und rechtsextreme Strömung aussperren zu wollen – nicht zuletzt im Interesse der Forschung selbst. Im Versuch einer Analogie stellt das heutige germanische Heidentum, eine Art experimenteller Archäologie dar, eine experimentelle Erfahrungsreligion, die bereits über mehrere Generationen viel vom mythologischen Wissen begriffen hat.”
Practices at museums for cultural history and pre-history are a case in point. Since the 19th century, such museums have been institutions working at the intersection of science, education, and performance or public entertainment. Combining research with its presentation, they often employ theatrical elements. In 1920s' and 30s' German reconstructionist open-air museums, the outspokenly germanophile ideological content of attempts to create "holistic impressions of an ideological projection as a 'culture image'" led to a "transgression of serious scholarly standards." In Germany, the approach was therefore abandoned, and not taken up again until the 1970s. In Scandinavia in particular, such a break never occurred, and Scandinavian open-air and cultural historical museums, including the archeological site in Lejre, Denmark, which has existed since the 1950s, have been at the forefront of creating and popularizing myths of national pasts continuously. Today, they are the locations of experiential archaeological endeavors attempting to re-create objects and artisanal techniques of the past. They also collaborate with re-enactment groups in order to attract, communicate with, and educate a broader public in an entertaining way.

Museums, folklorists, and archeologists themselves participate actively in popularizing the past, often in order to garner public acceptance and thus

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177 Cf. Erika Sandström, På den tiden, i dessa dagar: Föreställningar om och bruk av historia under medeltidsveckan på Gotland och Jamtli Historieland (Jamtli: Jamtli Förlag, 2005), 96; Lotten Gustafsson, Den förtrollade zonen. Lekar med tid, rum och identitet under medeltidsveckan på Gotland (Nora: Nya Doxa, 2002), 77f. What is called Living History today originated in the military historical re-enactment movement in the USA and Britain (cf. Nils Kagel, "Geschichte leben und erleben. Von der Interpretation historischer Alltagskultur in deutschen Freilichtmuseen," in Living History in Freilichtmuseen. Neue Wege der Geschichtsvermittlung, ed. Heike Duisberg (Ehestorf: Förderverein des Freilichtmuseums am Kiekeberg, 2008), 10) as well as in the first open air museum, Skansen in Stockholm, Sweden, founded by philologist and folklorist Artur Immanuel Hazelius in 1891. It was the first of its kind, and it initiated a whole movement of popular museums presenting the rural life of the past as part of the creation of national identities. (Cf. for example Stefan Bohman, Historia, museer och nationalism (Stockholm: Carlsson, 1997)).

178 Frank Andraschko, “Wikinger, Römer und Co. Living History in archäologischen Freilichtmuseen und ihrem weiteren Umfeld,” in Living History in Freilichtmuseen. Neue Wege der Geschichtsvermittlung, ed. Heike Duisberg (Ehestorf: Förderverein des Freilichtmuseums am Kiekeberg, 2008), 39: “Mit dieser auf Schaffung eines 'ganzheitlichen Eindrucks' ausgerichteten ideologischen Projektion als 'Kulturbild' wurden in Deutschland in den 1930er Jahren die Grenzen seriöser Wissenschaftlichkeit zugunsten 'germanophiler Volkserziehung' überschritten.”

179 Cf. ibid., Bodil Pettersson, Föreställningar om det förflutna. Arkeologi och rekonstruktion (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2003).
funding for their research. Evidently, the ideals behind such popularizations change according to the respective contemporary values through which the past is perceived. Thus, as Erika Sandström writes with regards to Swedish museums, while a hundred years ago encounters with a venerable history were meant to incite patriotism, today they are meant to nurture empathy, engagement, and equality. They at times revive older holistic (national-)Romantic identity projects in the process.\footnote{Cf. Sandström, \textit{På den tiden, i dessa dagar}, 100; Pettersson, \textit{Föreställningar om det förflutna}, 122–206, describes how contemporary nation branding around archaeological reconstructions of Viking ships and archaeological sites harks back to Romantic Nordic ‘archetypes,’ such as the Viking and the self-reliant peasant.}

While some Heathens are against re-enactment because they believe it blurs the boundary between life and fantasy, many others have recognized their affinity for experiential history and archeology, or are involved in re-enactment themselves. One prominent example is Pete Jennings, from England’s \textit{Odinshof}, who helps run a re-enactment group called \textit{Ealdfaether}, where the majority of members are Heathens. \textit{Ealdfaether} is active at the museum site of Sutton Hoo, an Anglo-Saxon burial ground near Suffolk.\footnote{Correspondence with Pete Jennings (Odinshof), and http://www.ealdfaeder.org/v03/programme.html, last accessed September 13, 2014.} The same ambivalence is brought to Heathens’ participation in the more general historical event culture of medieval markets or creative live re-enactment organizations such as the \textit{Society for Creative Anachronism} (co-founded by Asatruer Diana Paxson) and role-play groups.\footnote{While historical re-enactment is usually seen as an attempt to reconstruct events as close to historical reality as possible, Live Action Role Playing (LARP), as well as groups such as the \textit{SCR}, take inspiration from the positive aspects of the past (often the Middle Ages) and create role plays out of this.} While they are seen by some as frivolous players wanting to nostalgically immerse themselves in a fictional past, it remains true that many Asatruers come from re-enactment, role-playing, and medieval scenes, and continue to be connected to them.

These scenes are characterized by a sometimes contradictory, but often creative mix of a confident embracing of fiction with the search for authenticity: of creative play with identities and nostalgic identification with the past.\footnote{Cf. Sandström, \textit{På den tiden, i dessa dagar}, 56.} Scientific reconstructive attempts and aesthetic appropriation of sources, ideas, and images of the past intersect in a multitude of ways. They are suspended in a field of tension between the transference of tainted or dated knowledge, its rejection where it is recognized, and the enjoyment of the
freedom to imaginatively (re-)create. Fragments of tainted knowledge are utilized together with critical approaches, and Asatruers are active participants in all facets of this entangled web of scholarship, creative arts, pop culture, esotericism, religion, and politics. We can draw three preliminary conclusions from such associations: 1) Asatruers are not alone in reviving potentially problematic paradigms of the holistic, rooted nature of cultures that can be associated with exclusionary identity politics. Rather, they are participants in a broader trend of contemporary politics of history and identity, and they lend this trend a particular religious flavor. 2) Many Heathens claim that academic theory is foundational for their faith. They use such claims to protect themselves against political misuses of their religion, and to achieve a more respectable public standing. Nevertheless, Asatrue, even in its reconstructionist variety, is an aesthetic endeavor based on creativity and experience. This aesthetic dimension also drives the contemporary historical reconstruction scene, which has equally deep roots in 19th-century Romantic nationalism and its holistic academic views of culture. 3) The holistic cultural academic theories and methodologies which can be traced back to Romanticism and which fueled historians of religion, such as Vilhelm Grønbech, Jakob Wilhelm Hauer, Rudolf Otto, and Mircea Eliade; folklorists and Scandinavianists, such as Eugen Fehrle, Otto Höfler, and Bernhard Kummer; and archeologists, such as Gustav Kossina, are much more easily incorporated into Neopagan religion than medievalist methods. The latter attempt to contextualize texts within the textual traditions and the social and political conditions of their era, and they try to locate the sources within a high-medieval clerical and scholarly philosophical tradition. This has to do with the fact that scholarly constructions of wholeness and coherence are themselves dependent on operations which belong to the realm of the aesthetic: imaginations of a whole, a Gestalt, and experiential intuition, through which the fragments are held together and the gaps between them filled.

These entanglements make it seem productive to conclude this book with a final chapter that considers the interfaces between aesthetics, religion, and politics that have governed the reception of Germanic myth.