



**Title:** Shamanic Initiations and Their Loss—Decolonization as Initiation and Healing

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**Published by:** Ethnopsychologische Mitteilungen, Band 9, Heft 1/2, 109 – 148

**Publish date:** 2000

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# Shamanic Initiations and Their Loss -- Decolonization as Initiation and Healing

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Published in:  
Ethnopsychologische Mitteilungen, Band 9, Heft 1/2, 109 – 148  
[Page numbers inserted below as **P109** etc.]

*Dedicated  
to the students who  
have shared this path with me -  
in gratitude for the gifts  
of learning they offered*

**[P109]** I am a white man. *White* is short for "socialized into a Eurocentered frame of mind." *White* is the name of forgetting. Forgetting so much of how we came to be where we are. I am a white man. Boxed into a box that likes to forget its name. I do not walk alone. Like other white men something walks with me. With me walks a shadow. Before me I project the shadow of forgetting where I came from. Behind me trails the shadow of the tears of native peoples. Below me I march on the shadow of the lands my peoples have raped. Above me looms the shadow of the spirits which I am blind to. All around me walks the shadow of domination, witchhunts, genocides, holocausts, sexism, racism. I do not walk alone.

When I walk into healing - how can I heal when these shadows walk with me? How can I heal when they obscure what lies beyond them? I hope to heal by remembering and seeing the shadows that walk with me so that I can become complete. So that I am not made of illusions. I hope to heal by purifying the shadow. So that I am not boxed in a box without names. So that I walk with the multitude, richness, and plurality that is me. *Til árs ok til friðar* - so that there may be fertility and peace. So that there may be *friðr* and *heill* before me - peace, wholeness, and health... may there be *friðr* and *heill* behind me... may there be *friðr* and *heill* below me... may there be *friðr* and *heill* above me... may there be *friðr* and *heill* all around me. So that, maybe, I can go on in beauty, *friðr* and *heill*. And so that, maybe, even we all can go on in beauty, *friðr* and *heill*. So that, maybe, I can walk with all my relations. So that, maybe, I get healed.

## **Who is the self that is getting healed?**

So often people of the Eurocentered frame of mind are puzzled why indigenous people are upset when they see their healing approaches used in a context different from or alien to their traditional ways. Aboriginal people may then speak not only of abuse, misunderstanding, or appropriation, but also of the grave spiritual dangers ensuing as a consequence of healing done outside of what is defined as the proper practice according to indigenous beingknowing. This contribution attempts to address and clarify the significant **[P110]** differences in understanding the process of healing in the context of native (or indigenous) thinking vs. Eurocentered thinking.

Interest in Native American and other indigenous healing practices (and ceremonies in general) has increased quite dramatically in recent years. This surge in curiosity is fueled by the experience that the

conventional western healing paradigm frequently reaches its own limit and that the spiritual connections within one's self, with community and with nature, have desiccated. While this *yearning* for holistic healing by way of indigenous healing practices stems from a valid desire and need, it raises not only ethical and political issues, but also epistemological questions: Is the Eurocentered way of knowing indigenous healing compatible with the native understanding and use of these practices?

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

A significant part of the unease and discomfort indigenous people have around the decontextualized use of native healing practices is the shadow material looming not just in the background of such endeavors, but becoming part of them. Using native healing approaches outside of an indigenous way of being means carrying the disease of the colonizing paradigm, in fact, perpetrating colonization. Removing the presence of these shadows means decolonizing for all of us ensconced in the Eurocentered paradigm (whatever the cultural roots). It means healing the disassociation from communal roots. It means recognizing the losses of our own cultures. It means recognizing the history of colonization, racism, and sexism. Only then arises the possibility of a knowledge exchange about indigenous healing practices that can be called equitable, instead of acquisitive, reifying, or appropriative. It may lead to the renewal of a more complete, holistic, and associative nurturing conversation.

My general framework is a discursive conversational stance of communal *con-course*, which resists the reification and ossification of what is usually described as "the other" (e.g., *the Indian*, *the Sámi*, *the Aboriginal*). It is an attempt to recover the traditional plurality of tribal or indigenous stories not only in the perception of other cultures, but particularly and foremost in the perception of one's own roots. This means overcoming the denial of and separation from "the other" within one's own self constructed in the [P111] Eurocentered fashion; it means discontinuing and healing the projective identification with indigenous peoples (the romantic colonization and containment of native life and history through Eurocentered sciences). The construction of indigenous peoples as "the other" is only possible as long as Eurocentered folk choose to forget their own indigenous roots, since out of this denial arises the legitimation of Eurocentered scientific dominance, progress thinking, and colonization. This approach is based on the recognition that the discontinuance of colonizing action is not just to cease outward acts of hostility, violence, and dominance, but just as much the internal abolition of the colonizer or the colonizing mind (the latter being a concept synonymous with the construction of the Eurocentered mind or consciousness).

I would like to be as clear as possible about the vantage point from which I am writing: The framework is a) decolonization and b) the healing of the masculinization of the phenomena of perceived reality. Any consideration regarding indigenous roots for people who are removed from them by more than a couple of generations needs to include such dimensions as politics, economics, law, cultural practices, ceremony, initiation, science, psychology. Healing the Eurocentered thought process from its dissociation or split from an embedded, nurturing, or holistic participation in the phenomena cannot be merely an individualistic process - it has to be a cultural, communal, and social process. I am writing as a man of Nordic-Germanic ancestry struggling with the depths of the scars of modern pathologies as they show themselves in individuals physically as such illnesses as cancer, addictions, chronic fatigue syndrome, and in social anomies (in Durckheim's sense), ecological crises, continuing physical and cultural genocide of indigenous peoples, the crises of knowing, the persistence of sexism, institutionalized violence and racism, etc.

I am using the terms indigenous roots, indigenous consciousness, and the like not out of any presumption that this is something I have achieved for myself, or that I have reached closure to my personal process of decolonization (I do not believe that individual closure is possible without the healing of the communal,

cultural contexts). These terms have been suggested directly and indirectly by Native American thinkers, Apela Colorado in particular (1994, 47):

The goal of the recovery of indigenous mind [is] to reunite people with their tribal minds. Each of the races of humankind was given a sacred circle or original instruction to live by. If our species is to survive, Euro-Americans must be supported in their effort to regain the Earth-based knowledge of their ancestors. Native Americans will help.

Churchill (1996, 386/7) spoke similarly when addressing an audience of Germans:

You must set yourselves to reclaiming your own indigenous past. You must come to know it in its own terms - the terms of its internal values and understandings, and the way these [P112] were applied to living in this world - not the terms imposed upon it by the order which set out to destroy it. You must learn to put your knowledge of this heritage to use as a lense through which you can clarify your present circumstance ... You must begin with the decolonization of your own minds, with a restoration of your understanding of who you are, where you come from, what it is that has been done to you to take you to the place in which you now find yourselves.

Within the framework of his own indigenist approach he urges the expression of "German indigenism" (389). Mohawk (n.d., 17) speaks to the same issue when stating "I do not want people to adopt Indian rituals, because I want them to own their own rituals. I want them to come to ownership of experiences that are real for them. Then I'll come and celebrate with them."

According to all the native and indigenous people (shamans, medicine people and intellectuals) I have spoken to, the crucial point here is that indigenous roots are *always* recoverable. Indeed, indigenous leaders see such task as a *historic necessity* in our times. This is where their hope for the resolution of the current crises, particularly the ecological crisis, rests. For example, Bob Hazous, Chiricahua Apache, has stated: "Don't come to Indian people and look for feathers and sweats and medicine men and stuff like that. Go back to your own history and find out who you are so that you can look at yourselves and see how beautiful you are" (1994). Implicit here is an assumption about "original instruction - words about purpose, words rooted in our creation, words that allow the human being an identity beyond the illusion of civilization," as Native American writer Gabriel Horn puts it (1996, 49). Reconstructing indigenous consciousness is about the remembrance of these original instructions and the indigenous conversation with all beings they guide in a particular place at a particular time. While consciousness is a psychological term that has arisen from the individualism facilitated by the Eurocentered paradigm, it assumes quite a different meaning in an indigenous context: instead of being merely psychological it refers to a fluid and embedded awareness of and connection with all our relations - humans, ancestors, animals, plants, earth, stars, sun, and all others. And all this in the storied, imaginative, communal reflections of lived participation.

Even though the words "recovery of indigenous mind" have been suggested by Native American thinkers I have to admit to a certain degree of anxiety whenever I use words like these. So many concepts and terms have become superficial labels as they have entered mainstream or popular thinking that I am afraid a similar thing might happen with a romantic, nostalgic, or opportunistic appropriation of and identification with the word indigenous. This would be terrible and an outrageous misunderstanding of the process I am calling for. The remaining indigenous peoples continue to struggle for survival and recognition. Indigenous is a term with important political meaning. Any person of Eurocentered mind needs to assume (*take it on!*) this political meaning (*together* with all [P113] the other meanings the word indigenous connotes).

Assuming it means a personal and social struggle for decolonization, it means fighting genocide, racism, sexism, and ecocide. Outside of that context the use of the word indigenous is abuse and devaluation of the struggle of aboriginal peoples and supports those who keep destroying indigenous cultures in conscious and unconscious ways.

The differences in healing paradigm between indigenous traditions and Eurocentered traditions can be understood as the result of different constructions of self (importantly, any self construction arises within a complex web of mutual causality; consequently, the perspective offered here should not be misread in a monocausal vein). There are multiple ways of identifying such differences; for the purposes of this contribution on healing I am using shamanic initiations as a marker to identify differences in self construction. This leads, in a sense, to the most fundamental questions:

*Who are we healing? Which self are we healing when we attempt to relieve human suffering?*

*Are we attempting to heal the modern, Eurocentered, colonizing, or dissociated self? Or are we attempting to heal the indigenous self, the self embedded in community, land, and ancestry?*

*Are we attempting to heal the Eurocentered self, and make it more functional within the modern world of progress and dissociation? Or are we attempting to bring balance to the indigenous self by healing it from the source of creation as it is understood in the plurality of stories of traditions within which we are working?*

The most succinct way to describe my stance would be as follows: The exposure to Native American and other indigenous healing practices needs to be an occasion for people of Eurocentered mind to develop and remember their own indigenous healing practices. This process would include the integration of the western medical and psychological achievements *from European indigenous perspectives* - from the indigenous roots Eurocentered folk have recovered for a concursive construction of indigeneity for today and the future (not a folkloristic or retroromantic reënactment of things past).

In my attempt to clarify the issues I have just introduced I:

--- describe and discuss what is usually seen as the classical shamanic initiation in Eurasia, the prerequisite for the highest levels of healing in her indigenous traditions;

--- discuss my understanding of indigenous healing;

--- describe the historical loss of rites of passage and initiations leading to the construction of what can probably most accurately be called the Eurocentered self;

**[P114]** --- contrast the modern paradigm of healing that arises from this self construction with indigenous understandings of healing;

--- describe the process of decolonization as a rite of passage and initiation.

--- I conclude with I poem and overview table “summarizing” the issues discussed in this article.

### **Shamanic Initiation**

Most indigenous cultures seem to have a variety of specialists engaged in healing endeavors. Their native labels express their work succinctly, distinguishing between e.g., herbalists, bone setters, shamans, seers, diagnosticians. Given my background, my focus is on the Eurasian cultural areas which, amidst their rich diversity, have certain connecting strands. Here the *jajan*, *saman*, *noaidi*, *völva*, or *seiðkarl* embody the highest or deepest forms of seeing and healing; they are holders of the deep knowledge of their cultures and keep it alive through their ceremonial practices; they have been initiated by spirits into the lived knowledge of their cultures.

My Nordic-Germanic roots connect me with the vast Eurasian cultural complex that has certain common strands (Pentikäinen 1989). Within this rich area I begin my discussion with descriptions from cultures that are less impacted by Christian influences, and move subsequently to the Old Norse material that is much more fragmentary and influenced by Christian thought.

A feature on Tuvan shamanism filmed by Belgian Public Television (Dumon 1993) contains a brief moment where the interviewer asks the shaman whether he had to go through the shamanic illness in order to become a shaman. "Were you also sick?" The question leads us to expect a long explanation of such a significant event, however, the old man only answers matter of factly: "Of course, I was sick." The brevity of the answer indicates how obvious, necessary, and inevitable the so-called shamanic illness or *albystar* (in Tuvian). It is what makes and defines a shaman, whether woman or man or hermaphrodite. All other shamans shown in this movie have undergone similar trials as they were called to shamanize.<sup>[1]</sup>

The common language for the call to shamanize and the initiation is 'initiatory illness' or 'shamanic illness.' The following are excerpts from descriptions among the Evenki (Tungus) of Central Asia:

...He became tormented and timorous, especially at night when his head was filled with dream visions. On the day when he had to act as shaman, the visions stopped, he fell into a **[P115]** trance and stared for hours at an object. The pale and worried man, with his piercing look, made a peculiar impression. After his dream, the chosen man became uneasy and timid, began to meditate, did not answer when he was addressed and frequently heard 'words whispered into his ears' which he had to sing, *žarižaćan* (literally: 'to repeat'). That was the moment when, in shamanistic terminology, 'the spirits entered his ears and brain', telling him the words of the song. ... [The Evenki] believed that the choice itself and the transfer of the assistant spirits to the novice were directed by the master spirit of the upper world. The first words heard by the chosen person were instructions, such as: ... 'do not commit evil things, only

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<sup>[1]</sup> The available sources on Siberian shamanism are not without serious problems, and need to be discussed in the context of the history of Soviet ethnography, etc.

cure the sick. ... I shall be above you, and take care of you, and give you strength.' In his dream, the young shaman could see the shaman ancestors who also gave him instructions. Then other spirits came 'whispering into his ears'. (Vasilevič 1968, 345)

The last sentence of this quote speaks most clearly to the difference between a psychologizing Eurocentered perspective and indigenous perspectives: the ancestors and other spirits speak to the initiate, self construction is fluid and open enough to have intercourse with such realities; this is different from an internalizing self construction comprehending and apprehending ancestors as various aspects of the monadic self (whatever psychological theory we might use). The process leads from the initial visitation by spirits to the acquisition of the necessary shamanic accoutrements, as described in the following statement from the Tuva (Soyot) of Central Asia:

A shaman is recognized by typical attacks of a special 'disease' called *albystar*. The person in question 'goes off his head', utters inarticulate sounds, breaks dishes, leaves the house and roams about the taiga, twitches in hysterical convulsions, is seized with nausea and rends his garments, etc. The 'invalid' repeats that the soul of a shaman *ištig ırgäk* has moved into his body, that the spirit urges him to take a horse (by which the drum *dünjür* is meant) and clothes (*ala xujaq*) and to become a shaman. (Vajnštejn, 1968, 331)

Even in the Old Norse traditions, where shamanism fell prey to Christianity more than one thousand years ago, we find remnants in the records describing an indigenous self construction of the practitioners. For example, at the beginning of the Eddic poem reaching most deeply into the older layer of the culture we read how the seeress was raised by ancestral spirits:

*Ek man iötna / ár um borna, / þá er forðum mik / sædda höfðu. / Niu man ek heima / - niu iviðjur, / miötvið mæran - / fyr mold neðan.* (*Völuspá*, stanza 2)

I remember the Jötunn who were born at the beginning of time and reared me in former times. I remember nine worlds beneath the earth, nine giantesses, and also the glorious tree of fate. (Pálsson 1996, 47 & 58)

The völva is raised by giants, reared with primal spirits of old, one of them called Burr, the bear ancestor. Personal and collective or communal time are indistinguishable in this [P116] incantatory account of earliest Norse history. The giants are primal spirits, presences from before human beings (If we accept Pálsson's interpretation of *iötna* as Sámi we still end up with the same understanding: the seeress was raised in the presence of spirits or with spirits.)

The connection with one's dream or vision or medicine power or personal gift is part of native life, manifesting in all the multitude of cultural ways. Reinforcing that connection is the function of rites of passage. Shamanic initiation, in the indigenous sense, is deepening or reinforcing one's presence to the spiritual realities within a communal framework. While spirit(s) are part of all indigenous conversations, the awareness of and presence to spirit(s) becomes intensified and heightened for shamans. Thus the völva in *Völuspá* is raised with spirit(s) in such intensity and to such depths that she sees through time, that she remembers the beginnings of things, the center of her traditions (the tree of fate). As the descriptions above indicate, such shamanic initiations are not mere psychological processes. They are a process always also resulting in actions capable of manifesting healing. Paula Gunn Allen (1998, 47) aptly describes the difference between the psychologizing of spirit - a temptation to which many alternate Eurocentered approaches succumb in our current culture of psychology - and the indigenous conversation:

In tribal cultures, ecstatic, mystical states don't so much convert into emotive personal experience as into physical experience or experience with direct effect in the physical (that is, as a consequence of entering an ecstatic state, a practitioner can do something actual). Visionary experiences, in themselves, are either a direct requirement for some ritual activity in which the individual is engaging or are a prelude to a life as a holy person.

The shamanic self is not so much constructed as affirmed and confirmed during initiations; it is the rigorous confirmation of something which has already been in the process of construction from early on. It is worthy of note that the 'shamanic illness' is not something an individual chooses as an endeavor during a sequence of workshops, but that the spirit(s) come to them. The shamanic self is initiated from the 'outside', to speak in Eurocentered terminology. We might say more accurately that other aspects of the weave that the fluid, participatory indigenous self is connected into impinge their awareness onto the individual mind. Or, more plainly:

The Indian has achieved a particularly effective alignment of [the physical and imaginative] planes of vision. ... The appropriation of both images into one reality is what the Indian is concerned to do: to see what is really there, but also to see what is *really* there. (Momaday, from Blaeser 1998, 26)

So, this is a self which has easy concourse with spirits and spiritual dimensions, or rather: instead of being unconscious or in denial about such presences and concourse, it is present to it. This is the work of the völva, noaidi, and the various other shamanic practitioners.

[P117] Eliade, in his classic book *Shamanism - Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (1951/1964, 42), complains that not enough "care had been taken to collect the confessions (*sic!*) of ... Siberian shamans" so that they

are "reduced to the meager common formula: the candidate remained unconscious for a certain number of days, dreamed that he was cut to pieces by spirits and carried into the sky, and so on." He sees the following detailed description as a relief from such reductions. This example may be the one most frequently quoted in the literature (see Popov in Dioszegi 1968, 137-146; Elidade 1951/1964, 38-42; Halifax 1979, 37-49; Vitebky 1995, 60-61), and it can also be found on the internet (see below). Repeating this report one more time may thus contribute to a reification and ossification of what shamanic initiation is. The ones who escaped the care of the anthropological collectors may be the lucky ones, since they have escaped the grasp of anthropology, "the natural enemy of natives" (88), or more elaborately: "Natives are forever studied, invented as abstruse cultures, and then embodied in motion pictures as the simulated burdens of civilization. ... These adversities became more grievous and caused a turn in the notions, courses, and literary canons at universities, but the treacheries and dominance of anthropologism, the obsessive, unmerciful studies of natives by social scientists, have not been overturned..." (Vizenor 1997, 86). With the opening of the East Bloc, anthropological attention has turned more intensely on her aboriginal traditions previously more difficult to access. Here is an abbreviated version of the account:

At first he was descending somewhere, then he grasped that there was a sea beneath him. While walking by the sea, he listened to the voice of upper disease who told that he would acquire the shaman's gift from the Mistress of water and his shaman name would be Hotarie. After that he reached the shore. A naked woman, who was lying there, suckled him. She was the Mistress of water. Her husband Frosty God gave an ermine and a mouse to guide him. They led him to the hill in the lower world where he saw seven tents. Dyukhade entered the second tent. The Smallpox people were living there. They cut out Dyukhade's heart and put it in the cauldron to boil. Afterwards Dyukhade visited other tents and got familiar with the spirits of diseases who lived there. Still preceded by his guides, Dyukhade came to that place of the Shaman's Land where his throat and his voice were strengthened. Then he was carried to the shores of the nine lakes. In the middle of one lake was an island and on the island there was a tree, quite similar to the larch, only its top rose to the sky. It was the tree of the Mistress of the earth. Beside it grew seven herbs, the ancestors of all the plants on the earth. In each of the lakes swam a species of bird with its young. There were several kinds of ducks, a swan and a sparrow-hawk. While singing songs and telling incantations, Dyukhade walked round all of the lakes. Some of them were very hot, some were terribly salty. Thereafter Dyukhade raised his head and saw men of various nations in the top of the high tree. There were Nganasans, Russians, Dolgans, Nenetses and Tunguses. He heard voices: "It has been decided that you shall have a drum from the branches of this tree." Then he grasped that he was flying with the birds of the lakes. As he left the shore, the Lord of the Tree called to him: "My branch has just fallen. [P118] Take it and make a drum of it that will serve you all your life!" The branch had three forks and the Lord of the Tree bade him make three drums from it. "I let you have three wives, who will watch over your drums," he said. "The first drum you have got to use for shamanising women in childbirth, the second for curing the sick and the third for finding men lost in the snowstorm." Dyukhade took the branch and flew away with the birds. On his way he met a demiman-demitree creature who told: "If you will be asked to shamanise in the case of serious illness and your heart will not be strong enough, then you will take this," and he gave him seven herbs. "Each of them has its lords. If you will meet an orphan girl or a widow, you will help them." Then Dyukhade reached the large sea. He saw seven cliffs on the shore. When he got close, one of them opened. There were teeth like from the bear inside the cliff. The cliff said: "I am the Heavy Stone. By the use of my weight I hold the fertile soil in its place. The wind would carry it away without me." The second cliff opened and said: "Let all men melt iron from me." So Dyukhade studied seven days near the cliffs. Afterwards the ermine and the mouse led him to the marshland. They reached the hill with swampy slopes. There was an open doorway on the closest slope, and they went in. The interior, except for the ice around it, looked like the one of the conical tent's. There was a hearth in the middle of the room. On the left side two naked women were sitting. Their bodies were furry and they both had antlers (one of them had green ones). Both of them bore him two reindeer calves destined for sacrifice and nourishment. They gave him some reindeer fur for the shaman costume and for good luck with reindeer. Then Dyukhade came to a desert and saw a distant mountain. After three days' travel he reached it and entered an opening. There was a naked man working a bellows inside the mountain. On the fire was a cauldron as big as half the earth. The naked man saw Dyukhade and caught him with a huge pair of tongs. Dyukhade had only time to think: "I am dead!" The man cut off his head, chopped up his body and put them in the cauldron. There he boiled them for three years. There were three anvils on the tundra side of this mountain. The naked man forged Dyukhade's head on the third anvil, which was the one on which the best shamans were forged. Then he chilled his head in the cauldron, in which the water was the coldest (there were three cauldrons with water). He said: "When you will be called to cure someone, you will remember - if the soul of your patient will be warmer than water in the first cauldron, it will be useless to shamanize, for the man is already lost. If the soul will be as warm as water in the second cauldron, your patient is not very seriously ill and you will shamanize to cure him. Water in the third cauldron has the temperature of the healthy body." Then the blacksmith poured Dyukhade's bones and muscles out of the cauldron and separated flesh from bones. He said: "As you have three of them too many, you will have three shaman costumes too." Afterwards he said: "Your spinal cord is a river now, look at your bones floating away!" He fished Dyukhade's bones out of the river and put them together. The bones were covered with flesh again. Only the skull was still separated. Then the blacksmith told Dyukhade to read the letters inside the skull. And Dyukhade read. Then the blacksmith covered the skull with flesh and put it to its original place again. He changed his eyes and pierced his ears, making him able to understand the language of [P119] plants. Then Dyukhade found himself on the summit of a mountain. He entered a tent and awakened - in his own tent. Afterwards he behaved like an insane person: daily he sung incantations and frequently swooned away, nightly suffered torments caused by spirits. During the seventh year of his illness he went far into the tundra and met there a man who gave him back his heart, cut out at the very beginning of his shaman's sickness. (A. Popov "Tavgitsy" - Trudy Instituta antropologii i etnografii, t. 1. vyp. 5. Moskva-Leningrad 1936, pp 85 - 93. Abbreviated translation by A. Lintrop at <http://haldjas.folklore.ee/~aado/vis.htm>)

As all these descriptions should make obvious: the call to become a shaman is not a light matter; the initiation is a journey where the person's life is on the line, where not getting something right can easily mean death (see Eliade 1951/1964, 38-42 in particular). The patterns of call, initiation and instruction vary

from culture to culture in accordance with the form the nurturing conversation takes in a particular place (local knowledge), time, ancestry, and ceremonial tradition (See Vitebsky 1995 for a brief, comprehensive overview). However, common to all is pressure from spirits resulting in a heightened presence to them, and the imparting of healing knowledge in a way that makes it available to the personal repertoire of the initiand - the person is getting initiated into the deep knowledge of his or her culture. This is the crucial point: while this process certainly has a psychological dimension it functions, when comprehended as a whole, entirely outside of not just a psychological paradigm, but outside of the boundaries of the Eurocentered paradigmata in general. Psychologizing spirit amounts to the appropriation and containment of Eurasian ancestries. Especially since Joseph Campbell's *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (1949) Eurocentered individuals are prone to interpret initiation in psychological terms, particularly in Jungian archetypal terms (initiation into Self). While such process has psychological validity (there is, of course, such a process as the psychological initiation into the Self archetype), it is a partial interpretation of the Eurasian indigenous process of shamanic initiation (the call from and invasion of spirits) as is, hopefully, apparent from the above statements.

An illustration of such contact with spirits can be seen in the story of Óðinn being initiated by fasting and hanging on the tree of life for nine days. While fragmentary, it clearly contains some of the elements described above for Siberian shamanism. We reasonably have to assume that Óðinn started out as the village master shaman, who later became hypostasized and patricarchalized in the course of the emergence of Eurocentered social constructions. In the following quotation Óðinn undergoes shamanic initiation, what is really there and what is *really* there, come together, the physical and imaginative, spiritual planes get aligned. He is wounded and sacrifices himself for nine long nights on the tree of life, at the center whence the female spirits Urðr, Verðandi, and Skuld renew life continuously from the sources of creation. The giant spirit of Bölthorn's son (ancestral spirit of his uncle) teaches him the shamanic song for spirit calling, he drinks the mead, the [P120] herbal drink of ecstasy and in-spiration, thus becoming full of spirit and being present to spirits he learns from various spirits, *ginnregin*, the mighty gods,<sup>2[2]</sup> the tools of his shamanic trade (runes, not merely letters or symbols, but images to make spirit present for shamanic work, invocations; carving runes means creating spiritual presences).

138. Veit ek, at ek hekk vindga meiði á nætr allar níu geiri undaðr Óðni, sjálfr sjálfum mér, á þeim meiði er manngi veit hvers hann af rótum renn.	137. I know that I hung in the windtorn tree  Nine whole nights, spear-pierced,  Consecrated to Odin, myself to my Self above me in the tree,  Whose roots no one knows whence it sprang.
139. Við hleifi mik sældu né við hornígi, nýsta ek niðr nam ek upp rúnar Ípandi nam, fell ek aptr þaðan.	138. None brought me bread, none served me drink;  I searched the depths, spied runes of wisdom;  Raised them with song, and fell once more thence.
140. Fimbulljóð níu nam ek af inum frægja syni Bölpórs, Bestlu föður, ok ek drykk of gat ins dýra mjaðar ausinn Óðreri.	139. Nine powerful chants I learned  From the wise son of Bölthorn, Bestla's father; A draught I drank of precious mead  Ladled from Odraerir.
141. Þá nam ek frævask ok fróðr vera ok vaxa ok vel hafask; orð mér af orði orðs leitaði, verk mér af verki verks leitaði. [P121]	140. I began to thrive, to grow wise,  To grow greater, and enjoy; For me words led from words to new words;  For me deeds led from deeds to new deeds.

<sup>2[2]</sup> Titchenell translates *ginnregin* as Vaner, the older layer of Norse gods or spirits, relating Óðinn's wisdom thus to the deepest and more clearly woman-centered base of Norse mythology (with Freyja as the great goddess and primal shamanic spirit).

142. Rúnar munt þú finna  
ok ráðna stafí,  
mjök stóra stafí,  
mjök stinna stafí,  
er fáði fimbullþulr  
ok gørdu ginnregin  
ok reist Hroptr rjögna.  
(Evans 1986, 68-69)

141. Runes shall you know and right read staves,  
Very great staves, powerful staves,  
Drawn by the mighty one who speaks,  
Made by wise Vaner,  
carved by the highest rulers.  
(Titchenell 1985, 126-127)

This is one of Óðinn's shamanic journeys recorded in the Old Norse literature, where he learns what he needs for his craft. While this description seems to contain but remnants of a complete cultural practice, these ciphers direct our attention to a quality of indigenous conversation present beneath the layer of Christianized descriptions and patriarchal conceptualizations. In this nurturing shamanic conversations Óðinn consorts with spirits and feminine sources of creation, renewal, and healing. Hanging from the tree of life he has accessed the deep knowledge of his culture.

### Indigenous Healing

Healing is intimately connected with *seeing*: the perception of spirits and spirits is an integral part of any healing endeavor. Without *seeing* spirit there is no healing. Understanding spiritually what is out of balance and how healing needs to happen requires *seeing*. We find this form of seeing described in *Eiríks Saga Rauða*:

*Slógu þá konur hring um hjalling, en Þorbjörg sat á uppi. Kvað Guðriður flá kvæðið svá fagrt ok vel... Spákonan þakkar henni kvæðið, ok kvað margar þær náttúrur nú til hafa sótt ok þykkja fagrt at heyra, er kvæðið var svá vel flutt.*

The women then cast a circle round the ritual platform on which Thorbjörg seated herself. Then Gudrid sang the songs so well and beautifully... The völva gives thanks for the song to her and said many spirits have come to us and are charmed by what they hear as the song was sung so beautifully. (Jones 1961, 136)

The calling of the spirits is done by means of *varðlokkur*, the spirit song, which has a similar function to the drumming and inspired singing or chanting in other Eurasian shamanic traditions (*varðlokkur* is oftentimes translated as magic song, *Zaubergesang*; *warlock* is a related word; *vörðr* is soul, *fylgja*, the familiar spirit who follows, the spirit of the home and hearth, guardian spirit; *lúka* is what encloses the spirits, binds them). It is the power and beauty of the song that brings the spirits. The völva cannot do her *seeing* and prophecying without the spirits being present.

[P122] The various techniques of spirit calling have led many to interpret indigenous spirituality in terms of the dichotomous pair immanence - transcendence used in religious discussions of "major religions," for example. However, this represents, I believe, a fundamental misunderstanding of native beingknowing, where even the term "spirituality" creates a division reflecting more the impact of Eurocentered thinking and splitting than the practice of native realities: spirit is everywhere, spirituality is everywhere, everything is spiritual. Everything is immanent, spirit is immanent, not separate or transcendent (immanence and transcendence are more like poles on a scale with many thick and thin places of connection inbetween). While there are all kinds of aspects and levels to this, and while our awareness of these various presences and aspects may be clear or clouded, all these aspects and beings are nonetheless present to indigenous beingknowing. By contrast, the dissociated mind needs to transcend in order to conceptualize or even reach any of these aspects that are immanently present to the indigenous or primal or natural mind, when in balance.

Such immanent worldview can be found even at the roots of the Eurocentered traditions. (Historically, they first turned against their own indigenous roots, and subsequently projected this shadow material out; this led to all the colonial and genocidal violence against indigenous people.) We can trace it clearly in some of the central concepts: Within the oldest layers of the Indo-European traditions we find healing, holy, and wholeness all as aspects of such an immanent world view.

IE\**kai-lo-*, which occurs in Goth *hailjan*, OE *hælan*, OHG *heilen*, and OBulg *celjo*, all of which mean "to heal." What is expressed most directly through these terms, however, is not just the establishment of a vague state of "health" or "well-being" but more precisely a state of "wholeness, totality, completion," as shown in the nominal and adjectival formations from this root, such as Goth *hails*, ON *heill*, OHG *heil*, and OBulg *cel*, all of which mean both "healthy" and "whole"... So desirable was this state of wholeness thought to be that two common IE formulaic greetings and toasts express the wish that the one addressed may be "whole." Such a state of well-being and wholeness might be lost through injury or disease, whereupon the healer's task was to restore it. (Lincoln 1986, 100)

The centrality of this concept of healing is apparent. Hitler turned this very understanding of *heil* through his evil genius on to the dark side; from an indigenous perspective one could venture to say that the constant everyday use of a formula in older times spoken for the sake of healing, blessing, and greeting, but

now spoken millions of times every day for the sake of destruction and genocide, gave the fascism of the Third Reich a particular power and created the mass of bystanders and willing executioners so much in the public debates since Goldhagen's book. Ever since the word denoting the process of healing carries the shadows of history, and is thus collectively in need of purification and healing. Lincoln's analysis of the old Indo-European understanding of healing and wholeness identifies magic not as idle superstition, but rather as a

[P123] system of non-Aristotelian, homologous causality, whereby items connected to one another in a relation of underlying constubstantiality are considered capable of acting on one another. And what is more, the precise terms of these homologies are drawn from cosmogonic and anthropogonic myth. (1986, 110)

Within this worldview healing by acts of magical speech is the highest form of healing (ibid. 101). Magical speech, sacred poetry, singing, chanting are part of this evocative context, in which physical accoutrements and interventions form adjuncts which would be less effective if not accompanied by the spiritual presences created through sacred sound. Many words in the Old Norse and other Eurasian indigenous traditions use terms for ceremonial endeavors that are etymologically connected to chanting (Old Norse *blót*, *seiðr*, Evenki *jajan*, etc.), and many words for chanting are connected with *seeing* (even the English 'singing' is). (Another important complex consists of the words for knowing, the-one-who-knows, and *seeing*.)

Lincoln concludes his discussion of "magical healing" by saying

In considering the IE (Indo-European, JWK) vocabulary for the act of healing I noted that one term commonly used in this context, *\*kai-lo-*, signified "wholeness, integrity." It now becomes apparent just how awesome a task the production or restoration of such integrity must be, for it is not just a damaged body that one restores to wholeness and health, but the very universe itself. I also noted that the verb used to denote "healing," *\*med-*, stressed the knowledge and authority that enabled a healer to create proper order in an ailing patient. The full extent of such knowledge is now revealed in all its grandeur: the healer must understand and be prepared to manipulate nothing less than the full structure of the cosmos. (Lincoln 1986, 117/8)

*Kailo* and *heill* are terms that need to be understood in a communal frame of mind which includes humans, ancestors, animals, plants, and others. To conceive of them or of *fríðr* (peace or Great Peace) as individualistic pursuits (analogous to the "pursuit of happiness") means not seeing the obligations which weave the individual's contribution into the communal fabric. Such weaving has its origins in the place from which the possibility of healing and balance emanate: creation and creation story. Óðinnfasting on the tree of life puts him at the center of anthropogenesis where he receives crucial instructions for his way as a shaman or *seiðmenn*. The following story from Snorri's *Prose Edda* (Sturluson 1987) speaks to the centrality of healing and in-spiration emanating from the oldest layers of the story of the people. The literature commonly talks about the mead of inspiration or the mead of poetry, however, as we have seen previously, to be in-spired by poetic song is making the spirits present, is becoming present to them. Such poetic inspiration is not just seeing, but also the foundation of healing, of manipulating the structure of the universe through the power of the magic words chanted. Of course, the power of such tremendous [P124] manipulation is not the shaman's, but that of the spirits; the power of the shaman is the capacity of *varðlokkur*, spirit calling, and then the skill of his spirits traveling to where they must go for *seeing* and healing (the intensification of indigenous presence); the rest is the grace of spirit(s).

The story of Óðinn's recovery of the mead that is given below, illustrates a variety of things important in shamanic work: we read about shapeshifting, wrestling with spirits, the recovery of medicine, and a spirit which has been held by illegitimate owners, spirit journey. Remembering that magical speech is the highest form of healing the significance of the rescue of the source of such magic from thieves and murderers becomes evident. It is important to notice how the nature of the medicine of the mead changes as the story unfolds from creation: from the power of truce between two groups of spirits (the Vanir and the Æsir) to poetic in-spiration from one group of spirits only (the Æsir; Indo-Europeanization is thus strengthened).

The mead Óðinn recovers by means of his shamanic work is spiritually of eminent importance: Its origins lie with the truce between the Æsir and Vanir groups of gods/goddesses or spirits. They had spat into a vat to seal the agreement, and then decided to create the wisest of humans, Kvasir,<sup>3[3]</sup> out of it. Kvasir travelled

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<sup>3[3]</sup> 'Kvasir' is an interesting word: It is connected to Norwegian *kvaser* and Russian *kvas*, denoting the fermented berry drink created through the communal chewing of the berries which were then spat into a vat. The mead of the skalds, the Old Norse poets, is also known as *kvasis dreyra*, Kvasir's blood (De Vries 1977). English 'quash' and German (dialectal) *quatschen* are related. The latter word leads me to surmise an interesting etymology for this word, which can also mean 'to talk nonsense, to babble': talk in-spired by the mead, by *kvaser*, was increasingly considered nonsense, as it became unintelligible as people lost their ongoing and ceremonial presence to the world of spirit(s) - what people claimed to come from that world was increasingly considered *Quatsch* or nonsense,

through the world teaching his wisdom. He was killed by dwarves who preserved his blood, mixed with honey in three containers. The mead was passed on as recompense for the drowning of a giant. His son kept the mead putting his daughter in charge of it. This medicine, which was ceremonially created by the Æsir and Vanir spirits, and which became manifest in the wandering wise person Kvasir, then gets rescued by Óðinn during a shamanic recovery process, but changes its character significantly in the process - instead of being medicine mediating and balancing between the Æsir and Vanir spirits it now ends up in the possession of the Æsir as the mead of poetry (poetry is also known as Kvasir's blood), from the seal of truce making between two aspects of spirits it turns into the in-spiration from [P125] and for one group of gods and goddesses; the magic of healing words and inspired song is now in the hand of the Æsir, spirits of Indo-European cultural context:

Óðinn told him his name was Bölverkr ("worker of trickery or evil"); he offered to take over the work of nine men for Baugi ("the bent one"), and stipulated as his payment one drink of Suttungr's mead (Suttungr is probably "heavy with drink"). Baugi said he had no say in the disposal of the mead, said that Suttungr wanted to have it all to himself, but he said that he would go with Bölverkr and try whether they could get the mead. Bölverkr did the work of nine men for Baugi during the summer, and when winter came he asked Baugi for his hire. Then they both set off. Baugi told his brother Suttungr of his agreement with Bölverkr, but Suttungr flatly refused a single drop of the mead. Then Bölverkr told Baugi that they would have to try some stratagems to see if they could get hold of the mead, and Baugi said that was a good idea. Then Bölverkr got out an augur called Rati ("drill, augur") and instructed Baugi to bore a hole in the mountain, if the augur would cut. He did so. Then Baugi said that the mountain was bored through, but Bölverkr blew into the auger-hole and the bits flew back up at him. Then he realized that Baugi was trying to cheat him, and told him to bore through the mountain. Baugi bored again. And when Bölverkr blew a second time, the bits flew inwards. Then Bölverkr turned himself into the form of a snake and crawled into the auger-hole, and Baugi stabbed after him with the auger and missed him. Bölverkr went to where Gunnlöð ("invitation to fight", giant spirit) was and lay with her for three nights and then she let him drink three drafts of the mead. In the first draught he drank everything out of Óðrærir ("the one stimulating ecstasy"; originally the mead itself, but also the vessel containing it), and in the second out of Boðn ("vessel"), in the third out of Són (probably "blood, reconciliation, atonement"), and then he had all the mead. The he turned himself into the form of an eagle and flew as hard as he could. And when Suttungr saw the eagle's flight he got his own eagle shape and flew after him. And when the Æsir saw Óðinn flying they put their containers out in the courtyard, and when Óðinn came in over Ásgarðr (the home of the Æsir) he spat out the mead into the containers, but it was such a close thing for him that Suttungr might have caught him that he sent some of the mead out backwards, and this was disregarded. Anyone took it that wanted it, and it is what we call the rhymester's share. But Óðinn gave Suttungr's mead to the Æsir and to those people who are skilled at composing poetry. Thus we call poetry Óðinn's booty and find, and his drink and his gift and the Æsir's drink. (Sturluson 1987, Skaldskaparmál, 63-64)

This seems to be a very old shamanic story that finds clear resonances within the Eurasian complex, for example, in the *Rig Veda* of 1200-900 BCE: Here Indra, in the form of an eagle or with the eagle as helper spirit, steals the elixir of immortality, soma (which Wasson [1968] identifies with the fly agaric mushroom), the plant spirit of in-spiration and *seeing*. Verse 4.27.5 offers an interesting conjunction between "overflowing cow's milk, the finest honey, the clear juice" (all presumably words connoting soma; see Wasson for [P126] extensive discussions), which, by bold Indo-European generalization, brings Óðr, the drink of in-spiration, to the milk the primal cow Auðumla offers as nourishment. Modern Icelandic óður (adj.) means not just "furious," but also crazy and mad, which originally presumably would have been the "madness" of spirit possession or religious trance of in-spiration. Doniger O'Flaherty (1981, 128) comments that "Soma is the 'fiery juice', simultaneously fire and water", and Auðumla feeds the primal giant spirit Ymir who was born at the place from which the world arises, *Ginnungagap*, the conjunction of fire and ice (cf. *Gylfaginning*, Sturluson 1987). Óðrærir is commonly translated as mead (German *Met*), considered the oldest spiritual drink; it is the drink of fermented honey (but also berries<sup>4[4]</sup>), and a word which points to an old connection between Indo-European and Finno-Ugric cultures: Saami *miehta* (originating from Proto-Finno-Ugric of ca. 4000BCE; Sammallahti, 1998, 119), Finnish *mete*, etc. are related to the Pre-Aryan Indo-European language layer. In the words soma, mead, and óðrærir we find a constellation of the primal forces of creation, spiritual seeing, renewal, mantic poetry, nourishment from the center of creation and spirit(s), as well as atonement and peacekeeping.

The discussions of varðlokkur, kailo, and the mead of in-spiration serve to show that what so many of Euro-centered mind are looking for in Native American and other indigenous traditions can truly be found in their own roots, e.g. the Germanic-Nordic traditions. Healing is not a mere technology, but a spiritual activity which, while using certain pragmatic interventions such as herbs, is embedded in the deep structure

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while before it had been the wisdom of Kvasir. (Just as the seeresses of the Delphic oracle increasingly appeared to babble nonsense, thus "necessitating" the interpretation by men, and resulting in the patriarchal control of intercourse with spirits.)

<sup>4[4]</sup> It is beyond the scope of this article to display the rich web of connections in its entirety. However, it is worth mentioning that the berry, especially in its form as elderberry (*Hollunder*) is also the sacred blood from the female spirit or goddess (*Frau Holle*), and that we find lines leading us back into the Nordic culture at the times of Old Europe (cf. Gimbutas 1999).

of cultural beingknowing and the prerequisite initiations and lifeways. In my case healing can and needs to arise from the place where the Old Norse ancestors were created into their precise cultural identity. Just as it does for Native American tribes and other indigenous peoples. LaPena (1999, 18) comments beautifully: The elders "learn the earth's secrets by quietly observing. It is a secret language called knowledge that releases the spirit from stone and heals by tone of voice and by changing sickness into elements that flow instead of blocking life." This is what it means to follow our original instructions in a particular place and time. "Sacred names, dreams, and visions are images that connect the bearer to the earth; shamans and other tribal healers and visionaries speak the various languages of plants and animals and feel the special dream power to travel backward from familiar times and places" (Vizenor 1981, XVII). This is what the völvas, the seeresses, and the seers of the Nordic Germanic traditions did and do. The importance of the connection between language and place is described by Pinkson (1995, 127) based on his initiations into the Huichol tradition:

The original language of the people indigenous to a specific area on Mother Earth's body grows directly out of the land itself. The vibratory essence of the natural forces in a given area grow upward from the bowels of the land and surrounding elements to form the plant life and vegetation of that area. The indigenous people live, eat, and breathe these natural elements. They die back into them and new generations birth back out again in the passage [P127] of generations. The land literally teaches them how to live in harmony with it through this ingestion process. They take it into their bodies. It "speaks" to them. Then it comes out of their mouths as language. They speak the vibrations of that land. Their language and creation myths are embodied vehicles for the wisdom of that place. I could now understand why maintaining the original language of indigenous people is important not just to their survival but to all of humanity. Original languages contain within their vibratory structure the operating rules for how to live in their home territory in a harmonious manner. The indigenous language is a *nierica* [gateway, JWK] by which to access the intelligence of place. Lose the language and you lose its vital instructions about right relationship.

This visionary insight finds its reflections in the Nordic Germanic indigenous traditions where the power of the word arising from the lands is used in spells and runes, where the language of the *Poetic Edda* speaks an ancient wisdom from creation. But this statement does something else also: It clearly identifies the initiatory challenges for those who no longer live in the place of their ancestors, who have forgotten their language, and who may now live in places where the indigenous language has disappeared eating food that predominantly is not indigenous to their area of residence.

### The Loss of Initiations

A dramatic and succinct description from Leslie Marmon Silko's book *Ceremony* (1977, 132ff.) captures the rise of the Eurocentric story out of its Indo-European origins. Her use of the words "witch" and "witchery" is clear: it refers to the working of evil and imbalance. In its origins (Indo-European root *weik-*) it had religious connotations, the working of magic. These and similar words originally seem to have been rather neutral, although always holding the potential not just of good, but also of abuse of magical powers; however, the predominant identification of such words with evil and the devil clearly seems to be a consequence of the rise of Christianity. Before awareness of the medieval European witchhunts had a chance to infuse Native American use of the English language, workers of excess and evil were frequently called "witches" in Indian vernacular, thus assuming the Christian, pejorative use of the term. The word evil is connected to the Indo-European root *upo* and *upelo-*, meaning: exceeding the proper limit. And it is this that Silko talks about: It is the story of imbalance, the story of certain aspects of being exceeding their proper limit. It is in this sense that the sustained, thus pathological, dissociation of the Euro-centered endeavors from their balancing aspects can be understood as evil. (During the more than 20 years since the publication of *Ceremony* the word "witch" has re-established in pagan discourse as a positive and affirmative term.)

Long time ago  
in the beginning  
there were no white people in this world  
[P128] there was nothing European.  
And this world might have gone on like that  
except for one thing:  
witchery.  
This world was already complete  
even without white people.  
There was everything  
including witchery.  
  
Then it happened.  
These witch people got together. (...)

They all got together for a contest  
the way people have baseball tournaments nowadays  
except this was a contest  
in dark things. (...)

Finally there was only one  
who hadn't shown off charms or powers.  
The witch stood in the shadows beyond the fire  
and no one ever knew where this witch came from  
which tribe  
or if it was a woman or a man.  
But the important thing was  
this witch didn't show off any dark thunder charcoals  
or red ant-hill beads.

This one just told them to listen:  
"What I have is a story."

At first they all laughed  
but this witch said  
Okay  
go ahead  
laugh if you want to  
but as I tell the story  
it will begin to happen.

Set in motion now  
set in motion by our witchery  
to work for us.

Caves across the ocean  
in caves of dark hills  
white skin people  
like the belly of a fish  
covered with hair.

Then they grow away from the earth  
then they grow away from the sun  
then they grow away from the plants and animals.

They see no life  
When they look  
they see only objects.  
The world is a dead thing for them  
the trees and rivers are not alive  
the mountains and stones are not alive.  
The deer and bear are objects  
They see no life.

They fear  
They fear the world.  
They destroy what they fear.  
They fear themselves.

The wind will blow them across the ocean

thousands of them in giant boats  
swarming like larva  
out of a crushed ant hill. (...)

Set in motion now  
set in motion  
To destroy  
To kill  
objects to work for us  
Performing the witchery  
for suffering  
for torment  
[P129] for the still-born  
the deformed  
the sterile  
the dead.  
Whirling  
whirling  
whirling  
whirling  
set in motion now  
set in motion.

So the other witches said  
"Okay you win; you take the prize,  
but what you said just now -  
it isn't so funny  
It doesn't sound so good.  
We are doing okay without it  
we can get along without that kind of thing.  
Take it back.  
Call that story back."

But the witch just shook its head  
at the others in their stinking animal skins, fur and feathers.  
It's already turned loose.  
It's already coming.  
It can't be called back.

It is important to underscore that this process of the creation of imbalance is effected not with the help of shamanic paraphernalia, but by means of words, the power of words, the abuse of words, the imbalance or evil of the story - a story that inexorably grinds along, leaving many dead in its wake. The socialization of millions of people in conformity with this story of imbalance and its daily performance and reënactment as individual and cultural injunction constitute its power. As a story which pervades cultures, tribes, civilizations, and societies it cannot just be called back or counteracted with some medicine item as antidote. This requires words of balance, stories respecting proper limits, narratives healing the excessive dissociation from a self construction that acknowledges ourselves as whole and indigenous - the recovery of indigenous consciousness.

This story of the development of Eurocentrism from its Indo-European origins can be told in an alternate form using the information from scholarship which continues to be marginalized because it refuses to be part of the creation of imbalance (Silko's "witchery"). The story is, of course, a complex one with many twists and turns, multiple currents and many voices to be heard. What I present in the following paragraphs is a mere outline of some of the major shifts that are relevant for the discussion of healing and cosmology.

--- I postulate that the various Indo-European peoples had, at one point in their histories, an understanding or ideal of balanced living, a detailed understanding of their place in the cosmos and its cycles based on detailed ecological understanding, and reflected in their stories and communal ceremonies. The remnants of such understanding are reflected in etymological and other analyses, such as the ones provided from Lincoln above. We can possibly see them most clearly in the images of the tree of life, the anthropogenesis

beginning with the nurturing cow Auðumla, and the presence of the feminine in the oldest [P130] stories preserved.<sup>5[5]</sup> How and why these peoples changed from a cultural practice of balancing themselves with each other and their environment to a cultural practice of invasion and patriarchy (ultimately linear progress) remains mysterious, as Gimbutas acknowledges when she states that "this is a very serious question archaeologists cannot answer yet, but we can see that the patriarchy was already there around 5,000 B.C." (n.d., 17). It is reasonable to assume that these oldest Indo-European layers had cultural practices similar in ideology and practice to those who have retained their indigenous ways to this day, although the specifics of their socio-cultural practices were, of course, unique in accordance with their location, specific histories, and local indigenous science inquiries.

--- According to Gimbutas, beginning at about 4300 BCE the earliest inhabitants of Europe, the "civilizations of Old Europe" become Indo-Europeanized as three waves of Kurgan invasions effect a blending between the indigenous and indo-european populations. The matristic, matrifocal or matriarchal cultural practices become obliterated in the process as the indigenous peoples are destroyed or assimilated. (In the Nordic-Germanic stories this is reflected in the conflict between the Vanir and Æsir resulting in partial cultural assimilation, the increasing importance of Óðinn and the lessening importance of Freyja and other Vanir goddesses and gods.) We observe the rise of patriarchy, hierarchy, abstraction, dissociation, as well as increasingly larger scale violence and invasions. Healing now becomes an endeavor increasingly shifts into masculine, priestly contexts, with rigidly ritualized forms eclipsing shamanic *seeing* and inspiration; some of the original healing interventions become marginalized as woman's work as patriarchal forms of dominance gain strength. The Eurocentered medical sciences find their origin in Greece during the 5th century BCE with Hippocrates.

--- The rise of monotheistic Christianity through its appropriation of the shamanic Jesus figure and the alliance between Christianity and the Roman Empire in 390-391 by Constantine constitute a major turning point toward increased patriarchal power and the rise of Eurocentrism. The descriptions in Tacitus' *Germania* (ca. 98; 1967) reflect the relationship between the "barbarous," indigenous Germanic (and other) tribes north and east of the Roman Empire from the viewpoint of "civilized" Rome. "They even think that there is a prophetic quality in women, and so they neither reject their advice nor scorn their forecasts" (67). With the end of the East Germanic and Slavic migrations, and the formation [P131] of various royal empires (Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Franks, etc.) anything resembling communal tribal or indigenous practices disappears rapidly in most of Europe as Eurocentrism progresses in the form of Christian missionization and colonization. The reign of Charlemagne (crowned as emperor in 800) represents a major shift, most apparently with the felling of the world tree Irminsul and the massacre of 30,000 Saxons refusing conversion to Christianity in 772 CE (Gimbutas 1999, 190).

--- The oldest Nordic-Germanic knowledge about indigenous balanced living is recorded in sacred places, rock carvings, monuments, and artefacts accessible to the practice of indigenous science (cf. Kremer 1996). Most of what we know verbally is written down by Christians *after* Iceland's voluntary conversion to Christianity in the year 1000 (with Snorri Sturluson, 1178/9-1241, as central recorder and interpreter). Other written sources can be found in poetry, inscriptions, place names, folk customs, fairy and folk tales, as well as language etymology (the work of the Grimm brothers is seminal in this regard). Just as indigenous peoples have been identified as the Other, their practices getting reified in the process, so have the pre-Christian traditions been reified and safely othered under the gaze of the various Eurocentered human sciences (creating a textual and artefactual museum of Nordic-Germanic self-otherness equals to the dissociation from its origins, thus obscuring the potential of balanced cultural practices within an indigenous Nordic-Germanic worldview). In the oldest writings, healing practices are usually merely alluded to, either because the recorder was no longer initiated or because initiation prohibited the

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<sup>5[5]</sup> Within the Euro-centered frame of mind exists a strong tendency to read words like "traditional" or "indigenous" in a reifying fashion, postulating some stable, Edenic original state. While such projections of unfulfilled needs and desires may be momentarily satisfying, they reinforce the dissociative movements of progress thinking and the projective identification with indigenous peoples (making them feel our own shadow material as if it was theirs). We have to understand that whatever we are capable of identifying as beginning, original, traditional, indigenous, etc. immediately is always already imbued with history, and, whatever we manage to recover of it, we have to understand as the imaginative stories of communal truths, and *not* categorical statements of absolute truths.

dissemination of such information to the uninitiated. We find much focus on spells and the power of runic knowledge, again with an increasing tendency toward rigid ritualization under the sway of men, increasingly eclipsing women.

Beginning with the Renaissance this story becomes the story of the rise of eurocentric sciences. Anthropology can serve as a particularly good illustration for the increase in Eurocentered dissociations and splits from indigenous origins. McGrane (1989) has done an admirably lucid job of tracing the history of the relationship between euro-centered cultures and the Other, the alien, the different - an "archaeology of anthropology", so to speak. His analysis is helpful for understanding the loss of participation and presence to spirit(s) in greater detail. One of his fundamental premises is that "a culture that discovers what is alien to itself simultaneously manifests what it is in itself" (McGrane 1989, 1). He sees anthropology as an endeavor which is "fundamentally involved in the reproduction of Western society... It manifests and highlights that egocentric tendency of our Western mind to identify itself as separate from what it perceives as external to itself" (1989, 5). Using McGrane's conceptualization we can break down the process of loss of participation or loss of initiation as follows:

--- In the Renaissance (14th to 16th century) Christianity came between the European and the non-European; demonology determined that the Other, the fallen, was in need of naming, christening. Trances (and the concomitant healing practices) were seen as a practice which [P132] maintained the contact with demons and christianization meant the termination of such evil proceedings; killing or arrests of tribal members during ceremonies, the destruction or confiscation of artifacts (even during recent history, such as potlatch masks in Canada) are a result of this paradigm. The remaining old knowledge and practice are severely reduced during the three centuries of witchhunts, beginning around 1500. Much of the old knowledge is restricted to midwifery and herbalists. Indigenous cultural practices remain vital along "the margins" of Eurocentrism, particularly in the north and northeast (with the Baltic peoples and the Sámi people of the Arctic North the last to be christianized).

--- During the Enlightenment ignorance was the fundamental coordinate around which the understanding of the Other was constituted: indigenous peoples were living with the errors of superstition. Trances and alternate modes of healing were seen as superstitious practices which could not provide any true help or serve a healthful function. The 17th and 18th century saw the beginning of colonization.

--- The evolutionary thinking of the nineteenth century used the coordinate of time to understand natives as "primitives", or as "fossilized developmental stage" from the prehistory of European civilizations. Thus trances were conceptualized as contemporary remnants of an outmoded, primitive human potential; their usefulness was seen as superseded by medical and other sciences. The 19th century saw the height of colonialism and imperialism. Dion-Buffalo and Mohawk (1994, 33) comment that "the psychological and social foundation of this period of conquest and colonization is found in the ability to coerce the peoples of the world to accept the rules by which European politics and ideologies claimed the power to determine what is legitimate about the human experience." It is no coincidence that this was also the time in which evolutionary theories were first proposed. Epistemological and evolutionary thinking emerged out of the increasing split from the participation in the phenomena in order to understand and legitimize this dissociative logic of progress: Peoples participating in the phenomena become uncivilized with no possibility to discern truth because of insufficient dissociation. For example, Habermas (1997) makes this point clearly when he discusses the benefits and limitations of Cassirer's *The Theory of Symbolic Forms*: It is the logic of progress and the process of civilization - *Aufklärung*, enlightenment - which destroys and needs to destroy the impact of participation in the phenomena, the presence to spirits, and the desire for a balanced, meaningful existence. Indigenous healing practices have been relegated to the realm of anecdotes, folklore, fairy tale, to be marginally investigated by Euro-Centered sciences outside of the major trajectory of Eurocentrism (see Kremer 1998 for details).

The process of Eurocentered progress and domination seems to impact indigenous peoples at this historical moment most significantly through a process which takes its analogy from the individual psychological process of projective identification (somebody is made to feel the shadow material of somebody else as if it

were his or her own). The intra-Eurocentric denial of their own indigenous roots, the persecution of the Other in themselves (witchhunts, etc.), [P133] transforms the bloody and murderous colonizing forces into equally effective, albeit less physically lethal weapons: instead of killing people indigenous cultures get eradicated as natives begin to feel the bad feelings individuals constructed in Eurocentered fashion have about themselves; the devaluation of who they are pressures them to re-create themselves in the likeness of Eurocentered ideals. The ill feelings they have about themselves - expressed in the negligence of traditional ceremonies, pervasive alcoholism and violence, etc. - originated not from within themselves, but have their roots in the denial and projection of what Eurocentered minds have constructed as their "primitive," "ignorant," and "filthy" roots from which they have dissociated through the construction of so-called civilization, in contrast to the presumed savagery of their origins. Indigenous peoples carry the burden of the dissociative relationship of Eurocentered peoples to their own ancestries. They take on the such shadow material, as the following quote indicates:

Our stories help us to deal with shadow material individually and collectively; they connect the dark and the light sides of life. The predominant Eurocentered idea of goodness implies suppression and control of what is regarded as not good; this seems to be a behavioral pattern that can lead to genocide when taken to the extreme (when an extreme valuation of certain "good" traits is used as a way to scapegoat and then kill people who are seen as not sharing these traits). People of European descent are frequently surprised when their niceness is not experienced as such by Indians. I feel this particular collective delusion of what a good human being is in the European sense has become part of our collective Native American delusions leading us to participate in our own genocide. It is an individualistic and profit-centered view of humans. By taking on this image that focuses so strongly on the light side we are led to the denial of genocide, since the Native American genocide is relegated to the shadow side of the good Western person. Consequently, we do not allow sufficient knowledge that genocide is still occurring, and that perhaps we are participating in it ourselves. This reminds me of our tribal children who have been attending Western schools since contact. There they are taught inferiority, linearity, and the objectification of the universe. They internalize this today, just as I did as a child. Growing up, the racism and the notion of humanity from the perspective of Western imperialism became a part of me. I took on the identity of a victim and lost my power. This is how I have taken on the collective shadow by identifying with the self-construction of the dominant culture. How can anyone really grieve when there is the delusion that genocide is not really occurring today? (Bastien 1999)

This process of internalized colonization continues to perpetrate cultural and even physical genocide.

Another aspect of this process is captured in the following words by Silko (1977, 132):

They want us to believe all evil resides with white people. Then we will look no further to see what is really happening. They want us to separate ourselves from white people, to be ignorant and helpless as we watch our own destruction. But white people are only tools that the witchery manipulates.

[P134] It attempts to contain ossified, categorically identified remains of indigenous cultures in museums, universities, books, conferences - all endeavors that Vizenor identifies with the end of imagination or what has been called the nurturing conversation with all relations:

Traditional people imagine their social patterns and places on the earth, whereas anthropologists and historians invent tribal cultures and end mythic time. The differences between tribal imagination and social scientific invention are determined in world views: imagination is a state of being, a measure of personal courage; the invention of cultures is a material achievement through objective methodologies. To imagine the world is to be in the world; to invent the world with academic predicaments is to separate human experiences from the world, a secular transcendence and denial of chance and mortalities. (Vizenor 1984, 27)

Internalized colonization manifests also in ways other than alcoholism or violence:

They think the ceremonies must be performed exactly as they have always been done... That much is true... That much can be true also. But long ago when the people were given these ceremonies, the changing began, if only in the aging of the yellow gourd rattle or the shrinking of the skin around the eagle's claw, if only in the different voices from generation to generation, singing the chants. You see, in many ways, the ceremonies have always been changing. ... At one time, the ceremonies as they had been performed were enough for the way the world was then. But after the white people came, elements in this world began to shift; and it became necessary to create new ceremonies. ... Things which don't shift and grow are dead things. They are things the witchery people want. ... That's what the witchery is counting on: that we will cling to the ceremonies the way they were, and then their power will triumph, and the people will be no more. (Silko 1977, 126)

It is only under the pressures of continuing genocide that ceremonial renewal finally may disappear, and that the definitions of what is traditional or indigenous may be remade in the images developed by anthropologists or the desperate rigid repetition of what are considered the final live aspects of a culture. However, whatever the temporary victories of genocide may be, renewal remains always possible as the land, even if abused, and the ancestors, even if neglected, continue to be present.

### **Contrasts in Healing Paradigms**

The contrasts between indigenous healing paradigms and Eurocentered approaches can be made visible by looking at how each attempts to explain how healing happens. Within indigenous worldviews healing occurs within the narrative weave of the lived culture as it unfolds imaginatively from creation. Within the Eurocentered worldview healing is researched and understood within a paradigm of Truth, of cause and

effect, singularity of [P135] story, and the objective records of experimental observations. This leads to two forms of inquiry which are qualitatively distinct.

The *skeptical* Eurocentered researcher would be primarily interested in the efficacy of Native American healing and would try to isolate the elements considered efficacious or a necessary condition in healing ceremonies. Maybe the rattle or the drum or a particular herb or the temperature in the sweat lodge. The *sympathetic* researcher would also, in addition to this analytical approach, pay attention to the "set and setting" as it were, and would attempt to validate native approaches or find similarities, for example via psychotherapeutic approaches such as NLP (neurolinguistic programming) or Rogerian counseling, or via biochemical research of curative agents in herbs. The Eurocentered scientific approach commonly entails a stripping away of what is considered extraneous and the isolation of what is considered effective. Through this process it makes Other what is essential for native understandings.

Inquiry into native healing practices by way of what has been termed indigenous science, on the other hand, would begin with the culturally specific, ecologically and historically grounded indigenous understanding of *fríður* or the "the good mind" (Colorado 1988), the balanced way of living in community on a particular land. Healing is needed when the "good mind" is out of balance, when the proper limits are exceeded; the cultural stories and myths then provide explanations. Indigenous healing practices then are based in a synthetic, integral approach to what is out of balance. Native science guides the healer to the point in the fabric where it is rent and where wholeness needs to be reestablished. The ceremonies done are the precise knowledge and practice designed to create balance on all levels and from all levels (within the person on the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual levels, and by doing so on the level of spirits, community and nature which hold the individual); they are indigenous science. Their efficacy is established through the integrity and the wholeness of the healing ceremony.

The different motivations for understanding healing in the case of Eurocentered and indigenous sciences are of note: The researches of the native healer are done to increase the integrity and wholeness of the communal fabric and to benefit the individuals that are part of it. Eurocentered researches of native healing practices rarely seem to benefit the peoples researched directly, but they are a way to address the limitations of the western healing paradigm and to come to terms with events which Eurocentered scientists commonly consider anomalous, inexplicable or nonexistent; they are attempts to better an individualistic paradigm without fundamentally leaving or changing it.

Whether an image in a rock carving is perceived as symbol or as spirit marks the difference between indigenous knowing and Eurocentered knowing. The rock carvings in Bohuslän, South Sweden, for example contain extraordinary images from the Bronze Age northern European times. The Eurocentered mind understands them as an assemblage of *symbols* [P136] which *represent* certain beings which are significant in the world of the Old Norse and their ancestors; they are commonly seen as 'symbols of healing', or 'symbols of initiation,' where each piece of the rock carving stands for something else. This interpretation reflects the split in the dissociative Eurocentered mind: the different parts of the rock carving point to something which is elsewhere, outside of the representation. The participatory tribal mind relates entirely differently to the rock carving: The spirits *are* in the rock carvings, they *are* the rock carving. The making of the rock carving is the creation of the presence of these beings. The beings are not at all separate from what the carving looks like. Once the rock carving is there, they are there. And then they can be ceremonially honored and renewed by tracing the carving with red ochre or other pigments, by making offerings of amber, axes, etc. Blót, the Old Norse ceremonies of offering, bring rock carving spirits and the people present to each other. This simple distinction marks worlds of differences: Whether a rock carving is a symbol for something or whether it *is* a certain being indicates the consciousness process we are engaged in. In one case we have symbolic healing, in the other spirit heals. There is no simple technique which can bridge this difference. Each understanding reflects a different way of being in the world. There is no such thing as a simple switch from one to the other. Whether we use trances for symbolic work or to seek healing with and from spirit(s) is an indication of the consciousness and reality in which we are participating.

Jungian interpretations of rock carvings (or sandpaintings and other images), myths or healings do *not* reflect tribal mind. They reflect the process of the Eurocentered mind. Jungian psychology and related

transpersonal approaches are certainly the closest to indigenous ways of being in that they validate the seminal importance of *participation mystique* and spiritual experiences. However, they are only accurate as long as they deal with the *Eurocentered* mind. There they can be very helpful. If such a psychology gets projected onto indigenous peoples, then grave misunderstandings result. What may be a good starting point for the Eurocentered mind means engaging the indigenous mind in a process of splitting and dissociation.

Within the western paradigm we pick an herb for its curative properties known to relieve a certain ailment. Herb collection is an entirely different event within an indigenous context. Here it is a ceremonial event which involves spirit and, especially the spirits of the plant to be collected. It is a participatory event with the plant relations which presupposes detailed knowledge, including knowledge of their language; it requires knowledge of cycles and the preparations necessary for gathering. It means understanding plants like any other intelligent people.

Prayer accompanies all plant use on the Navajo Reservation. ... Plants are not picked randomly or wastefully. Rather, they are picked as needed, and then, no more than are necessary. An herbalist finds two of a particular species that she wishes to pick. To the largest and healthiest plant, she says a prayer and explains why she must pick its neighbor. [P137] An offering of shell, pollen, or other sacred material is deposited with the first plant. Then she picks what she needs. Afterward, the plant remains are buried with a final prayer. (Mayes & Lacy 1989, 2-3)

This is no longer the collection of an herb, but an engagement and appointment with spirit to help heal. What heals is more than the beneficial chemical ingredient in the herb.

Knowing the medical benefits of a sweat lodge purification or the effective chemical agents in an healing herb is certainly useful. But if this knowledge is not integrated into an indigenous science framework, then we fail to understand indigenous approaches to healing. If what we are doing is healing our Eurocentrically minded selves within the existing paradigm, then iatrogenic diseases which are an expression of the continuing dissociation are the result (which is one of the reasons why natives are disturbed about the decontextualized use of their healing approaches). The correct technique used in a dissociated way is dangerous because it allows the appearance of a deeper healing that did not occur (individual benefits notwithstanding). Combining indigenous approaches with modern techniques on the basis of the story of excess and imbalance is not the same as integrating the knowledge from psychology and other sciences on the basis of indigenous beingknowing. If we are healing our indigenous selves through the remembrance of indigenous healing ways, then individual healing is also the healing of community and paradigm.

### **Decolonization as Initiation**

Silko's poetic evocation of the colonial process of Euro-centered thinking contains a crucial point: the most powerful creatrix of imbalance is not using shamanic accoutrements to wield her power, she uses words, a story. Her imbalancing is the story made of words that splits people more and more from participation, words developing a dissociative world view, where the fluid, participatory process of verbal descriptions turns into the categorical grasp of nouns attempting to wield control via reality definitions they create. This story has many names: we can call it the loss of participation; or the loss of the nurturing conversation with all our relations; or the shift from oral to written traditions; or the loss of sacred writing (rock carvings, runes, hieroglyphs, ideographic, etc.) to the linearity of alphabetical writing; or the change from sacred (cyclical, linear-cyclical, spiral) to linear secular time; or the rise of colonialism and imperialism; or the split of story into its aspects of history, personal story, scientific stories, and others; or the rise of patriarchy from its Indo-European roots to Euro-centrism; or the rise of Christianity; or the rise of the masculinized version of the evolutionary story. These and other vantage points provide ways of coming to terms with the story Silko tells so powerfully: creating imbalance by exceeding the proper limits, by focusing on certain elements at the expense of others (i.e., pathological dissociation).

[P138] When the competing workers of imbalance ask her to call the story back she shakes her head and answers: "It's already turned loose. It's already coming. It can't be called back." The story continues to be told the world over, and impacts every aspect of our lives, from the increasing dominance of the noun-oriented English language (most lately via the internet) to economic globalization. It is clear that the story has not been called back, and continues to dominate the majority of educational systems: more and more young citizens are unconsciously made willing participants and co-narrators in this story. If the story can't be called back - what to do?

As we have seen in the brief discussions above, the story of imbalance and excess of proper limits was not told all of a sudden, but became more powerful over time as its addictive nature exerted a centrifugal force. The increasing literature on early human history and story attests to the various layers through which the telling has shapeshifted. Healing the story would mean peeling back through these layers, not merely for the advancement of the sciences, but to recover a quality of storytelling that is communal and participatory. Euro-centered thinking frequently misconstrues such endeavor as search of some sort of Eden or other paradisaical original state of being (it is worthy of note that paradise has its roots in Greek *paradeisos*, a *walled in* garden or park, and related terms). Instead of linearly conceptualizing recovery as the reconstitution of a particular state or point of origin, I suggest that it is the reconstitution of a particular process or quality: the recovery of the indigenous quality of storytelling. Healing the imbalancing story of Euro-centrism means beginning to tell the story differently. The evocative power of the word is clearly understood by contemporary indigenous peoples, and it was just as clearly understood by the early Indo-European traditions (most obviously, perhaps, in the use of the Sanskrit mantras). Óðinn's quest for the mead of mantic poetry, the search for the words of *seeing*, and his initiation into the sacred, healing use of runic letter carving share this understanding. The word story finds its root in Indo-European *weid-*, to see; here we find story connected with the wisdom of the prophet(ess) and seer(ess) (an element that, of course, continues to be present in the creativity of contemporary novels and their best authors).<sup>6[6]</sup> The story cannot be called back, but it can be changed and told differently if we make ourselves whole again.

Telling a story in a participatory frame of mind instead of dissociated consciousness may sound simple enough. But just as the Indo-European healers of old needed to be able to be with spirit(s) in such a way that the entire cosmos was impacted, so does a different telling of the story change the cosmos we are living in. Changing the story is impacting the cosmos (as the cosmos impacts it). Instead of evoking and maintaining dissociation and splitting from an indigenous nurturing conversation, such telling would evoke participatory being. This is no small matter: it is the healing ceremony of the Euro-centered self, the **[P139]** reconstruction of who we are. Such an endeavor finds its parallel not in “a bandaid on a cut, but in heart surgery.” It is not a mere change in identity, but a foundational, qualitative shift in *the process of how* we construct our identities. This means we need to deconstruct ourselves as the beings we are so that there can be renewal from the creative source of our origins. While such healing clearly means the return, to use the language of the Old Norse, to the well of memory, *Urðr*, such remembrance is not for the indulgence of nostalgic or retro-romantic splits (dissociative endeavors indeed), but for the righting of the story for the future. Indeed, just like Óðinn, and other women and men before him, we need to be capable of transforming our selves so that we can drink *oðrærir*, the mead of in-spiration. The dissociated self commonly gets but very diluted sips from such powerful substance. Aspiring to drinking a higher percentage of mead means having our language fall apart so that the words of seeing can re-emerge, so that words can become in-spirited and healed, so that word, chant, and seeing are part of our lifeworld. And our language inevitably comes apart when we of Euro-centered mind confront the shadows that walk with us.

Placing ourselves (those of Eurocentered or Nordic-Germanic mind) at the creative source Ginnungagap is not possible as a direct, unmediated act, since we have divested ourselves from the self capable of getting there with immediacy. Recovering the self that can enter Ginnungagap, the maw of *Miðgarðsormr*, the world snake, means purifying ourselves from the self construction that is incapable of entering such a place, because dissociation disallows it to be present to the continuing reality of *Urðr*, *Ginnungagap*, *Miðgarðsormr*, *oðrærir*, and the other spiritual powers of the Norse universe of old. How this universe is to appear today will only become apparent to the self which has initiated itself into participating in its continuing creative, regenerative, and imaginative story. Putting ourselves into the presence of such powers of creation is only possible through the cathartic mediation of the grieving shudder over the story of imbalancing (“witchery”), the confrontation and ownership of the shadow material. As a consequence, what our story evokes may become different. Instead of the story of exceeding the proper limits, we create the possibility the contemporary celebration of indigenous healing stories even among peoples who like to contain their indigenous roots at a safe distance by putting them in museums, and various other reifying and distancing places.

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<sup>6[6]</sup> The Indo-European root *weid-* is connected to story and wisdom, while the root *skei-* (to cut, split) is connected to the word conscious; knowledge is connected to the root *gno-*, which has narration and normal in its wake.

## Recovery of Indigenous Mind and Healing

The following poetic statement is modeled on Eddic poetry, particularly the rhetoric of the völvu in Völuspá. It is an attempt to capture the change of the ages about that so many indigenous peoples talk about in a language appropriate to my own cultural background and ancestry. It also serves as an appropriate summary and evocation to what I have said about healing and cosmology. It is the voice of the seeress, the völvu, speaking as she looks through the ages, from the past into the future.

[P140] I.

*Heilir æsir!*

*Heilir ásynjur!*

*Heil sjá in fjölnyta fold!*

*Hail to the gods,*

*hail to the goddesses,*

*hail to the allgiving earth!*

*Mál ok mannvit*

*gefið okkr mærum tveim*

*ok læknishendr, meðan lifum!*

*Wisdom and lore,*

*as long as we live,*

*grant us, and healing hands! (from Sigrdrífumál)*

*I remember the giants who were born*

*at the beginning of time and*

*who reared me in former times.*

*I remember the Sámis who were born*

*at the beginning of time and*

*who reared me in former times.*

*I remember nine worlds beneath the earth,*

*nine giantesses,*

*and also the glorious tree of fate.*

*I remember towards the beginning of time*

*at the place where the giant Ymir lived,*

*there was neither sand nor sea, and no cool waves.*

*The earth did not exist at all,*

*nor heaven above:*

*only a yawning gap*

*and grass nowhere.*

*I remember when the sons of*

*grandfather and grandmother Bear*

*raised the lands,*

*they who made the great Middle World. (Free after Völuspá)*

I remember the world of spirits,

I remember the world of giants,

**jötun,**

the world of dwarves,

**álfar.**

I remember the time when humankind was created.

I remember the three spirits

who found ash and elm

fragile and fateless.

*I know an ash tree call Yggdrasil;*

*it is a tall tree*

*sprayed with white clay.*

*From there comes the dew*

*that dabbles the dales.*

*The evergreen tree towers above Urðr's Well.*

*From the same place*

*come three knowledgeable maidens,*

*who emerge from the lake*

*that lies at the foot of the tree.*

*People call one Urðr,*

*the second Verðandi,*

*and the third Skuld;*

*they carved sacred markings*

*on pieces of wood.*

*They laid down the laws,*

*the fates of the people,*

*and chose life*

*for the children of humankind. (Free after Völuspá)*

II.

And I remember

the beginning of a new world age,

when the stars changed places,

and I remember

when the tree of life

[P141] was fastened to the new pole star.

Yes, I remember

the world of spirits of the previous world age,

but I also remember the new age

when spirits turned into symbols,

and humankind thus became more lonesome.

And I remember

that even spirits and ancestors

felt more lonesome.

I remember the age

when language was sacred,

when words brought spirits,

when language was filled with spiritual energy.

And then I saw

how language,

how words

lost their powers,

and how the husks remaining

helped humankind to forget

how they are woven

into the world.

And then I saw

how language and writing

helped humankind to forget

how they are

intimate

participants in everything

that surrounds them.

And then I saw them

looking at reality

from the outside.

And I saw how

language became poorer

and poorer,

and reality moved farther

and farther away.

And I saw humankind

greedily grabbing

what remained as reality,

and how they forgot to

evoke the world, and

to chant it into being.

And I remember how

human beings slowly forgot

what their medicine gifts were,

how they forgot their totems,  
how they forgot their clans,  
and how they forgot that  
they all were related  
as red, black, white, yellow and people of mixed color.  
And I remember how they  
struggled to reconstruct their  
relationship and similarities  
through abstract models,  
because they had forgotten  
the specificity of their relationships.  
And I remember how they sought their  
universal connections through more and more  
abstract thoughts  
in order to find each other again.

And I remember the age when Óðinn  
was a shaman still, *seiðkarl*,  
when he was called Óðr,  
when he used the drum on Sámseyja and elsewhere, and  
honored women.  
Two ravens sat on his shoulders  
helping his seeing.  
And I remember the new age when Óðinn  
took knowledge away from women  
and began to reign as patriarch.

And I remember the new age  
when human beings were reared  
[P142] separated from their ancestors,  
separated from their stories and histories,  
separated from their places of power and spirit,  
separated from the healing arts.  
And I have seen how they forgot  
that happiness depends  
on initiations into the higher self  
and the world of spirit.

I remember seeing lonely humans  
in search of completion and wholeness,  
even though their ancestors  
stood right by them.  
I remember seeing lonely humans  
blinded by symbols  
so that the spirits remained hidden.

And I remember human souls  
roaming the collective unconscious without bearings,  
unable to see their own guardian spirits.

And I remember human beings  
delving deeply into psychology,  
getting trapped on the personal side  
of the gateway to spirit,  
and when they would chance to encounter  
a spirit  
they would feel nothing but fear.

### III.

And I remember the times when the bridges  
to spirit went up in flames and collapsed,  
and the ancestor boats ceased  
to shuttle across the milky way.

And I see now  
how this world age  
is coming to an end,  
and that yet another  
new age is about to begin.

And I see now  
souls making the journey home  
seeking the roots of their creation.  
And I see how these souls  
sit in ancestor boats  
crossing the spirit bridges  
purifying the abuses of the word “**heil!**”,  
seeking healing for the innermost  
of their cultures.  
And I see humans  
once again courageous enough  
to sit at the center of their creation  
for the sake of healing.

### remembering

root meanings

**kailo**  
healing holy

turning  
to the root  
**kailo**  
source of wholing  
clay of healing

**kailo**  
root memories  
reaching into riches  
returning  
nurtured  
returning home  
returning from home  
healing

**kailo**  
[P143] the good omen  
from creation

issuing  
from the fingers  
of the woman of memory  
white clay  
smeared  
over the body  
wholesome clay  
healing  
fertilizing  
the human tree

at the root of healing  
is the remembrance  
of the center  
is the celebration  
of the center of our world

at the root of healing  
is placing ourselves  
at the center of our world  
the place of balance

at the root of healing  
is the celebration  
of the original instructions  
are the prayers

for our courage  
to step into the maw of the snake  
**ginnungagap**  
the abyss of creation  
is the open mouth of the world snake  
**miðgards**snake  
the snake holding our world

the snake creating our world  
through the fire and ice of **ginnungagap**  
created from her mouth

healing is the courage  
to step into the simplicity  
of creation  
the simplicity  
of the original instructions  
instructions for balance

purifying the abuses of the word "**heil!**",  
seeking healing for the innermost  
of their cultures.

And I see how the past  
becomes hotter and hotter,  
and how humans find the courage  
to warm themselves  
at the fires of their ancestors.  
And I see how humankind  
remembers the conversation  
with all relations.

And I see how woman and man  
are willing to be taken apart  
and ask the fire to consume  
their addictions to civilisation  
and progress.  
And I see how woman and man  
deconstruct their modern identities  
to become aware that they are still  
interwoven with their fellow humans,  
the plants, the animals, and the rocks.

And I see spirits  
once again  
stepping out  
of symbols.

And I see humans  
remembering  
that not only they need nourishment,  
but that their relations  
need nourishment also.

[P144] And I see how humans  
find their balance  
in the great cycle  
of nurturing  
and being nurtured.

**Heilir æsir!**  
**Heilir ásynjur!**  
**Heil sjá in fjölmyta fold!**  
*Hail to the gods,*  
*hail to the goddesses,*  
*hail to the allgiving earth!*  
**Mál ok mannvit**  
**gefið okkr mærum tveim**  
**ok læknishendr, meðan lifum!**  
*Wisdom and lore,*  
*as long as we live,*  
*grant us, and healing hands! (from Sigdrífumál)*

**Summarizing Table**

The following table gives a visual display of the major distinctions I have talked about throughout this article. The terminology used below is defined in its narrative context above. It may help to recall the broad outlines that underlie the detailed discussions.

*EUROCENTRIC DISCOURSES*  
**MODERNITY AND ITS CRITICS**

*INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS*  
**OUTSIDE**  
**EUROCENTRIC DISCOURSE**

<b>OPPOSING PAIR</b>		<b>THIRD PROCESS</b>	
<b>MODERN CONSCIOUS-NESS</b>	<b>CRITIQUES OF MODERN CONSCIOUS-NESS</b>	<b>RECOVERED INDIGENOUS CONSCIOUS-NESS</b>	<b>INDIGENOUS CONSCIOUS-NESS</b>
good subject	bad subject	developing non-subject	non-subject
unconscious participation	breakdown of un-conscious participation	regaining conscious participation	conscious participation
singular Truth	multiple truths	re-contextualizing truths and Truth locally & historically	locally & narratively contextualized truths and Truth
[P145] his-story	her-stories Story revealed as his-stories	recovering female aspects of stories; remembering multifarious gender identities	multiply engendered stories: Freyja-Freyr, Nerthus-Njörðr, twins, metamorphoses, spirit marriages
objective reality	narrative realities	recovering ancestral narrative realities & anchoring them in present ecology & historical moment	communally & locally anchored narrative realities
rationality	recovery of reasonableness	reasonableness	reasonableness
imperial self	non-imperial self	re-connecting self	connected self
individualism	individualism	intentional communities	natural communities
progress	progress (albeit questioned in appearance)	linearity struggling for balance	balance
linearity	variegated linearity	cyclical linearity	cyclical linearity

dissociation	suffering from dissociation	recovering participation	participation
colonialism	post-colonialism	decolonization	beside, outside & inside of colonization

[Chart by Jürgen W. Kremer, inspired by Mohawk & Dion-Buffalo. From Kremer 1999, *Bearing Obligations*.]

### [P146-148] References

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