

Stephen Edred Flowers, *The Northern Dawn: A History of the Reawakening of the Germanic Spirit*. Vol. 1, *From the Twilight of the Gods to the Sun at Midnight* (North Augusta, SC: Arcana Europa Media, 2018), 188 pp., \$US 20 (paperback).

Stephen Flowers is an independent scholar and founder of the Woodharrow Institute for Indo-European Studies. Woodharrow publishes scholarly works that advance and promote Germanic and Indo-European studies, counteracting what Flowers perceives as the erosion or elimination of these fields from traditional academic contexts. Flowers also intends these publications to serve as source material for the reconstruction of contemporary Norse and Germanic Paganism. As both a scholar and a long-time practitioner of magic and Heathenism, Flowers has contributed prolifically to the movement's literature and has situated himself as one of its important intellectuals.

From the Twilight of the Gods is the first of three proposed volumes of Flowers' Germanic history. He undertakes the ambitious project of tracing Germanic civilization and its influence from the period of pre-Christian contact to the reawakening of "the Germanic spirit" in contemporary Heathenism. Flowers takes a folksy approach to Heathenism. However, he has pushed back against a simple racial interpretation of the religion and consistently has put forward a more complex understanding of the Germanic past. *Northern Dawn* exemplifies this approach. Flowers argues for a Germanic essence—a heroic-aristocratic cultural pattern—that defined the Germanic spirit and provided continuity to the Germanic world. Yet within that framework, he acknowledges that a good deal of diversity and change occurred both geographically and temporally. Flowers examines these in some specificity, looking at continental Gothic and Frankish, western Anglo-Saxon/English, and northern Norse/Scandinavian exemplars.

In chapter 1, Flowers lays out a methodology for cultural and religious reconstruction. As a starting point, he contests the discourse of conversion. He suggests that a religious conversion—defined as the sudden transformation of a person's or society's core belief structure—never occurred in Northern Europe. The strong underlying traits shared by Germanic peoples remained intact during

the political, economic, and military upheaval of Christianization. Instead, Germanic culture transformed the pattern of Christianity received from Rome, “turning a pacifist, initiatory, and soteriological mystery cult based on the rejection of this world into a world-affirming folk religion led by warrior kings” (79). For this point, he is heavily indebted to James C. Russell’s *The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity*. Flowers seeks to demonstrate that core components of Germanic Paganism were effectively maintained and transmitted through fifteen hundred years of cultural change. These elements continue to exist within contemporary cultures influenced by Germanic precedents. Flowers intends something more robust than the survivals theorized by Edward Tylor. These remnants, he suggests, are the long-dormant patterns of a pre-Christian worldview that Heathen reconstructionists can reawaken into a living religious culture.

The bulk of the volume explores the two processes of Christianization and Germanization. Chapter 2 surveys various components of Germanic culture prior to Christian contact. Flowers draws heavily on Georges Dumézil, Jan de Vries, and Paul C. Bauschatz for this discussion of social structure and language, mythology and cosmology, legal customs, and material culture. Chapter 3 describes the distinct regional processes of Christianization within Northern Europe from 350–1100 C.E. He notes the important roles of kings and nobility, legislative decision, and military conquest as modes by which Christianization occurred. Chapter 4 involves a substantial discussion of the assimilation of Germanic culture into medieval Christendom, comprising much of the book’s second half. Flowers notes that its encounter with the Germanic worldview left Christianity significantly altered. He explores this syncretism using examples such as the names of the week days, the emergence of Christmas as a binary to the Easter cycle, the culture of the royal courts, and church architecture among many others. Flowers suggests that this assimilation was an uneasy relationship. The incongruence between Germanic Pagan and Christian values created a condition of “cultural schizophrenia” that would play itself out in European history.

The book is primarily a summary of previous scholarship oriented to a popular audience. Flowers makes little original contribution to our understanding of Germanic history and culture. For that reason, its appeal to specialists and scholars in those fields will be limited. However, for observers of contemporary Heathenism, the book offers the most intellectually robust interpretation of Germanic

history that has emerged from folkish Heathenry and thus marks an important development within the intellectual history of the movement. The volume should be of interest to all varieties of reconstructionist Pagans. Practitioners with scholarly inclinations and interests in Norse Paganism will find here a diverse account of Germanic history and culture. For these readers, Flowers' reconstructionist methodology and his discussion of Germanic influence on medieval Christendom will be of particular interest.

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