Damh the Bard:

I am on Zoom with Cazi, who I know from Witchfest Internationals and Witchfest Midlands and things like that. A follower of the Norse tradition of Heathenism. And you have another name that you've just told me that I'm never going to be able to pronounce. What is your other name that you are known as?

Cazi Brook:

Hi. It's a rough translation from Icelandic. It actually translates as Sarcastic Witch, which somewhat sums me up quite successfully. It was one of those names that just fit.

Damh the Bard:

So I can expect a bit of sarcasm then.

Cazi Brook:

It's a possibility.

Damh the Bard:

It's a possibility.

Cazi Brook:

Honestly. It's always a possibility with me.

Damh the Bard:

I'm really interested in the Norse tradition and I think there must be an increased interest within popular culture with the Vikings and the Last Kingdom and all those programs that are coming out. Let's start at the beginning. What was it that brought you to your path?

Cazi Brook:

Well, you briefly mentioned Witchfest. I am, of course one of the organizers and volunteer lead for Witchfest and Witchfest International, which are a pagan events group, not-for-profit organization. They've run for 30 years, but I think about 15, 16 years ago I found them through different volunteer work I was doing, handling wolves. I don't know if you ever saw them or met them. We have the Wolf Trust.

Damh the Bard:

At the Artemis Gathering?

Cazi Brook:

Yes.

Damh the Bard:

I do remember that. I do remember that. I went in there with my boys, Zack and Josh, who went in with the wolves. I've even got one of the mugs downstairs of one of the wolves, still today. That was amazing.

Cazi Brook:

Do you remember Dakota we used to bring along to the Artemis and to the International, actually, they were at Croydon a couple of times as well. But yes, I came along with them and I just discovered this whole other world of eclectic, crazy, hippie, pagan-y people. I was obsessed from that point, it just felt right. And I'll admit it took me a few years to really fall into where I laid in the path-y world, and a lot of research, and a lot of trial and error. But I found myself having most luck and being most at peace with anything based on Norse pagan paths, specifically Freyja, who is one of the Vanir goddesses. And it just bloomed from then. It was a slow path to get to where I am now, where I actually do talks about Norse pagan culture and how we can adapt that into modern society, et cetera.

It's been a very long and very slow and very tedious journey into finding myself. But it is something that if it hadn't been for the wolves in Witchfest, I probably would never have found, I wasn't living in a world where that was normal to me. So it's funny how it all comes together.

Damh the Bard:

Those worlds met. And so what was it about Freyja that really called to you?

Cazi Brook:

Well, I had gone along with a lot of the Greek pantheon up until possibly when my eldest was born, back in 2011. And there was just something about the mothering instinct that fascinated me. And at the same time, I was starting to realize I wasn't having as much luck or comfort as I felt I needed with the Greeks. So I started looking into others and there was just... I don't even remember what it was, but there was just some evening I sat down and I was doing some meditation and really trying to focus on, I had a postpartum depression and I was trying to focus on that mothering instinct and feeling like a fit. And something about Freyja just called. And the more and more I looked into her, not just being that lady of fertility, but also strength and cleverness and magic and being able to use the softness and the feminine side in such a powerful way and a protective way. It really called to me.

And then, a few years later, for personal circumstances, I started really looking into the other lesser known Norse gods, such as Hel and things like that. And really just the entire world fits. And when I work with them, I have success like nothing else. It just works. And I think that is how most people find their path, isn't it? A lot of trial and error. And then they'll just find that thing that just works. And it really was one of those,

Damh the Bard:

If you find Wicca and you find Druidry, there seem to be quite recognized and obvious paths into those traditions. With Wicca, you've got Children of Artemis, you can find a Coven with Druidry, OBOD, druid orders, that kind of stuff. But I don't know, I've got to say, I think we said this before we started this conversation, I know nothing. I'm working from a place where I really know very, very little about the Norse heathen path. Is there a route in via groups like that?

Cazi Brook:

Multiple. Genuinely multiple. But the problem is the heathen path or the Norse pagan, in whichever you refer to it as, is so vast, so vast. And is separated in so many different ways that people don't always really find the right version straight away. If I explain, heathenry really came back about in the 1970s, and it's referred to as a lot of different things. We've got the Norse pagans, heathens, contemporary Germanic paganism, but it all comes under the same thing. And then at the same time, we also have the aesthetic appeal, which obviously modern culture, vikings, et cetera. Some people will like the aesthetic

and then start to look at the gods. And that's perfectly okay. Some people will find groups online such as Asatru UK. They're a very good one in the UK and that's wonderful as well. There are people who can fall into groups that are not great, unfortunately.

There is a lot of appropriation of heathenry in the wrong form. So used as if it's some big masculine white supremacy style thing. And there are groups, normally along Odinic lines that will use that and direct you down a very dangerous and wrong path. And the problem with that is with modern culture and Odin being possibly the most well known God of the whole pantheon, it happens a lot. So there's a real social media push at the moment to promote healthy groups, shall we say, like Asatru UK or Heathens Against Hate and things like that. But really just if you Google heathen groups, you'll come across a billion of them, there's no shortage of them.

Damh the Bard:

You just have to make sure you're heading down the right avenue, really.

Cazi Brook:

Exactly. It's very difficult, but there's a lot of information out there. You just have to do the research really.

Damh the Bard:

You have a relationship with Freyja. Is it a polytheistic relationship? An animistic relationship? Or an archetypal, I guess that's the... Archetypal relationship.

Cazi Brook:

I have quite a polytheistic, I would say, relationship. Freyja was the first goddess I found long before I really started, for lack of a better word, experimenting with the Norse gods. And funny enough, one of the things that drew me to her was the connections that she may have been Artemis. So there's a lot of suggestion that Artemis and Freyja were one and the same. The same as though Artemis is Diana in the Romans versus Greeks.

That's how I found her. And then yes, I have that relationship with her. I don't know if it's a Gemini thing, but I have two sides to me. I have Freyja, who she is my mothering instinct, my ability with my plants, my general nurturing and all the support work that I do and things like that. And then on the flip side, I have Hel. And the funny thing about her is just how misunderstood as a goddess she is. But she is the sea, she's my yin to my yang, my dark side. And I work mostly with those two, but on occasion I will work with most of the Vanir. I tend actually really not to touch the Aesir. I have a polite relationship with them, so Odin, Thor, et cetera. But I don't really work with them a whole lot. Most of my work is with the Vanir gods.

Damh the Bard:

And the Vanir, as far as I can understand, are very much about nature and earth. Whereas the Aesir are a little bit more up in the clouds. And was it the Vanir were like the elder gods maybe? Were they there first?

Cazi Brook:

It is not entirely... There's different opinions on this. So we know that there was Jotunheim, the giants, they were before. And then of course Muspelheim and Niflheim were the lands of ice and fire, so they

were one of the biggest first creations. You had the light elves, who the best association of them would be the guardian angels, I think is the best way to describe them. But the Aesir and the Vanir, I think it's safe to say they were about the same time, but living in completely different worlds. And when the war kicked off between them, because the Aesir were quite bold and fighty, and very much the modern depiction of Viking life. Whereas the Vanir were peace loving field workers, very good with magic, very intelligent. And so of course, those two clashing sides went to war and peace was found when certain Vanir went to live with the Aesir, but I think it's safe to say they were probably around the same time in creation.

Damh the Bard:

And there was an exchange of people wasn't it? Was it Freyja who went to live with the Aesir, was it her?

Cazi Brook:

Yes. Freyja and her brother, Freyr. Njörðr, who is the god of sea, and another whose name has completely blanked me. And they all went to live with the Aesir. It was an exchange to guarantee peace. It was really only Freyja that Odin wanted, for her beauty and for her magic. But family protects family and that's always been the case. So that's essentially why the others went over.

Damh the Bard:

And again, what appears to be a large part of the Norse heathen path is the runes, what is your relationship with the runes.

Cazi Brook:

Runes. Gosh, my favorite topic. Here's the thing. Runes, like most of the old Norse world, are entirely misunderstood. I have an opinion really about props in general. So whether that's runes, tarot, teas, et cetera. I believe that sphere, that magic that you have, that premonition, that ability to read actually comes from within yourself. And what you are holding, whether it be runes or a teapot, is an amplifier more than the work itself. And there is evidence that people who practiced seiðr, which is magic in the old Norse world, likely thought the same. Because runes were not an alphabet, they were not a word exact. Runes were more of a phonetic, a meaning. Each one was associated with a specific ideal. So for example ox, was all about being burely and strong.

And it makes more sense to me that in a culture that was fascinated by spoken words, by poems, by how we communicate through rhythm and music, that the written word was more of an amplifier in addition to support that. And I do seiðr work, but I rarely use the runes. I'll use them occasionally when I'm doing ritual work just to really emphasize what I'm trying to get my point across. But I don't use it as words. We use it as meaning. And so that tends to be my association with runes. And I think for a lot of the part, things like runes and tarot, for example, tarot, we knew is a French card game, long before, it was never really used for fortune-telling. I think they're almost a placebo effect, in the fact that being able to use them just gives us the self-confidence that we require to tap into that higher level. And that has definitely been my experience with them.

Damh the Bard:

Alphabets are magical anyway, aren't they? That's the thing. Even if you look at the Greek alphabet that becomes ours, each symbol is a... And that's the thing about magic. Magic is a language of symbols, I

think a lot of the time. A symbol holds so much more information at a glance. It's like if you were driving along the road and you see a car, and underneath that car is a skid, you'd slow down. If you'd went up to that same sign and it said, "There's ice ahead, please, by the time you read it, you'd be driven past it." And to me, that's the power of symbolism in magic. It gets straight to the topic and the intent of the magic itself, I think. So maybe that's the same with runes. That they're symbols that contain that magic. I was talking to a friend of mine, she's in my grove, and she uses the Anglo-Saxon runes, and she sees them as personalities. So each little symbol has its own kind of personality in quite an animistic way, so they're almost alive.

Cazi Brook:

And it definitely makes sense and in what we know from the older runes as well, because obviously we've got the Anglo-Saxon futhorc that came from the younger futhorc that came from the elder futhorc, which is what we use. And I think it was probably a lot of pass down, person to person, talk to talk. But essentially each one of those runes do have their own character, their own meaning, whether that be about Odin and strength, or whether that be about femininity, or luck, or power, or self guidance, whatever. They all have that kind of... And they're all associated in a way with an animal. But that actually exists outside of runes as well for Norse pagans. One of the biggest surprises I think, and I know we were going to come onto this, was how the Norse depicted death and how that's all tied in.

And one of the biggest misconceptions is, you pass and you go to Valhalla, but actually the Norse, there is significant evidence that they believed in, essentially, a form of reincarnation. Because they believed your soul had four parts. And you had the hamr, which was your body, your physical presence, your appearance, that unit could be passed down through generation. You had your hugr, which was your reflective spirit, essentially your soul. And that was normally associated with an animal, with a personality, like a totem. So if you were a cunning person, you were probably like a fox, if you were sly... So they all strongly were an ox. That exists throughout Norse pagan culture. It makes perfect sense that it would exist through the runes as well.

Damh the Bard:

Well let's continue with that idea, the concept of death and what happens afterwards. Because, as I say, somebody who doesn't really know much about, it would seem that Valhalla is the place that everyone wants to go. And I have to say, the idea of feasting in a hall with a load of warriors is about my idea of... I would hate that.

Cazi Brook:

As someone who practices with the Vanir, probably me too. There is some suggestion that Valhalla, for most, would have been a form of tortures, that if you go through the story, you fight all day until every one of you is dead, and then you are resurrected, go feast until you are drunk and bloated, and then you fight again the next day. And that is repeated over and over. But of course, if you are not a warrior spirit, that is just pure hell, that's a boot camp that I don't want to be in.

But in actuality, and I think really Valhalla really became popular in, I'm going to say about when the Hávamál was created, when Snorri Sturluson created that, because he was trying to create this persona of a strong man wanting to be a warrior so that he could go and fight for his country. Because really that is what was important at the time, that was the narrative they were trying to create, weak women, strong men. And before that, it really was a lot more open. Like I said, before you had the four parts of your body, at least two parts of those they believed could be passed down to the next generation, your body and your mind, your hugr.

So in sense, they thought that you were more than just one part, and so you could be reincarnated and then also off to another thing. And in the more older stories, it was recognized that Freyja actually got first pick of said warriors. She chose who went to Fólkvangr long before Odin chose who went to Valhalla. So there was an idea of women's strength there. And then we also have what is now commonly misunderstood as a place for murderers and oath breakers, but actually it was way more, which is Helheim and Hel, who I work with. And I feel like this is probably one of the biggest still misunderstood sections of the entire thing. Helheim wasn't a place for repenting, it wasn't a place for bad people to go, mostly because they believed guilt was a destroyer, it wasn't something to hold onto, it wasn't something to repent, it was something to release, to let go, because it would ruin you in your path.

So Helheim was a place for anyone who wasn't a warrior, it was for the lost souls, for the bakers, for just mothers in general, things like that, things who didn't want to go off and do that fight. Everyone essentially went to Helheim. And Hel has had this big change around, which it has to have come from the 13th century Christian writings, of being this overlord of a terrible place for monsters, but they didn't see it that way. So it couldn't have been that. And I find it truly fascinating that even now with all that we have rediscovered them though, we still hold onto these, or how the media holds onto the popularity of Valhalla is this big end game winning place, when actually it was a minute part for a very select few of what Norse death really was.

Damh the Bard:

Really interesting. I guess the word hell has been definitely usurped. And I guess that word does come from Hel, from Helheim, that was appropriated as this other place of torture and torment. And it's hard to let that go, I guess, in a culture that's been raised in that, you hear the word Hel, and Hela, and Helheim, and your mind can go to those areas.

Cazi Brook:

The thing we've heard is, her depictions aren't helped by misunderstanding how the Norse saw good and evil, because they didn't really. The biggest thing about the Norse was that they believe the fate set your death date. You had your birth to your death, but what you did between that was on you and it was your path to follow, and your mistakes to make, and your hubris to represent. And errors, they happen because no one is perfect, but it's yours to fix at the same time. And so there wasn't really this requirement for the afterlife of being punished, because you were doing that to yourself while you were living. And really only the worst of the worst, so oath breakers were up there with murderers because a person's word was law back then. They would be the ones who would have to deal with the consequences of their actions, but they were natural consequences.

They weren't punished, they weren't set into a pit of fire. Helheim doesn't even look like that, that's Muspelheim that has all the fire and dragons and whatever. There has been a lot of taking a lot, and trying to squeeze it in to a very small narrative that fits good versus evil, light versus dark. But the Norse understood it to be way more gray than that. And when you start to pick away at the modern day representation, you find that really it was a whole plethora of emotions, and beauties, and anguish, and really quite human in the godliness. And it's fascinating to me.

Damh the Bard:

One of the things that I found myself getting quite jealous of, if I'm honest, was what appeared to be a very distinct connection to the past when it comes to the myths. And then I discovered that a lot of the myths were created by Snorri.

Cazi Brook:

Good old Snorri.

Damh the Bard:

Good old Snorri. And I bought his two books and... Or two of his books. I read that, essentially he was trying to create a Greek version of the Norse myths, by having a pantheon. And maybe before his writings, they weren't considered to be quite like that. Would you agree with that or do you think that's wrong?

Cazi Brook:

In part, I think the theory is there. We know Snorri, he created the Prose Edda and the Hávamál, we know that. But there was, long before that, the Poetic Edda. And that's what you can really look into a collection of 31 that we know of poems, that were created by a monk, or collected, I should, say by a monk, edited, I guess is the best term. But they really didn't have the same social pressures that Snorri must have felt when he was writing. A lot of what he wrote was adapted in a way from those poems, from how they would pass down family to family. And the problem with that, I think, is that up until he really wrote it down, everything we knew was passed down generation to generation. So, as the next generation perhaps changed its path, changed its religion, whatever, it was obviously going to adapt that, and adapt those poems, and adapt those stories.

That actually, funny enough, is one of my biggest issues with the so-called traditionalism, because it is not traditional. Even if you went back to the first bits, the Poetic Edda, that really was already tainted. And so we have to just rely on our instinct when we go through this. I feel like there's no smoke without fire. Those stories, they came from somewhere and there's a lot of reading between the lines. One of my favorite examples is Ragnarok and Odin in general, whether we believe Ragnarok, or will happen, or has happened, or is happening, is irrelevant really, because the story is supposed to be about how Odin let his hubris and his determination to know everything really get the better of him. And if he had been willing to trust people that didn't look like him, the entire thing would not have happened.

If he'd have trusted Loki's children, if he hadn't sent Hel to Helheim, if he hadn't banished Jörmungandr, or chained Fenrir, none of that would've followed. It was a series of dominoes, a consequence of actions. And of course we, or modern day, focuses on Valhalla and Ragnarok, and we must fight for the end, because that is the narrative that was required when Snorri was writing. He was writing for a population where he needed people meant to be strong and want to fight for their country. And the best thing was to be big and brave, and war was the best thing, and dying was the best thing, and it was to be glorious in battle.

But actually the story behind it was a lot more soft and a lot more use your brain. And so I find it fascinating that if you strip away the expectations of society at that time... Sorry, my upstairs are being very, very noisy. If you strip away the expectations of society at that time and read between the lines, the stories read true and they read fascinating, and they can give you a lot of good insight. There is a lot of reading between the lines, I think.

Damh the Bard:

It's a curse and a blessing at the same time for the fact that these were written down, I think. It's the same with folk songs I find. People say this is the definitive version of a particular folk song, and that was because Francis Child wrote it down, or the Copper Family, or whatever. But actually, if you'd have gone to the village next door, there would've been a different version of the same folk song. And I think it's a

bit like the Mabinogi, thank the gods that Rhydderch actually commissioned that to be done, but the moment it's done, it's trapped in amber. You've got a version that everyone can argue about and almost treat them like biblical texts, when actually they are myths. Myths are are things that you relate to on a much more visceral level than that, I think. And one of the things that I love is the Norse creation myth. I can read that over and over again. I absolutely love it. Now, from your experience, is that a creation of Snorri or was that from those Poetic Eddas as well? Was it older than that?

Cazi Brook:

It's definitely older than Snorri. He definitely put his own flamboyance onto it, shall we say? He made it his own. But actually, it's clear that it existed. The nine realms, there has always been some argument as to what the nine realms were, whether they're actually eight, but it did exist in the Poetic Edda. And so that must have meant it was talked about long before him, because that was a couple hundred years before he wrote Prose Edda. The creation is fascinating in general. You said we treat it like a biblical text, you're not entirely wrong. There are some paths and some groups who do, there is something known as the Nine Noble Virtues, which is based directly off of the Prose Edda and Hávamál. And it's the equivalent of the 10 Commandments, and it's very popular in American heathenry, it's very popular over there, I think, as a way for them to adapt their previous understanding of religion into a newer path.

But actually over in the European side, it's frowned upon, because it's so restricting, it's so untrue to the greater understanding of, like I said before, that things are gray and it is a lot more complex than just putting it down into nine virtues. And so it's funny how there is a very European versus American divide, and that also plays a lot into certain social injustices and ethical dilemmas within heathenry as well. There are a lot of paths, and obviously you use folk in a good term in heathenry, you hear the word folk and you immediately know there's a very high chance that they are racists or white supremacists in disguise. So wording plays a very heavy role in that way.

Damh the Bard:

Cazi, I could talk to you for hours, and I know you've probably got to head off, but I just want to ask you a couple little questions if that's all right. And I'm finding this absolutely fascinating, and I hope the listeners are too. You mentioned seiðr, is that the right pronunciation, seiðr?

Cazi Brook:

There is arguments to that. The most common representation would be seidhr.

Damh the Bard:

Seidhr. And that, to me, that feels like magic, Norse magic to me, and also from my limited experience seems to be much like the realm of the feminine, the realm of the woman. And I remember to access that energy, I have it in my head and it might be wrong, that some of the Norse gods had to dress up and change gender too. How's that work? Is that still the case or not?

Cazi Brook:

I love this. This is one of my favorite topics. And I'm going to try not run for an hour.

Damh the Bard:

God, here we go.

Cazi Brook:

So here we go. So seiðr is literally magic. It wasn't Norse magic. You don't have to be heathen to be magic. You don't have to be magic to be heathen. They're not one and the same. So seiðr is what the Vanir practiced essentially. And it included working with plants, working with elements, working with spirits, seeing fortune-telling. And as Norse völva, which were witchy wise women who would travel around villages. They would often be hired by local villages to help with issues, like, "Should I go do this?" Or, "Can we put this person to rest?" Et cetera. And there's depictions of them sitting on burial mounds for days while they practice. There's various forms of seiðr as well. But it's funny how Snorri has had such an unexpected influence into understanding what Norse magic was, because like you say, there's this depiction that it is feminine and somehow that's bad, but it's not, the Vanir, as a total, could practice magic.

The women, such as Freyja, were just generally better at it because they were the ones doing it. Freyja herself is extremely competent in magic. When she went to live with the Aesir, when she went to live with Odin, he was obsessed with understanding her magic, understanding the written word, understanding this stuff that, he as the Aesir, had not had access to. And there is no better word, he was genuinely possessively, obsessed with finding out as much information as he could. And of course that meant he then went on to hang himself, because there's no better sacrifice than to sacrifice yourself, et cetera, et cetera. But if you take away this whole male versus female power that Odin had to get ahold of, Freyja was weak for doing magic, and Loki was weak for being feminine, et cetera, what you find was a person who was obsessed with power, looking for the most powerful thing.

And I don't see how those stories could ever have considered Odin... Sorry, as magic being weak, or feminine power being weak, if this one supposedly really wise person was entirely obsessed with it. And we also know from Norse culture, before Christian influence, before Saxon influence, that women were quite revered in their communities. They managed lands, they held house, they made decisions. Some villages, even the women could vote. So there wasn't this whole female is weak, being female is weak. There is a story, a very good story, where Thor had to dress up as a bride, as Freyja, to get back the Mjölnir, because Loki had played a trick and it had gone out of hand, which was essentially just Loki being drunk and making a bad choice. And that is half of what the stories are. Loki got drunk, he made a bad choice, now let's fix the problem. Pretty much the entire way through.

And I think because of social perception, there was this idea that Thor dressing up as the bride was somehow humiliating for him, to be dressed as a woman. But in actuality, I think it was more just the fact that he was upset with Loki because he had to go and do this. He didn't want to be a bride for one of the children because he didn't get on with them. And the whole thing was absolutely ridiculous. He was probably just feeling a bit rubbish. And I think the idea that females are weak comes a lot later on and is probably very heavily a Snorri and social influence, because it doesn't really match the narrative of what Odin was trying to achieve in the first place.

And so I think if we assume that Odin was as wise as we claim him to be, then he wouldn't have gone for magic if he knew that would make him weak, so to speak. I think that's another one of those things where social perception has had a lot of effects on what could otherwise be a very good story.

Damh the Bard:

It's interesting, because... I don't know if you can hear my dog, somebody's just come to the door and he's barking his head off downstairs.

Cazi Brook:

Bless him.

Damh the Bard:

Up until what you've just said, I never associated anything about weakness. I saw it as power, as energy, very much like I think you are describing it there. And it's something I connect to the old idea of the wise woman in the village and all those things. It's like almost a continuation of that line for me.

Cazi Brook:

I was just going to say, those wise women in those villages, those völva that would travel from place to do the magic, they are paid fortunes. You can see them in burial mounds covered in jewels and gold and bits of expensive herbs, et cetera. So they were obviously very well revered at the time.

Damh the Bard:

Deeply respected part of the communities. Absolutely. So one last question, and I'll let you go. Obviously the Anglo-Saxon period started with migrations after the Romans left Britain, and a foundation of formation and blending of cultures that later on became England, as we know. The Battle of Brunanburh and all those things, it's just a fantastic story. But obviously the people of the Anglo-Saxon period went from their original faith, that I think they brought in with them, to adopting Christianity absolutely freehold. But do you see a connection between... What do you see as the connection between those early Anglo-Saxon, Germanic religions and Norse traditions? Is there a direct comparison or is it a different path?

Cazi Brook:

I wouldn't say it's different. I wouldn't say it's different. I think the difficulty have, when we talk about history, is we have such a small perception of exactly how long timeline is right. We're talking generations on generations or generations, this was a slow process. This happens over hundreds and thousands of years. So it's not like the Christians came in one day and e everyone was Christian, it didn't happen like that. Obviously we know that the Norse came over, we all know about Lindisfarne, that they came over and that they so called pillage. But actually it wasn't as dramatic as all that. And there is a very, very, very high likelihood that they came over before then as traders. And that this was just the first documented actual pillage. And so there would've been a slow build, this slow mold from different paths and into each other.

And one of the best things about the Norse pagans, and Scandinavians, and general, and the Danes, was that they liked to trade, they liked to collect. They were fascinated by other cultures. They went off to Americas, before it was America, they went to the Middle East, they collected, they wanted to learn. And so they would have adapted into their culture, quite likely as the Saxons would've adapted, the Norse in West.

And it would've been a slow process. There are things that we do know, for example, the Saxon had a problem with the Norse because they were bathing too often and it made them look bad. We know that these kind of things, that there were those fights. But I think, in general, I think it would've been a slow molding. And I think there would've been a lot of correlation and a lot of connection, sitting around the campfire, sharing stories, being able to find similarities, because that's how you connected and that's how you traded, and that's how we managed to mold these two societies into one. It wasn't all war, it wasn't all battle, that was done by the higher ups, the people lower down, they would've had to have connected along some path.

Damh the Bard:

As they always have done.

Cazi Brook:

As they always have done.

Damh the Bard:

Are there any particular books that you could recommend for people if they want to find out more and follow up any of what they've heard during this chat?

Cazi Brook:

Let's see. Well, I would recommend actually that you try and find yourself a copy of the Poetic Edda, so that's Edda that was out before Snorri's version, and then you can define the differences for yourself. I would actually recommend going and checking out a website rather than a book itself, called Heathens Against Hate. They have an incredible source of information that has been tried and tested, and peer reviewed, not to contain racist thoughts and it's influence. And they do a lot of education things as well. So definitely check out them. If you are interested in the Aesir, I would say Asatru UK are probably the best in the UK for that. I would say be very careful of anything or any author that calls themselves Folky or calls themselves Odinists, because they are very heavily tainted in not such a good path. But other than that, the world yours and there's so many books. I could maybe send you some links, but I can't think of any one.

Damh the Bard:

How about, who's the guy who wrote Good Omens with Terry Pratchett and he did-

Cazi Brook:

Neil Gaiman.

Damh the Bard:

How so how would you recommend Neil Gaiman's book? How was that?

Cazi Brook:

Neil Gaiman. And in another example of Snorri, he has wonderful artistic license, but actually he is an incredible storyteller. And if you are really just trying to get the first grips of what the huge story might be, he's a good first place to go. Take him with a pinch of salt obviously. He's wonderful. I have a lot of love for him. But yes, I'd probably recommend Asatru for beginners by Mathias Nordvig. I think he's a PhD. He's very good at that. I think it's called, A Modern Heathens Guide to Ancient Northern Way. And that's a really good read into it. And also A Practical Heathen's Guide to Asatru. I think, Travels Through Middle Earth as well. If you are looking for the Saxon side, Travels Through Middle Earth, The Path of a Saxon Pagan by Alaric Albertsson. Very, very good.

Damh the Bard:

Brilliant. Asatru, has it got a meaning? Asatru?

Cazi Brook:

Asatru. Essentially, it comes from following the Vanir. Following the Aesir, sorry.

Damh the Bard:

The Aesir.

Cazi Brook:

I would be classes like the Vanatru. There's also Forn Sed, which is following the Anglosaxon path as well.

Damh the Bard:

Brilliant. Well, thank you Cazi for spending this time with me. It's been fantastic. I'm so interested in what you do. I want to get you back on the show, because we haven't talked about Yggdrasil, we haven't talked about Wyrd, we haven't talked about a bunch of stuff.

Cazi Brook:

I know.

Damh the Bard:

So let's just save that for another time, if that's all right. But thank you for spending the time with me.

Cazi Brook:

No worries. Thank you very much.