CHAPTER ONE

“ADULRUNA REDIVIVA” – JOHANNES BUREUS’ ROSY CROSS

Records show that along the wind-torn shores of the Baltic—from Lübeck and Danzig in the south to Pernau and Reval in the east, and from Dorpat and Riga in the north-east to Stockholm in the north-west—a particular understanding had flourished. Sightings of celestial portents in 1583 had sped up the dissemination of medical, alchemical, magical, and political tracts in the trade networks among Baltic merchants. The Gregorian calendar reform of this year created a wave of Protestant resistance, as activists claimed that the new dating was a strategy by Rome to confound believers; never more, they cried out, will we know when Easter comes.

What had begun in the first half of the sixteenth century with the presentation of a mysterious Paracelsian theme had reached a bifurcating fork: the chemical and medical sciences were impelled along a familiar line of opposition to scholastic learning; a more obscure and prophetic science began to spread on the basis of a geographic and mythical claim.

The geographic claim evolved into the view that the Scandinavians were a genuinely autochthonous people, who, isolated and self-evolving on their wanderings, had carried with them the gist of an archaic knowledge that was now revealed to have arisen out of the primeval Hyperborean culture in the north to which land Apollo had ridden on his Swans to spend the winters. Adressing himself to the Rosicrucians, Johannes Bureus proclaimed in his *FaMa e sCanzJa reDUX* (s.l., 1616) that the north was distinct in culture and knowledge, that much of this Hyperborean tradition was preserved in the Gothic-Scandinavian Runes, and that a northern wisdom existed that could ensure salvation to those who sought it.

Some of this lore about a special wisdom had been energized by ideas given in satirical form in the visionary tract *Fama Fraternitatis*
R.C., believed to have been written in Tübingen by Johan Valentin Andreae while he was in contact with members of the group around Tobias Hess and Christoph Besold some years before it turned up in print in 1614 at Kassel. Nine editions appeared between 1614 and 1617; four at Kassel, two at Frankfurt, and then those of Danzig and Marburg, as well as translations from the original German into Latin and Dutch at Frankfurt. A new statement, *Confessio Fraternitatis Roseae Crucis. Ad eruditos Europae* appeared in Latin at Kassel in 1615. The authors of the two tracts called for others to come forward in support of the brotherhood. Replies were now being written by various hands and the stream of publications pledged to the Rosicrucian brothers in 1614 to 1620 amount to more than two hundred texts.

Johannes Bureus, the northern antiquarian, worked at this time as a royal archivalist in Sweden and had access to books otherwise difficult to obtain. Bureus found inspiration in the French antiquarian Guillaume Postel’s cosmographic ideas on a revival of Celtic Europe with an accompanying revolution of arts and sciences, to which he added ideas on the northern spread of the Hyperborean peoples. Postel’s expansionist Gallic imperial scheme was veiled in rhetoric on the redemptive role for mankind that would be played by the sons of Japheth, particularly Gomer and his youngest brother Askenaz. Bureus took interest in Postel’s claims concerning the double sources of prophecy: that the Old Testament prophets are completed by the Sibylline oracles, and the prophetic role of Alruna, the northern Sybil, who like the Celtic druids had been revered for her great visionary powers. Alruna was born in 432 B.C. and Bureus believed she knew the great Thracian Sibyls, Latona, Amalthea, and Acheia.¹

By harkening back to the Sybils, Bureus sought to give new significance to the alleged medieval proofs that the inhabitants around the Baltic were descendents of migrating tribes from before the fall of the Tower of Babel, tribes that undivided and uncorrupted had remained in direct cultural debt to the son and grandson of Noah: Japheth and Askenaz, from which was derived the name *Skanzea*.