

= Gerðr =

In Norse mythology , Gerðr (Old Norse " fenced @-@ in ") is a jötunn , goddess , and the wife of the god Freyr . Gerðr is attested in the Poetic Edda , compiled in the 13th century from earlier traditional sources ; the Prose Edda and Heimskringla , written in the 13th century by Snorri Sturluson ; and in the poetry of skalds . Gerðr is sometimes modernly anglicized as Gerd or Gerth .

In both the Poetic Edda and the Prose Edda , Freyr sees Gerðr from a distance , becomes deeply lovesick at the sight of her shimmering beauty , and has his servant Skírnir go to Jötunheimr (where Gerðr and her father Gymir reside) to gain her love . In the Poetic Edda Gerðr initially refuses , yet after a series of threats by Skírnir she finally agrees . In the Prose Edda , no mention of threats are made . In both sources , Gerðr agrees to meet Freyr at a fixed time at the location of Barri and , after Skírnir returns with Gerðr 's response , Freyr laments that the meeting could not occur sooner . In both the Poetic Edda and the Prose Edda , Gerðr is described as the daughter of Gymir and the mountain jötunn Aurboða .

In Heimskringla , Gerðr is recorded as the wife of Freyr , euhemerized as having been a beloved king of Sweden . In the same source , the couple are the founders of the Yngling dynasty and produced a son , Fjölnir , who rose to kingship after Freyr 's passing and continued their line . Gerðr is commonly theorized to be a goddess associated with the earth . Gerðr inspired works of art and literature .

= = Attestations = =

Gerðr is attested in two poems in the Poetic Edda , in two books of the Prose Edda , and in two books in Heimskringla .

= = = Poetic Edda = = =

In the Poetic Edda poem Skírnismál , the god Freyr sat on the high seat Hlidskjalf and looked into all worlds . Freyr saw a beautiful girl walking from the hall of her father to a storehouse . Freyr became heartsick for the girl . Freyr has a page named Skírnir . Freyr 's father Njörðr and , in verse , the goddess Skaði tells Skírnir to find out what troubles Freyr . An exchange occurs between Freyr and Skírnir in verse , where Freyr tells Skírnir that he has seen a wondrous girl with shining arms at the home of (her father) Gymir , yet that the gods and elves do not wish for the two to be together :

Skírnir requests that Freyr give him a horse and Freyr 's sword ; a sword which fights jötnar by itself . Under the cover of darkness , Skírnir rides the horse over nations and dew @-@ covered mountains until he reaches Jötunheimr , the home of the jötnar , and proceeds to Gymir 's courts . Ferocious dogs are tied before the wooden fence that surrounds Gerðr 's hall . Skírnir rides out to a herdsman (unnamed) sitting on a mound , greets him , and asks the herdsman how he may speak to the maiden beyond Gymir 's dogs . An exchange occurs between the herdsman and Skírnir , during which the herdsman tells Skírnir that he will never speak to the girl .

Hearing a terrible noise in her dwellings , Gerðr asks where it is coming from , noting that the earth trembles and that all of Gymir 's courts shake . A serving maid (unnamed) notes that outside a man has dismounted his horse and has let it graze . Gerðr tells the serving maid to invite the man to come into their hall and to partake of some of their " famous mead , " yet Gerðr expresses fear that the man outside may be her " brother 's slayer " .

Gerðr asks the stranger if he is of the elves , Æsir , or the Vanir , and why he comes alone " over the wild fire " to seek their company . Skírnir responds that he is of none of these groups , yet that he has indeed sought her out . Skírnir offers Gerðr 11 golden apples (or apples of eternal life , in a common emendation) to gain her favor . Gerðr rejects the apples ? no matter who offers them ? and adds that neither will she and Freyr be together as long as they live . Skírnir offers Gerðr a ring , here unnamed , that produces eight more gold rings every ninth night and " was burned with Odin 's young son " . Gerðr responds that she is not interested in the ring , for she shares her father 's property , and Gymir has no lack of gold .

= = = Threats = = =

Skírnir turns to threats ; he points out to Gerðr that he holds a sword in his hand and he threatens to cut her head from her neck unless she agrees . Gerðr refuses ; she says that she will not endure the coercion of any man , and says that if Gymir encounters Skírnir then a battle can be expected . Skírnir again reminds Gerðr of his blade and predicts that Gerðr 's jötunn father will meet his doom with it . Skírnir warns Gerðr that he will strike her with his Gambanteinn , a wand , that it will tame her to his desires , and says that she will never again be seen by " the sons of men " . From early morning , Gerðr will sit on an eagle 's mound , looking outward to the world , facing Hel , and that " food shall be more hateful to you than to every man is the shining serpent among men " .

Skírnir declares that when Gerðr comes out she will be a spectacle ; Hrímgrímnir will " glare " at her , " everything " will stare at her , she will become more famous than the watchman of the gods , and that she will " gape through the bars " . Gerðr will experience " madness and howling , tearing affliction and unbearable desire " and that , in grief , tears will flow from her . Skírnir tells Gerðr to sit down , for her fate will be even worse yet . She will be harassed by fiends all her weary days . From the court of jötnar to the halls of the hrímthurs , Gerðr shall everyday crawl without choice , nor hope of choice . Gerðr will weep rather than feel joy , suffering tearfully . She will live the rest of her life in misery with a three @-@ headed thurs or otherwise be without a man altogether . Skírnir commands for Gerðr 's mind to be seized , that she may waste away with pining , and that she be as the thistle at the end of the harvest ; crushed .

Skírnir says that he has been to a wood to get a " potent branch " , which he found . He declares that the gods Odin and Thor are angry with Gerðr , and that Freyr will hate her ; she has " brought down the potent wrath of the gods " . Skírnir declares to the hrímthursar , thursar , the sons of Suttungr , and the " troops of the Æsir " that he has denied both pleasure and benefit from men to Gerðr . Skírnir details that the thurs 's name who will own her below the gates of Nágrind is Hrímgrímnir and that there , at the roots of the world , the finest thing Gerðr will be given to drink is the urine of goats . He carves " thurs " (the runic character * thurisaz) on Gerðr and three runes (unnamed) symbolizing lewdness , frenzy , and unbearable desire , and comments that he can rub them off just as he has carved them ? if he wishes .

Gerðr responds with a welcome to Skírnir and tells him to take a crystal cup containing ancient mead , noting that she thought she would never love one of the Vanir . Skírnir asks her when she will meet with Freyr . Gerðr says that they shall meet at a tranquil location called Barri , and that after nine nights she will there grant Freyr her love :

Skírnir rides home . Standing outside , Freyr immediately greets Skírnir and asks for news . Skírnir tells him that Gerðr says she will meet with him at Barri . Freyr , impatient , comments that one night is long , as is two nights , and questions how he will bear three , noting that frequently a month seemed shorter than half a night before being with Gerðr .

A stanza in the poem Lokasenna refers to Gerðr . In the poem , Loki accuses the god Freyr of having purchased Gymir 's daughter (Gerðr) with gold and comments that , in the process , Freyr gave away his sword . Referring to Freyr as a " wretch " , Loki then posits how Freyr intends to fight when the Sons of Muspell ride over the wood Myrkviðr (an event during Ragnarök) . Freyr 's servant , Byggvir , interjects and the poem continues .

In the poem Hyndluljóð , Óttar 's ancestry is recounted and information is provided about the gods . One stanza that actually belongs to Völuspá hin skamma relates that Freyr and Gerðr were married , that Gerðr is the daughter of the jötunn Gymir , that Gerðr 's mother is Aurboða , and that they are related to Þjazi (the nature of the kinship is not specified) ? father of the goddess and jötunn Skaði .

= = = Prose Edda = = =

In chapter 37 of the Prose Edda book Gylfaginning , Gerðr is introduced by the enthroned figure of High as the daughter of Gymir and the mountain jötunn Aurboða , and is described as " the most

beautiful of all women " . High reports that Freyr went into Hlidskjalf and looked over all worlds . When Freyr looked to the north he saw a distant homestead with a large and magnificent building . A woman went to the building , and when she lifted her arms and opened the door to the building " light was shed from her arms over both sky and sea , and all worlds were made bright by her " . In punishment for " his great presumption " in having sat in the holy seat , Freyr went away filled with grief .

Freyr arrives home and neither sleeps nor drinks , remaining in silence . No one dares speak to him . The god Njörðr sends Freyr 's servant Skírnir to speak to Freyr . Freyr tells Skírnir that he saw a beautiful woman , so beautiful that he was filled with grief and that he would soon die if he could not have her . Freyr tells Skírnir that he must go gain her hand on his behalf ? whether the woman 's father agrees or not ? and he will be rewarded . Skírnir replies that he accepts the mission but only in exchange for Freyr 's sword , which can fight on its own . Freyr gives him the sword and Skírnir sets off . Skírnir asks for the woman 's hand for Freyr and receives her promise . Nine nights later she is to meet with Freyr at a location called Bæy . Skírnir delivers the news to Freyr and Freyr responds with the final stanza from the Poetic Edda poem Skírnismál , lamenting that he must wait .

At the beginning of the Prose Edda book Skáldskaparmál , eight goddesses are listed as attending a feast held by Ægir on the island of Hlesy (modernly Læsø , Denmark) , including Gerðr . In chapter 19 , different ways of referring to the goddess Frigg are provided . One of these names is " rival of Gerðr " ; however , this is probably a scribal error (see " Theories " section below) . In chapter 57 , various goddesses are listed , including Gerðr (between Snotra and Gefjon) .

= = = Heimskringla = = =

In chapter 12 of Ynglinga saga (as collected in Heimskringla) , an euhemerized prose account relates that Freyr was a much loved king in what is now Sweden . Freyr 's wife was Gerðr and their son was Fjölfnir . Gerðr 's fate is not provided , but after Freyr 's death their son goes on to become king and their family line , the Ynglings , continues . In a verse stanza found in chapter 16 of Haralds saga Gráfeldar , Gerðr is mentioned in a kenning for " woman " (" Gerðr @-@ of @-@ gold @-@ rings ") .

= = Archaeological record = =

Small pieces of gold foil featuring engravings dating from the Migration Period into the early Viking Age (known as gullgubber) have been discovered in various locations in Scandinavia , almost 2 @, @ 500 at one location . The foil pieces have been found largely at sites of buildings , only rarely in graves . The figures are sometimes single , occasionally an animal , sometimes a man and a woman with a leafy bough between them , facing or embracing one another . The human figures are almost always clothed and are sometimes depicted with their knees bent . Scholar Hilda Ellis Davidson says that it has been suggested that the figures are partaking in a dance , and that they may have been connected with weddings , as well as linked to the Vanir group of gods , representing the notion of a divine marriage , such as in the Poetic Edda poem Skírnismál ; the coming together of Gerðr and Freyr .

= = Theories = =

= = = " Rival of Frigg " = = =

In chapter 19 of the Prose Edda book Skáldskaparmál , Gerðr is listed among " rivals " of the goddess Frigg , a list of sexual partners of Frigg 's husband , Odin . Instead of Gerðr , the jötunn Gríðr , mother of Odin 's son Víðarr according to the Prose Edda , was probably intended . One manuscript has Gríðr corrected to Gerðr . Andy Orchard notes that it may nonetheless be an intentional inclusion in view of " Odin 's notorious appetites " .

= = = Earth and fertility = = =

Scholar John Lindow comments that Gerðr 's name has been etymologically associated with the earth and enclosures and that the wedding of Gerðr and Freyr is commonly seen as " the divine coupling of sky and earth or at least fertility god and representative of the soil . " Lindow adds that , at the same time , the situation can be read as simply the gods getting what they want from the jötnar .

Hilda Ellis Davidson comments that Gerðr 's role in Skírnismál has parallels with the goddess Persephone from Greek mythology , " since it is made clear that if [Gerðr] remains below in the dark kingdom of the underworld there will be nothing to hope for but sterility and famine . She does not become the bride of the underworld , however ; her bridal is to be in the upper world when she consents to meet Freyr at Barri . "

= = Modern influence = =

Gerðr has inspired works of art and literature . The Danish poet Adam Gottlob Oehlenschläger wrote a series of poems referencing Gerðr as collected in (1819) Nordens Guder . Esaias Tegnér 's (1782 ? 1846) unfinished epic poem Gerda also references the goddess . K. Ehrenberg depicted the goddess in his illustration (1883) Freyr und Gerda , Skade und Niurd .