

= Valkyrie =

In Norse mythology , a valkyrie (from Old Norse valkyrja " chooser of the slain ") is one of a host of female figures who choose those who may die in battle and those who may live . Selecting half of those who die in battle , the valkyries bring their chosen to the afterlife hall of the slain , Valhalla , ruled over by the god Odin (the other half go to the goddess Freyja 's afterlife field Fólkvangr) . There , the deceased warriors become einherjar (Old Norse " single (or once) fighters ") . When the einherjar are not preparing for the events of Ragnarök , the valkyries bear them mead . Valkyries also appear as lovers of heroes and other mortals , where they are sometimes described as the daughters of royalty , sometimes accompanied by ravens and sometimes connected to swans or horses .

Valkyries are attested in the Poetic Edda , a book of poems compiled in the 13th century from earlier traditional sources ; the Prose Edda and Heimskringla (by Snorri Sturluson) , and Njáls saga , a Saga of Icelanders , all written in the 13th century . They appear throughout the poetry of skalds , in a 14th @-@ century charm , and in various runic inscriptions .

The Old English cognate terms wælcyrge and wælcyrre appear in several Old English manuscripts , and scholars have explored whether the terms appear in Old English by way of Norse influence , or reflect a tradition also native among the Anglo @-@ Saxon pagans . Scholarly theories have been proposed about the relation between the valkyries , the norns , and the dísir , all of which are supernatural figures associated with fate . Archaeological excavations throughout Scandinavia have uncovered amulets theorized as depicting valkyries . In modern culture , valkyries have been the subject of works of art , musical works , video games and poetry .

= = Etymology = =

The word valkyrie derives from Old Norse valkyrja (plural valkyrjur) , which is composed of two words ; the noun valr (referring to the slain on the battlefield) and the verb kjósa (meaning " to choose ") . Together , they mean " chooser of the slain " . The Old Norse valkyrja is cognate to Old English wælcyrge . Other terms for valkyries include óskmey (Old Norse " wish maid ") , appearing in the poem Oddrúnargrátr and Óðins meyjar (Old Norse " Odin 's maids ") , appearing in the Nafnapulur . Óskmey may be related to the Odinic name Óski (Old Norse , roughly meaning " wish fulfiller ") , referring to the fact that Odin receives slain warriors in Valhalla .

= = Old Norse attestations = =

= = = Poetic Edda = = =

Valkyries are mentioned or appear in the Poetic Edda poems Völuspá , Grímnismál , Völundarkviða , Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar , Helgakviða Hundingsbana I , Helgakviða Hundingsbana II and Sigrdrífumál .

= = = Völuspá and Grímnismál = = =

In stanza 30 of the poem Völuspá , a völva (a travelling seeress in Germanic society) tells Odin that " she saw " valkyries coming from far away who are ready to ride to " the realm of the gods " . The völva follows this with a list of six valkyries : Skuld (Old Norse , possibly " debt " or " future ") who " bore a shield " , Skögun (" shaker ") , Gunnr (" war ") , Hildr (" battle ") , Göndul (" wand @-@ wielder ") and Geirskögun (" Spear @-@ Skögun ") . Afterwards , the völva tells him she has listed the " ladies of the War Lord , ready to ride , valkyries , over the earth " .

In the poem Grímnismál , Odin (disguised as Grímnir) , tortured , starved and thirsty , tells the young Agnar that he wishes that the valkyries Hrist (" shaker ") and Mist (" cloud ") would " bear him a [drinking] horn " , then provides a list of 11 more valkyries who he says " bear ale to the

einherjar " ; Skeggjöld (" axe @-@ age ") , Skögun , Hildr , Þrúðr (" power ") , Hlökk (" noise " , or " battle ") , Herfjötur (" host @-@ fetter ") , Göll (" tumult ") , Geirahöð (" spear @-@ fight ") , Randgríð (" shield @-@ truce ") , Ráðgríð (" council @-@ truce ") and Reginleif (" power @-@ truce ") .

== == Völundarkviða == ==

A prose introduction in the poem Völundarkviða relates that the brothers Slagfiðr , Egil and Völund dwelt in a house sited in a location called Úlfdalir (" wolf dales ") . There , early one morning , the brothers find three women spinning linen on the shore of the lake Úlfsjár (" wolf lake ") , and " near them were their swan 's garments ; they were valkyries " . Two , daughters of King Hlödver , are named Hlaðguðr svanhvít (" swan @-@ white ") and Hervör alvitr (possibly meaning " all @-@ wise " or " strange creature ") ; the third , daughter of Kjarr of Valland , is named Ölrún (possibly meaning " beer rune ") . The brothers take the three women back to their hall with them ? Egil takes Ölrún , Slagfiðr takes Hlaðguðr svanhvít and Völund takes Hervör alvitr . They live together for seven winters , until the women fly off to go to a battle and do not return . Egil goes off in snow @-@ shoes to look for Ölrún , Slagfiðr goes searching for Hlaðguðr svanhvít and Völund sits in Úlfdalir .

== == Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar == ==

In the poem Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar , a prose narrative says that an unnamed and silent young man , the son of the Norwegian King Hjörvarðr and Sigrínn of Sváfaland , witnesses nine valkyries riding by while sitting atop a burial mound . He finds one particularly striking ; this valkyrie is detailed later in a prose narrative as Sváva , king Eylimi 's daughter , who " often protected him in battles " . The valkyrie speaks to the unnamed man , and gives him the name Helgi (meaning " the holy one ") . The previously silent Helgi speaks ; he refers to the valkyrie as " bright @-@ face lady " , and asks her what gift he will receive with the name she has bestowed upon him , but he will not accept it if he cannot have her as well . The valkyrie tells him she knows of a hoard of swords in Sigarsholm , and that one of them is of particular importance , which she describes in detail . Further into the poem , Atli flytes with the female jötunn Hrímgæðr . While flyting with Atli , Hrímgæðr says that she had seen 27 valkyries around Helgi , yet one particularly fair valkyrie led the band :

Three times nine girls , but one girl rode ahead ,
white @-@ skinned under her helmet ;
the horses were trembling , from their manes
dew fell into the deep valleys ,
hail in the high woods ;
good fortune comes to men from there ;
all that I saw was hateful to me .

After Hrímgæðr is turned to stone by the daylight , a prose narrative continues that Helgi , who is now king , goes to Sváva 's father ? King Eylimi ? and asks for his daughter . Helgi and Sváva are betrothed and love one another dearly . Sváva stays at home with King Eylimi , and Helgi goes raiding , and to this the narrative adds that Sváva " was a valkyrie just as before " . The poem continues , and , among various other events , Helgi dies from a wound received in battle . A narrative at the end of the poem says that Helgi and his valkyrie wife Sváva " are said to be reincarnated " .

== == Helgakviða Hundingsbana I == ==

In the poem Helgakviða Hundingsbana I , the hero Helgi Hundingsbane sits in the corpse @-@ strewn battlefield of Logafjöll . A light shines from the fell , and from that light strike bolts of lightning . Flying through the sky , helmeted valkyries appear . Their waist @-@ length mail armour is drenched in blood ; their spears shine brightly :

Then light shone from Logafell ,

and from that radiance there came bolts of lightning ;
wearing helmets at Himingvani [came the valkyries] .
Their byrnies were drenched in blood ;
and rays shone from their spears .

In the stanza that follows , Helgi asks the valkyries (who he refers to as " southern goddesses ") if they would like to come home with the warriors when night falls (all the while arrows were flying) . The battle over , the valkyrie Sigrún (" victory @-@ rune ") , informs him from her horse that her father Högni has betrothed her to Höðbroddr , the son of king Granmar of the Hniflung clan , who Sigrún deems unworthy . Helgi assembles an immense host to ride to wage battle at Frekastein against the Hniflung clan to assist Sigrún in her plight to avoid her betrothment . Later in the poem , the hero Sinfjötli flyts with Guðmundr . Sinfjötli accuses Guðmundr of having once been female , and gibes that Guðmundr was " a witch , horrible , unnatural , among Odin 's valkyries " , adding that all of the einherjar " had to fight , headstrong woman , on your account " . Further in the poem , the phrase " the valkyrie 's airy sea " is used for " mist " .

Towards the end of the poem , valkyries again descend from the sky , this time to protect Helgi amid the battle at Frekastein . After the battle , all the valkyries fly away but Sigrún and wolves (referred to as " the troll @-@ woman 's mount ") consume corpses :

Helmeted valkyries came down from the sky

? the noise of spears grew loud ? they protected the prince ;

then said Sigrun ? the wound @-@ giving valkyries flew ,

the troll @-@ woman 's mount was feasting on the fodder of ravens :

The battle won , Sigrún tells Helgi that he will become a great ruler and pledges herself to him .

= = = = Helgakviða Hundingsbana II = = = =

At the beginning of the poem Helgakviða Hundingsbana II , a prose narrative says that King Sigmund (son of Völsung) and his wife Borghild (of Brálund) have a son named Helgi , who they named for Helgi Hjörvarðsson (the antagonist of the earlier Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar) . After Helgi has killed King Hunding in stanza 4 , a prose narrative says that Helgi escapes , consumes the raw meat of cattle he has slaughtered on a beach , and encounters Sigrún . Sigrún , daughter of King Högni , is " a valkyrie and rode through air and sea " , and she is the valkyrie Sváva reincarnated . In stanza 7 , Sigrún uses the phrase " fed the gosling of Gunn 's sisters " . Gunnr and her sisters are valkyries , and these goslings are ravens , who feed on the corpses left on the battlefield by warriors .

After stanza 18 , a prose narrative relates that Helgi and his immense fleet of ships are heading to Frekastein , but encounter a great storm . Lightning strikes one of the ships . The fleet sees nine valkyries flying through the air , among whom they recognise Sigrún . The storm abates , and the fleets arrive safely at land . Helgi dies in battle , yet returns to visit Sigrún from Valhalla once in a burial mound , and at the end of the poem , a prose epilogue explains that Sigrún later dies of grief . The epilogue details that " there was a belief in the pagan religion , which we now reckon [is] an old wives ' tale , that people could be reincarnated " and that " Helgi and Sigrun were thought to have been reborn " as another Helgi and valkyrie couple ; Helgi as Helgi Haddingjaskaði and Sigrún as the daughter of Halfdan ; the valkyrie Kára . The epilogue details that further information about the two can be found in the (now lost) work Káruljóð .

= = = = Sigdrífumál = = = =

In the prose introduction to the poem Sigdrífumál , the hero Sigurd rides up to Hindarfell and heads south towards " the land of the Franks " . On the mountain Sigurd sees a great light , " as if fire were burning , which blazed up to the sky " . Sigurd approaches it , and there he sees a skjaldborg with a banner flying overhead . Sigurd enters the skjaldborg , and sees a warrior lying there ? asleep and fully armed . Sigurd removes the helmet of the warrior , and sees the face of a woman . The woman 's corslet is so tight that it seems to have grown into the woman 's body . Sigurd uses his sword

Gram to cut the corslet , starting from the neck of the corslet downwards , he continues cutting down her sleeves , and takes the corslet off of her .

The woman wakes , sits up , looks at Sigurd , and the two converse in two stanzas of verse . In the second stanza , the woman explains that Odin placed a sleeping spell on her she could not break , and due to that spell she has been asleep a long time . Sigurd asks for her name , and the woman gives Sigurd a horn of mead to help him retain her words in his memory . The woman recites a heathen prayer in two stanzas . A prose narrative explains that the woman is named Sigdrífa and that she is a valkyrie .

A narrative relates that Sigdrífa explains to Sigurd that there were two kings fighting one another . Odin had promised one of these ? Hjalmgunnar ? victory in battle , yet she had " brought down " Hjalmgunnar in battle . Odin pricked her with a sleeping @-@ thorn in consequence , told her she would never again " fight victoriously in battle " , and condemned her to marriage . In response , Sigdrífa told Odin she had sworn a great oath that she would never wed a man who knew fear . Sigurd asks Sigdrífa to share with him her wisdom of all worlds . The poem continues in verse , where Sigdrífa provides Sigurd with knowledge in inscribing runes , mystic wisdom , and prophecy .

= = = Prose Edda = = =

In the Prose Edda , written in the 13th century by Snorri Sturluson , valkyries are first mentioned in chapter 36 of the book Gylfaginning , where the enthroned figure of High informs Gangleri (King Gylfi in disguise) of the activities of the valkyries and mentions a few goddesses . High says " there are still others whose duty it is to serve in Valhalla . They bring drink and see to the table and the ale cups . " Following this , High gives a stanza from the poem Grímnismál that contains a list of valkyries . High says " these women are called valkyries , and they are sent by Odin to every battle , where they choose which men are to die and they determine who has victory " . High adds that Gunnr (" war ") , Róta , and Skuld ? the last of the three he refers to as " the youngest norn " ? " always ride to choose the slain and decide the outcome of battle " . In chapter 49 , High describes that when Odin and his wife Frigg arrived at the funeral of their slain son Baldr , with them came the valkyries and also Odin 's ravens .

References to valkyries appear throughout the book Skáldskaparmál , which provides information about skaldic poetry . In chapter 2 , a quote is given from the work Húsdrápa by the 10th century skald Úlfr Uggason . In the poem , Úlfr describes mythological scenes depicted in a newly built hall , including valkyries and ravens accompanying Odin at Baldr 's funeral feast :

There I perceive valkyries and ravens ,
accompanying the wise victory @-@ tree [Odin]
to the drink of the holy offering [Baldr 's funeral feast]
Within have appeared these motifs .

Further in chapter 2 , a quote from the anonymous 10th century poem Eiríksmál is provided (see the Fagrskinna section below for more detail about the poem and another translation) :

What sort of dream is that , Odin ?
I dreamed I rose up before dawn
to clear up Val @-@ hall for slain people .
I aroused the Einheriar ,
bade them get up to strew the benches ,
clean the beer @-@ cups ,
the valkyries to serve wine
for the arrival of a prince .

In chapter 31 , poetic terms for referring to a woman are given , including " [a] woman is also referred to in terms of all Asyniur or valkyries or norns or dísir " . In chapter 41 , while the hero Sigurd is riding his horse Grani , he encounters a building on a mountain . Within this building Sigurd finds a sleeping woman wearing a helmet and a coat of mail . Sigurd cuts the mail from her , and she awakes . She tells him her name is Hildir , and " she is known as Brynhildr , and was a valkyrie "

In chapter 48 , poetic terms for " battle " include " weather of weapons or shields , or of Odin or valkyrie or war @-@ kings or their clash or noise " , followed by examples of compositions by various skalds that have used the name of valkyries in said manner (Þorbjörn Hornklofi uses " Skögul 's din " for " battlefield " , Bersi Skáldtorfuson uses " Gunnr 's fire " for " sword " and " Hlökk 's snow " for " battle " , Einarr Skúlason uses " Hildr 's sail " for " shield " and " Göndul 's crushing wind " for " battle " and Einarr skálaglamm uses " Göndul 's din ") . Chapter 49 gives similar information when referring to weapons and armor (though the term " death @-@ maidens " ? Old Norse valmeyjar ? instead of " valkyries " is used here) , with further examples . In chapter 57 , within a list of names of ásynjur (and after alternate names for the goddess Freyja are provided) , a further section contains a list of " Odin 's maids " ; valkyries : Hildr , Göndul , Hlökk , Mist , Skögul . And then an additional four names ; Hrund , Eir , Hrist and Skuld . The section adds that " they are called norns who shape necessity " .

Some manuscripts of the feature Nafnapulur section of Skáldskaparmál contain an extended list of 29 valkyrie names (listed as the " valkyries of Viðrir " ? a name of Odin) . The first stanza lists : Hrist , Mist , Herja , Hlökk , Geiravör , Göll , Hjörprimul , Guðr , Herfjötra , Skuld , Geirönl , Skögul and Randgníð . The second stanza lists : Ráðgríðr , Göndul , Svipul , Geirskögul , Hildr , Skeggöld , Hrund , Geirdriful , Randgríðr , Þrúðr , Reginleif , Sveið , Þögn , Hjalpmrimul , Þrma and Skalmöld .

== = Hrafnsmál == =

The fragmentary skaldic poem Hrafnsmál (generally accepted as authored by 9th century Norwegian skald Þorbjörn Hornklofi) features a conversation between a valkyrie and a raven , largely consisting of the life and deeds of Harald I of Norway . The poem begins with a request for silence among noblemen so that the skald may tell the deeds of Harald Fairhair . The narrator states that they once overheard a " high @-@ minded " , " golden @-@ haired " and " white @-@ armed " maiden speaking with a " glossy @-@ beaked raven " . The valkyrie considers herself wise , understands the speech of birds , is further described as having a white @-@ throat and sparkling eyes , and she takes no pleasure in men :

Wise thought her the valkyrie ; were welcome never
men to the bright @-@ eyed one , her who the birds ' speech knew well .
Greeted the light @-@ lashed maiden , the lily @-@ throated woman ,
The hymir 's @-@ skull @-@ cleaver as on cliff he was perching .

The valkyrie , previously described as fair and beautiful , then speaks to the gore @-@ drowned and corpse @-@ reeking raven :

" How is it , ye ravens ? whence are ye come now
with beaks all gory , at break of morning ?
Carrion @-@ reek ye carry , and your claws are bloody .
Were ye near , at night @-@ time , where ye knew of corpses ? "

The black raven shakes himself , and he responds that he and the rest of the ravens have followed Harald since hatching from their eggs . The raven expresses surprise that the valkyrie seems unfamiliar with the deeds of Harald , and tells her about his deeds for several stanzas . At stanza 15 , a question and answer format begins where the valkyrie asks the raven a question regarding Harald , and the raven responds in turn . This continues until the poem ends abruptly .

== = Njáls saga == =

In chapter 157 of Njáls saga , a man named Dörruð witnesses 12 people riding together to a stone hut on Good Friday in Caithness . The 12 go into the hut and Dörruð can no longer see them . Dörruð goes to the hut , and looks through a chink in the wall . He sees that there are women within , and that they have set up a particular loom ; the heads of men are the weights , the entrails of men are the warp and weft , a sword is the shuttle , and the reels are composed of arrows . The women sing a song called Darraðarljóð , which Dörruð memorizes .

The song consists of 11 stanzas , and within it the valkyries weave and choose who is to be slain at the Battle of Clontarf (fought outside Dublin in 1014 CE) . Of the 12 valkyries weaving , six have their names given in the song : Hildr , Hjörprímur , Sanngríör , Svipul , Guör and Göndul . Stanza 9 of the song reads :

Now awful it is to be without ,
as blood @-@ red rack races overhead ;
is the welkin gory with warriors ' blood
as we valkyries war @-@ songs chanted .

At the end of the poem , the valkyries sing " start we swiftly with steeds unsaddled ? hence to battle with brandished swords ! " The prose narrative picks up again , and says that the valkyries tear their loom down and into pieces . Each valkyrie holds on to what she has in her hands . Dörruð leaves the chink in the wall and heads home , and the women mount their horses and ride away ; six to the south and six to the north .

= = = Heimskringla = = =

At the end of the Heimskringla saga Hákonar saga góða , the poem Hákonarmál by the 10th century skald Eyvindr skáldaspillir is presented . The saga relates that king Haakon I of Norway died in battle , and although he is Christian , he requests that since he has died " among heathens , then give me such burial place as seems most fitting to you " . The saga relates that shortly after Haakon died on the same slab of rock that he was born upon , he was greatly mourned by friend and foe alike , and that his friends moved his body northward to Sæheim in North Hordaland . Haakon was buried there in a large burial mound in full armour and his finest clothing , yet with no other valuables . Further , " words were spoken over his grave according to the custom of heathen men , and they put him on the way to Valhalla " . The poem Hákonarmál is then provided .

In Hákonarmál , Odin sends forth the two valkyries Göndul and Skögun to " choose among the kings ' kinsmen " and who in battle should dwell with Odin in Valhalla . A battle rages with great slaughter , and part of the description employs the kenning " Skögun 's @-@ stormblast " for " battle " . Haakon and his men die in battle , and they see the valkyrie Göndul leaning on a spear shaft . Göndul comments that " groweth now the gods ' following , since Hákon has been with host so goodly bidden home with holy godheads " . Haakon hears " what the valkyries said " , and the valkyries are described as sitting " high @-@ hearted on horseback " , wearing helmets , carrying shields and that the horses wisely bore them . A brief exchange follows between Haakon and the valkyrie Skögun :

Hákon said :

" Why didst Geirskogul grudge us victory ?
though worthy we were for the gods to grant it ? "

Skögun said :

" ' Tis owing to us that the issue was won
and your foemen fled . "

Skögun says that they shall now ride forth to the " green homes of the godheads " to tell Odin the king will come to Valhalla . The poem continues , and Haakon becomes a part of the einherjar in Valhalla , awaiting to do battle with the monstrous wolf Fenrir .

= = = Fagrskinna = = =

In chapter 8 of Fagrskinna , a prose narrative states that , after the death of her husband Eric Bloodaxe , Gunnhild Mother of Kings had a poem composed about him . The composition is by an anonymous author from the 10th century and is referred to as Eiríksmál . It describes Eric Bloodaxe and five other kings arriving in Valhalla after their death . The poem begins with comments by Odin (as Old Norse Óðinn) :

'What kind of a dream is it , ' said Óðinn ,
in which just before daybreak ,
I thought I cleared Valh?ll ,

for coming of slain men ?
I waked the Einherjar ,
bade valkyries rise up ,
to strew the bench ,
and scour the beakers ,
wine to carry ,
as for a king 's coming ,
here to me I expect
heroes ' coming from the world ,
certain great ones ,
so glad is my heart .

The god Bragi asks where a thundering sound is coming from , and says that the benches of Valhalla are creaking ? as if the god Baldr had returned to Valhalla ? and that it sounds like the movement of a thousand . Odin responds that Bragi knows well that the sounds are for Eric Bloodaxe , who will soon arrive in Valhalla . Odin tells the heroes Sigmund and Sinfjötli to rise to greet Eric and invite him into the hall , if it is indeed he .

= = = Ragnhild Tregagás charm = = =

A witchcraft trial held in 1324 in Bergen , Norway , records a spell used by the accused Ragnhild Tregagás to end the marriage of her former lover , a man named Bárd . The charm contains a mention of the valkyrie Göndul being " sent out " :

I send out from me the spirits of (the valkyrie) Gondul .
May the first bite you in the back .
May the second bite you in the breast .
May the third turn hate and envy upon you .

= = Old English attestations = =

The Old English *wælcyrge* and *wælcyrrie* appear several times in Old English manuscripts , generally to translate foreign concepts into Old English . In the sermon *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* , written by Wulfstan II , *wælcyrrie* is used , and considered to appear as word for a human " sorceress " . An early 11th @-@ century manuscript of Aldhelm 's *De laudis virginitatis* (Oxford , Bodleian library , Digby 146) glosses *ueneris* with *wælcyrge* (with *gydene* meaning " goddess ") . *Wælcyrge* is used to translate the names of the classical furies in two manuscripts (Cotton Cleopatra A. iii , and the older Corpus Glossary) . In the manuscript Cotton Cleopatra A. iii , *wælcyrge* is also used to gloss the Roman goddess Bellona . A description of a raven flying over the Egyptian army appears as *wonn wælceaseg* (meaning " dark one choosing the slain ") . Scholarly theories debate whether these attestations point to an indigenous belief among the Anglo @-@ Saxons shared with the Norse , or if they were a result of later Norse influence (see section below) .

= = Archaeological record = =

= = = Female figures and cup and horn @-@ bearers = = =

Viking Age stylized silver amulets depicting women with long gowns , their hair pulled back , sometimes bearing forth drinking horns have been discovered throughout Scandinavia . These figures are commonly considered to represent valkyries or *disir* . According to Mindy MacLeod and Bernard Mees , the amulets appear in Viking Age graves , and were presumably placed there because " they were thought to have protective powers " .

The Tjängvide image stone from the island of Gotland , Sweden features a rider on an eight @-@ legged horse , which may be Odin 's eight @-@ legged horse Sleipnir , being greeted by a female ,

which may be a valkyrie at Valhalla . The 11th century runestone U 1163 features a carving of a female bearing a horn that has been interpreted as the valkyrie Sigrdrífa handing the hero Sigurd (also depicted on the stone) a drinking horn .

In 2013 , a small figure dated at around 800 AD was discovered in Hårby , Denmark by three amateur archaeologists . The figurine portrays a woman with long hair in a ponytail carrying a sword and a shield . Commenting on the figure , archaeologist Mogens Bo Henriksen said that " there can hardly be any doubt that the figure depicts one of Odin 's valkyries as we know them from the sagas as well as from Swedish picture stones from the time around AD700 " .

= = = Runic inscriptions = = =

Specific valkyries are mentioned on two runestones ; the early 9th century Rök Runestone in Östergötland , Sweden , and the 10th @-@ century Karlevi Runestone on the island of Öland , Sweden , which mentions the valkyrie Þrúðr . On the Rök Runestone , a kenning is employed that involves a valkyrie riding a wolf as her steed :

That we tell the twelfth , where the horse of the Valkyrie [literally " the horse of Gunn "] sees food on the battlefield , where twenty kings are lying .

Among the Bryggen inscriptions found in Bergen , Norway , is the " valkyrie stick " from the late 14th century . The stick features a runic inscription intended as a charm . The inscription says that " I cut cure @-@ runes " , and also " help @-@ runes " , once against elves , twice against trolls , thrice against thurs and then a mention of a valkyrie occurs :

Against the harmful skag @-@ valkyrie ,
so that she never shall , though she never would -
evil woman ! - injure (?) your life .

This is followed by " I send you , I look at you , wolfish perversion , and unbearable desire , may distress descend on you and jöluns wrath . Never shall you sit , never shall you sleep ... (that you) love me as yourself . " According to Mindy MacLeod and Bernard Mees , the inscription " seems to begin as a benevolent formulation before abruptly switching to the infliction of distress and misery , presumably upon the recipient of the charm rather than the baleful valkyrie " , and they posit the final line appears " to constitute a rather spiteful kind of charm aimed at securing the love of a woman " .

MacLeod and Mees state that the opening lines of the charm correspond to the Poetic Edda poem Sigrdrífumál , where the valkyrie Sigrdrífa provides runic advice , and that the meaning of the term skag is unclear , but a cognate exists in Helgakviða Hundingsbana I where Sinfjötli accuses Guðmundr of having once been a " skass @-@ valkyrie " . MacLeod and Mees believe the word means something like " supernatural sending " , and that this points to a connection to the Ragnhild Tregagás charm , where a valkyrie is also " sent forth " .

= = Valkyrie names = =

The Old Norse poems Völuspá , Grímnismál , Darraðarljóð and the Nafnapulur section of the Prose Edda book Skáldskaparmál , provide lists of valkyrie names . In addition , some valkyrie names appear solely outside of these lists , such as Sigrún (who is attested in the poems Helgakviða Hundingsbana I and Helgakviða Hundingsbana II) . Many valkyrie names emphasize associations with battle and , in many cases , on the spear ? a weapon heavily associated with the god Odin . Some scholars propose that the names of the valkyries themselves contain no individuality , but are rather descriptive of the traits and nature of war @-@ goddesses , and are possibly the descriptive creations of skalds .

Some valkyrie names may be descriptive of the roles and abilities of the valkyries . The valkyrie name Herja has been theorised as pointing to a connection to the name of the goddess Hariasa , who is attested from a stone from 187 CE . The name Herfjötur has been theorised as pointing to the ability of the valkyries to place fetters . The name Svipul may be descriptive of the influence the valkyries have over wyrd or ørlog ? a Germanic concept of fate .

= = Theories = =

= = = Old English wælcyrge and Old English charms = = =

Richard North says that the description of a raven flying over the Egyptian army (glossed as *wonn wælceaseg*) may have been directly influenced by the Old Norse concept of Valhalla , the usage of *wælcyrge* in *De laudibus virginittatis* may represent a loan or loan @-@ translation of Old Norse *valkyrja* , but the Cotton Cleopatra A. iii and the Corpus Glossary instances " appear to show an Anglo @-@ Saxon conception of *wælcyrge* that was independent of contemporary Scandinavian influence " .

Two Old English charms mention figures that are theorised as representing an Anglo @-@ Saxon notion of *valkyries* or *valkyrie* @-@ like female beings ; *Wið færstice* , a charm to cure a sudden pain or stitch , and *For a Swarm of Bees* , a charm to keep honey bees from swarming . In *Wið færstice* , a sudden pain is attributed to a small , " shrieking " spear thrown with supernatural strength (Old English *mægen*) by " fierce " loudly flying " mighty women " (Old English *mihtigan wif*) who have ridden over a burial mound :

They were loud , yes , loud ,
when they rode over the (burial) mound ;
they were fierce when they rode across the land .

Shield yourself now , you can survive this strife .

Out , little spear , if there is one here within .

It stood under / behind lime @-@ wood (i.e. a shield) , under a light @-@ coloured / light @-@ weight shield ,

where those mighty women marshalled their powers , and they send shrieking spears .

Theories have been proposed that these figures are connected to *valkyries* . Richard North says that " though it is not clear what the poet takes these women to be , their female sex , riding in flight and throwing spears suggest that they were imagined in England as a female being analogous to the later Norse *valkyrjur* . " Hilda Ellis Davidson theorizes that *Wið færstice* was originally a battle spell that had , over time , been reduced to evoke " a prosaic stitch in the side " . Towards the end of *For a Swarm of Bees* , the swarming bees are referred to as " victory @-@ women " (Old English *sigewif*) :

Settle down , victory @-@ women ,
never be wild and fly to the woods .
Be as mindful of my welfare ,
as is each man of eating and of home .

The term " victory women " has been theorised as pointing to an association with *valkyries* . This theory is not universally accepted , and the reference has also been theorised as a simple metaphor for the " victorious sword " (the stinging) of the bees .

= = = Merseburg Incantation , fetters , *dísir* , *idisi* and *norns* = = =

One of the two Old High German Merseburg Incantations call upon female beings ? *Idisi* ? to bind and hamper an army . The incantation reads :

Once the *Idisi* sat , sat here and there ,
some bound fetters , some hampered the army ,
some untied fetters :

Escape from the fetters , flee from the enemies .

The *Idisi* mentioned in the incantation are generally considered to be *valkyries* . Rudolf Simek says that " these *Idisi* are obviously a kind of *valkyrie* , as these also have the power to hamper enemies in Norse mythology " and points to a connection with the *valkyrie* name *Herfjötur* (Old Norse " army @-@ fether ") . Hilda R. Davidson compares the incantation to the Old English *Wið færstice* charm and theorises a similar role for them both .

Simek says that the West Germanic term *Idisi* (Old Saxon *idis* , Old High German *itis* , Old English *ides*) refers to a " dignified , well respected woman (married or unmarried) , possibly a term for any woman , and therefore glosses exactly Latin *matrona* " and that a link to the North Germanic term *dísir* is reasonable to assume , yet not undisputed . In addition , the place name *Idisiaviso* (meaning " plain of the *Idisi* ") where forces commanded by Arminius fought those commanded by Germanicus at the Battle of the Weser River in 16 AD . Simek points to a connection between the name *Idisiaviso* , the role of the *Idisi* in one of the two Merseburg Incantations and valkyries .

Regarding the *dísir* , Simek states that Old Norse *dís* appears commonly as simply a term for " woman " , just as Old High German *itis* , Old Saxon *idis* and Old English *ides* , and may have also been used to denote a type of goddess . According to Simek , " several of the Eddic sources might lead us to conclude that the *dísir* were valkyrie @-@ like guardians of the dead , and indeed in *Guðrúnarkviða* I 19 the valkyries are even called *Herjans dísir* " Odin 's *dísir* " . The *dísir* are explicitly called dead women in *Atlamál* 28 and a secondary belief that the *dísir* were the souls of dead women (see *fylgjur*) also underlies the *landdísir* of Icelandic folklore . Simek says that " as the function of the matrons was also extremely varied ? fertility goddess , personal guardians , but also warrior @-@ goddesses ? the belief in the *dísir* , like the belief in the valkyries , *norns* and *matrons* , may be considered to be different manifestations of a belief in a number of female (half- ?) goddesses . "

Jacob Grimm states that , though the *norns* and valkyries are similar in nature , there is a fundamental difference between the two . Grimm states that a *dís* can be both *norn* and a valkyrie , " but their functions are separate and usually the persons . The *norns* have to pronounce the *fatum* [fate] , they sit on their chairs , or they roam through the country among mortals , fastening their threads . Nowhere is it said that they ride . The valkyrs ride to war , decide the issues of fighting , and conduct the fallen to heaven ; their riding is like that of heroes and gods [...] . "

= = = Origins and development = = =

Various theories have been proposed about the origins and development of the valkyries from Germanic paganism to later Norse mythology . Rudolf Simek suggests valkyries were probably originally viewed as " demons of the dead to whom warriors slain on the battlefield belonged " , and that a shift in interpretation of the valkyries may have occurred " when the concept of *Valhalla* changed from a battlefield to a warrior 's paradise " . Simek says that this original concept was " superseded by the shield girls ? Irish female warriors who lived on like the *einherjar* in *Valhall* . " Simek says that the valkyries were closely associated with Odin , and that this connection existed in an earlier role as " demons of death " . Simek states that due to the shift of concept , the valkyries became popular figures in heroic poetry , and during this transition were stripped of their " demonic characteristics and became more human , and therefore become capable of falling in love with mortals [...] . " Simek says that the majority of the names of the valkyries point to a warlike function , that most of valkyrie names do not appear to be very old , and that the names " mostly come from poetic creativity rather than from real folk @-@ belief . "

MacLeod and Mees theorise that " the role of the corpse @-@ choosing valkyries became increasingly confused in later Norse mythology with that of the *Norns* , the supernatural females responsible for determining human destiny [...] . "

Hilda Ellis Davidson says that , regarding valkyries , " evidently an elaborate literary picture has been built up by generations of poets and storytellers , in which several conceptions can be discerned . We recognise something akin to *Norns* , spirits who decide destinies of men ; to the seeresses , who could protect men in battle with their spells ; to the powerful female guardian spirits attached to certain families , bringing luck to youth under their protection ; even to certain women who armed themselves and fought like men , for whom there is some historical evidence from the regions round the Black Sea " . She adds that there may also be a memory in this of a " priestess of the god of war , women who officiated at the sacrificial rites when captives were put to death after battle . "

Davidson places emphasis on the fact that valkyrie literally means " chooser of the slain " . She

compares Wulfstan 's mention of a " chooser of the slain " in his *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* sermon , which appears among " a blacklist of sinners , witches and evildoers " , to " all the other classes whom he [Wulfstan] mentions " , and concludes as those " are human ones , it seems unlikely that he has introduced mythological figures as well . " Davidson points out that Arab traveller Ibn Fadlan 's detailed account of a 10th @-@ century Rus ship funeral on the Volga River features an " old Hunnish woman , massive and grim to look upon " (who Fadlan refers to as the " Angel of Death ") who organises the killing of the slave girl , and has two other women with her that Fadlan refers to as her daughters . Davidson says that " it would hardly be surprising if strange legends grew up about such women , who must have been kept apart from their kind due to their gruesome duties . Since it was often decided by lot which prisoners should be killed , the idea that the god " chose " his victims , through the instrument of the priestesses , must have been a familiar one , apart from the obvious assumption that some were chosen to fall in war . " Davidson says that it appears that from " early times " the Germanic peoples " believed in fierce female spirits doing the command of the war god , stirring up disorder , taking part in battle , seizing and perhaps devouring the slain . "

= = = Freyja and Fólkvangr = = =

The goddess Freyja and her afterlife field Fólkvangr , where she receives half of the slain , has been theorized as connected to the valkyries . Britt @-@ Mari Näsström points out the description in *Gylfaginning* where it is said of Freyja " whenever she rides into battle she takes half of the slain " , and interprets Fólkvangr as " the field of the Warriors " . Näsström notes that , just like Odin , Freyja receives slain heroes who have died on the battlefield , and that her house is Sessrumnir (which she translates as " filled with many seats ") , a dwelling that Näsström posits likely fills the same function as Valhalla . Näsström comments that " still , we must ask why there are two heroic paradises in the Old Norse view of afterlife . It might possibly be a consequence of different forms of initiation of warriors , where one part seemed to have belonged to Óðinn and the other to Freyja . These examples indicate that Freyja was a war @-@ goddess , and she even appears as a valkyrie , literally ' the one who chooses the slain ' . "

Siegfried Andres Dobat comments that " in her mythological role as the chooser of half the fallen warriors for her death realm Fólkvangr , the goddess Freyja , however , emerges as the mythological role model for the Valkyrior [sic] and the dísir . "

= = Modern influence = =

Valkyries have been the subjects of various poems , works of art and musical works . In poetry , valkyries appear in " *Die Walküren* " by H. Heine (appearing in *Romanzero* , 1847) , " *Die Walküren* " (1864) by H. v. Linge , " *Sköldmon* " (appearing in *Gömda Land* , 1904) .

Works of art depicting valkyries include " *Die Walküren* " (sketch , 1818) by J. G. Sandberg , " *Reitende Walküre* " (fresco) , previously located in Munich palace but now destroyed , 1865 @-@ 66 by M. Echter , " *Valkyrien* " and " *Valkyriens død* " (paintings , both from 1860) , " *Walkürenritt* " (etching , 1871) by A. Welti , " *Walkürenritt* " (woodcut , 1871) by T. Pixis , " *Walkürenritt* " (1872) by A. Becker (reproduced in 1873 with the same title by A. v. Heyde) , " *Die Walkyren* " (charcoal , 1880) and " *Walkyren wählen und wecken die gefallenen Helden (Einherier) , um sie vom Schlachtfeld nach Walhall zu geleiten* " (painting , 1882) and " *Walkyrenschlacht* " (oil painting , 1884) by K. Ehrenberg , " *Walkürenritt* " (oil painting , 1888 , and etching , 1890) by A. Welti , " *Walküre* " (statue) by H. Günther , " *Walkürenritt* " (oil painting) by H. Hendrich , " *Walkürenritt* " (painting) by F. Leeke , " *Einherier* " (painting , from around 1900) , by K. Dielitz , " *The Ride of the Valkyries* " (painting , from around 1900) by J. C. Dollman , " *Valkyrie* " (statue , 1910) and " *Walhalla @-@ freeze* " (located in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek , Copenhagen , 1886 ? 87) , " *Walkyrien* " (print , 1915) by A. Kolb , and " *Valkyrier* " (drawing , 1925) by E. Hansen .

= = = In popular culture = = =

Valkyries have also been depicted in popular culture , including in comic books and video games . Square Enix and Tri @-@ Ace created the popularly and critically acclaimed Valkyrie Profile series of video games , centered around a trio of Valkyries - Lenneth (VP1 / Lenneth) , Silmeria (VP2) and Hrist - including exploring their origins as they fight in the divine war leading to Ragnarok . Meanwhile , comic makers Stan Lee and Jack Kirby created the Valkyrior , who serve a similar function to the Valkyries as well as having a similar name , in Marvel Comics as part of the Marvel adaptation of Norse mythology that includes Thor beginning with Thor # 133 in October 1966 .

= = = Illustrations = = =