

= Eir =

In Norse mythology , Eir (Old Norse " help , mercy ") is a goddess and / or valkyrie associated with medical skill . Eir is attested in the Poetic Edda , compiled in the 13th century from earlier traditional sources ; the Prose Edda , written in the 13th century by Snorri Sturluson ; and in skaldic poetry , including a runic inscription from Bergen , Norway from around 1300 . Scholars have theorized about whether these three sources refer to the same figure , and debate whether Eir may have been originally a healing goddess and / or a valkyrie . In addition , Eir has been theorized as a form of the goddess Frigg and has been compared to the Greek goddess Hygieia .

= = Attestations = =

= = = Poetic Edda = = =

In the Poetic Edda poem Fjölsvinismál , the watchman Fjölsviðr presents a list of the maidens that attend the lady of the keep ? Menglöð ? that includes Eir , and states that they all sit on the hill Lyfjaberg (Old Norse " hill of healing " or " healing mountain ") . The exchange between the hero Svipdagr and Fjölsviðr mentioning Eir is as follows :

After the exchange , Svipdagr asks if these figures will give aid if blóts are made to them . Fjölsviðr responds that Svipdagr is correct :

= = = Prose Edda = = =

In chapter 35 of the Prose Edda book Gylfaginning , the enthroned figure of High provides brief descriptions of 16 ásynjur . High lists Eir third , and says no more about her other than noting that " she is an extremely good physician . " In chapter 75 of the Prose Edda book Skáldskaparmál Eir appears within a list of valkyrie names , but Eir is not included in the list of ásynjur in the same chapter .

= = = Skaldic poetry and runic inscription = = =

In skaldic poetry , the name Eir is frequent in kennings for women . A sample construction is Eir aura (" Eir of riches ") , occurring in Gísla saga . The name is already used in this way by the 10th century poets Kormákr Ögmundarson and Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld . Similarly , the name Eir is used in a woman kenning in a runic inscription inscribed on a stick from Bergen , Norway around the year 1300 . The stick records a common mercantile transaction followed by a verse from a displeased scribe (edits applied per the translator 's notes) :

'Wise Var of wire [" woman of filigree , " meaning " wise bejeweled woman "] makes (me) sit unhappy .

Eir [woman] of mackerels ' ground [likely gold] takes often and much sleep from me.'

Mindy Macleod and Bernard Mees posit that the first line of the inscription essentially means " women make me miserable " or potentially " marriage makes me miserable , " whereas the second line means " women often take a lot of sleep from me . "

The name remained frequently used in woman kennings in rímur poetry .

= = Theories = =

Regarding the seemingly three different , seemingly conflicting , mentions of Eir , Andy Orchard says that the etymology of the name Eir may appear to fit the role of Eir as a goddess and servant of Menglöð best , but that one should consider that the valkyries also have the ability to waken the dead . John Lindow is skeptical of there having been a belief in Eir as a goddess , stating that " whether we should trust Snorri and imagine the existence of a goddess Eir is problematic " . Rudolf

Simek says that Eir may originally have been simply a valkyrie rather than a goddess , and lists the servant of Menglööð by the same name as a separate figure .

Hilda Ellis Davidson comments that " virtually nothing " is known about Eir outside of her association with healing , and points out that she is " singled out as one of the Norns who shape the lives of children " . Davidson adds that " no satisfactory conclusions " have been drawn from her name , and considers all mentions of Eir as of the same figure . Davidson says that , in reference to Eir 's appearance among Menglööð 's maidens , that the names of these maidens " suggest that they are guardian spirits , and [they are] said to ' shelter and save ' those who make offerings of them . They could be akin to protective spirits of the house , guarding both men and women . " She additionally draws a link between these spirits and Lyfjaberg :

Lyfjaberg is where the goddess sits surrounded by her helpful spirits . Although healing by a goddess ? or indeed by a god either ? has left little mark on Norse myths as they have come down to us , there is no doubt that the healing power of goddesses was of enormous importance in daily life in the pre @-@ Christian period , as was that of many women saints in Christian times . The goddess who presided over childbirth was held to possess power over life and death , and was revered as a lifegiver , both in the family home and in the courts of kings , though she might also pass sentence of death .

Henry Adams Bellows proposes a relationship between Eir and the place name Lyfjaberg , which he translates as " hill of healing " . Bellows notes that manuscripts vary about the spelling of the place name , and that he , like others , has followed 19th @-@ century scholar Sophus Bugge 's choice . Bellows states that the stanza mentioning Lyfjaberg " implies that Mengloth is a goddess of healing , and hence , perhaps an hypostasis of Frigg , as already intimated by her name [...] . In stanza 54 , Eir appears as one of Mengloth 's handmaidens , and Eir , according to Snorri (Gylfaginning , 35) is herself the Norse Hygeia . Compare this stanza to stanza 32 . "

= = In popular culture = =

Eir is portrayed by Alice Krige in the 2013 Marvel Studios film Thor : The Dark World . She is re @-@ imagined as an Asgardian physician .