

Baduhenna

Baduhenna is an obscure Frisian goddess associated with war. The Roman historian Tacitus mentions a wood dedicated to Baduhenna, in which 900 Roman soldiers were slaughtered by Frisians.

The name Baduhenna probably means 'battle goddess'. The first element seems to be related to Germanic **badwa-*, battle. The ending *-henae* is found on names for groups of matrons inscribed on votive altars (such as the Berguiahenae).

Baduhenna Lore

from *The Annals, Book IV (23-28 C.E.)*

by the Roman historian Tacitus

translated by Alfred John Church and William Jackson
Brodribb

That same year the Frisii, a nation beyond the Rhine, cast off peace, more because of our rapacity than from their impatience of subjection. Drusus had imposed on them a moderate tribute, suitable to their limited resources, the furnishing of ox hides for military purposes. No one ever severely scrutinized the size or thickness till Olennius, a first-rank centurion, appointed to govern the Frisii, selected hides of wild bulls as the standard according to which they were to be supplied. This would have been hard for any nation, and it was the less tolerable to the Germans, whose forests abound in huge beasts, while their home cattle are undersized. First it was their herds, next their lands, last, the persons of their wives and children, which they gave up to bondage. Then came angry remonstrances, and when they received no relief, they sought a remedy in war. The soldiers appointed to collect the tribute were seized and gibbeted. Olennius anticipated their fury by flight, and found refuge in a fortress, named

Flevum, where a by no means contemptible force of Romans and allies kept guard over the shores of the ocean.

As soon as this was known to Lucius Apronius, propraetor of Lower Germany, he summoned from the Upper province the legionary veterans, as well as some picked auxiliary infantry and cavalry. Instantly conveying both armies down the Rhine, he threw them on the Frisii, raising at once the siege of the fortress and dispersing the rebels in defence of their own possessions. Next, he began constructing solid roads and bridges over the neighbouring estuaries for the passage of his heavy troops, and meanwhile having found a ford, he ordered the cavalry of the Canninefates, with all the German infantry which served with us, to take the enemy in the rear. Already in battle array, they were beating back our auxiliary horse as well as that of the legions sent to support them, when three light cohorts, then two more, and after a while the entire cavalry were sent to the attack. They were strong enough, had they charged altogether, but coming up, as they did, at intervals, they did not give fresh courage to the repulsed troops and were themselves carried away in the panic of the fugitives. Apronius entrusted the rest of the auxiliaries to Cethegus Labeo, the commander of the fifth legion, but he too, finding his men's position critical and being in extreme peril, sent messages imploring the whole strength of the legions. The soldiers of the fifth sprang forward, drove back the enemy in a fierce encounter, and saved our cohorts and cavalry, who were exhausted by their wounds. But the Roman general did not attempt vengeance or even bury the dead, although many tribunes, prefects, and first-rank centurions had fallen. Soon afterwards it was ascertained from deserters that nine hundred Romans had been cut to pieces in a wood called Baduhenna's, after prolonging the fight to the next day, and that another body of four hundred, which had taken possession of the house of one Cruptorix, once a soldier in our pay, fearing betrayal, had perished by mutual slaughter.

Beda

Beda is a goddess associated with the þing (Germanic legislative assembly). She is one of two *Alaisiagae* (most likely 'venerated ones'), who are named in three inscriptions near Hadrian's wall in Cumbria.

The name *Beda* is of Frisian origin and related to the Anglo-Saxon verb *biddan*, 'to ask' or 'to command'. Frisians called a convened Thing a *Bodþing*.

Votive Altars to the Alaisiagae

A votive altar set up by Frisian legions at Housesteads on Hadrian's Wall, Cumbria c.150 CE is dedicated to *Deo Marti Thingso et dualbus Alaesiagis Bede et Fimmileve*. Two other altars found nearby also name the Alaesiagae.

Comments:

The *Mars Thingus* referred to on two of the three extant *Alaisiagae* inscriptions is most likely a reference to the Germanic god **Tiwaz**, known to the Norse as **Tyr**. In the Roman *interpretatio germanica*, the name of the god *Tiwaz* is consistently translated as *Mars*. The þing (thing) is an indigenous Germanic legal institution, which had no direct Roman equivalent.

Tiwaz/Tyr is often viewed as a god of justice, and as such might well have been invoked at the legal gatherings known as *þings*. Thus, *Mars Thingus* seems to be the Cumbrian Germanic/Latin way of saying "Tiwaz, god of the legislative assembly". Since both of the *Alaisiagae* have names which can be connected to þings and legal proceedings, it's not surprising that we find them in Tiwaz's company.

Beyla

Beyla is an obscure goddess whose role is uncertain.

Beyla's name may be related to Old Norse *baula*, 'cow', in which case she may have been associated with the dairy; or it may stem from Proto-Germanic **bíuilo*, 'little bee', in which case she may have been associated with mead making.

Beyla Lore from *The Poetic Edda* translated by Carolyne Larrington

Lokasenna

Ægir, who is also called Gymir, had brewed ale for the Æsir, when he got the great cauldron which has just been told about. To the feast there came Odin and Frigg, his wife. Thor did not come because he was away in the east. Sif was there, Thor's wife, Bragi, and Idunn, his wife. Tyr was there; he was one-handed, for Fenrir the wold tore his hand off when he was bound. There was Njord and his wife, Skadi, Freyr and Freyja, Vidar, son of Odin; Loki was there and the servants of Freyr, Byggvir and Beyla. Many of the Æsir and elves were there. Ægir had two servants, Fimafeng and Eldir.

(After Loki insults Sif)

Beyla said:

'All the mountains shake; I think Thor must be
on his way home;
he'll bring peace to those who quarrel here,
all the gods and men.'

Loki said:

'Be silent, Beyla, you're Byggvir's wife
and much imbued with malice;
a worse female was never among the Æsir's children,
you shitty serving-wench.'

Bil

Bil is a goddess whose image can be seen in the moon

The name Bil may be related to the Old Norse word *bil* meaning 'a moment'.

Bil Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*
translated by Anthony Faulkes

Gylfaginning

Moon guides the course of the moon and controls its waxing and waning. He took two children from the earth called Bil and Hiuki as they were leaving a well called Byrgir, carrying between them on their shoulders a tub called Sæg; their carrying pole was called Simul. Their father's name is Vidfinn. These children go with the moon and can be seen from earth.

In answer to 'Who are the Asyniur?'

Sol and Bil are reckoned among the Asyniur, but their characteristics have been mentioned above.

Snorri also includes Bil in another list of Asyniur

Burorina

Burorina is the name of a goddess found on a votive stone at Domberg in the Netherlands. She is assumed to be a local goddess. Nothing specific is known about her.

Votive Altar to Burorina

in the Zeeuws Museum, Middleburg

The text appears to read:

DEAE
BURORI
NA DUS(?)
VOTUM F
ECIT LIBE
NS PRO SE(?)
ET SUIS

To the goddess Burorina, Dus(?) [donor's name]
freely made his vow for himself and his...

Eir

Eir is best known for her healing ability.

The name Eir means "help" or "mercy" in Old Norse

Eir Lore from *The Prose Edda* translated by Anthony Faulks

Gylfaginning

In answer to "who are the Asyniur?"

"Third is Eir. She is an extremely good physician."

Eir Lore from *The Poetic Edda* translated by Lee M. Hollander

Svipdagsmal

Svipdag said:

"Tell me, Fjolsvith, for I fain would know;
answer thou I ask:
what the mountain is hight which the maiden doth
dwell on, aloft and alone?"

Fjolsvith said:

"Tis Lyfja mount hight, and long has it been
for the sick and the halt a help:
for hale grows wholly, though hopeless she seems,
the woman who wins its hight."

Svipdag said:

"Tell me, Fjolsvith, for I fain would know;
answer thou I ask:
what the maids are hight before Mengloth's knees
that sit in sisterly wise?"

Fjolsvith said:

"Hlif one is hight, Hlifthrasa another,
a third, Thjothvara;
eke Bjort and Bleik, Blith and Frith,
Eir and Aurbortha.

Eostre/Ostara

Eostre (Anglo-Saxon) or Ostara (Old High German) is the goddess after whom the springtime festival of Easter is named. The month of April was also named in her honour AS *Eosturmonað*, OHG *Ostarmanoth*.

In *Teutonic Mythology*, Grimm tells us that the Anglo-Saxon name *Eostre* is related to Old High German adverb *ostar* expressing movement toward the rising sun. "Ostara, Eostre seems therefore to have been a divinity of the radiant dawn, of upspringing light, a spectacle that brings joy and blessing, whose meaning could be easily adapted to the resurrection-day of the Christian's God."

Eostre Lore

From Bede's *The Reckoning of Time*
translated by Faith Wallis

Chapter 15: The English Months

In olden times the English people --for it did not seem fitting to me that I should speak of other nations' observance of the year and yet be silent about my own nation's-- calculated their months according to the course of the Moon. Hence, after the manner of the Greeks and the Romans, [the months] take their name from the Moon, for the moon is called *mona* and each month *monath*.

The first month, which the Latins call January, is Giuli; February is called Solmonath; March Hrethmonath; April, Eosturmonath[...]

Eosturmonath has a name which is now translated "Paschal month", and which was once called after a goddess of theirs named Eostre, in whose honour feasts were celebrated in that month. Now they designate that Paschal season by her name, calling the joys of the new rite by the time-honoured name of the old observance.

Fimmilena

Fimmilena is a goddess associated with the þing (Germanic legislative assembly). She is one of two *Alaisiagae* (most likely "venerated ones"), who are named in three inscriptions near Hadrian's wall in Cumbria.

The name *Fimmilena* seems to be related to the Frisian legal term *Fimelþing*. The exact meaning of this term is uncertain, but it has been interpreted as "moveable assembly".

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Freyja

Freyja is best known as a beautiful and seductive sex goddess. As such, she is the most popular goddess of the Germanic pantheon today. Freyja is credited with knowledge of seiðr, a form of magick often associated with female sexuality. Like many high-class women, she has a taste for gold and jewels. She is also strongly associated with war and battle-- Oðin takes half of the slain to Valhalla, whilst Freyja takes the other half to her hall. The ancient lore presents Freyja as an independent and assertive goddess confident in using her feminine charms to help achieve her goals.

The Old Norse *Freyja* derives from a title meaning 'Lady', cognate with the modern German word *Frau*.

Freyja Lore

From *The Tale of Hogni and Hedinn*

translated by Eirír Magnússon and William Morris

Chapter I

Of Freyia and the Dwarfs

East of Vanaquisl in Asia was the land called Asialand or Asiahome, but the folk that dwelt there was called Æsir, and their chief town was Asgard. Odin was the name of the king thereof, and therein was a right holy place of sacrifice. Niord and Frey Odin made Temple-priests thereover: but the daughter of Niord was Freyia, and she was fellow to Odin and his concubine.

Now there were certain men in Asia, whereof one was called Alfrigg, the second Dwalin, the third Berling, the fourth Grrer: these had their abode but a little space from the King's hall, and were men so wise in craftsmanship, that they laid skillful hand on all matters; and such-like men as they were did men call dwarfs. In a rock was their dwelling, and in that day they mingled more with menfolk than as now they do.

Odin loved Freyia full sore, and withal she was the fairest of women of that day: she had a bower that was both fair and strong; insomuch, say men, that if the

door were shut to, none might come into the bower aforesaid without the will of Freyia.

Now on a day went Freyia afoot by that rock of the dwarfs, and it lay open: therein were the dwarfs a-smithying a golden collar, and the work was at a point to be done: fair seemed that collar to Freyia and fair seemed Freyia to the the dwarfs.

Now would Freyia buy the collar of them, and bade them in return for it silver and gold, and other good things. They said they lacked not money, yet that each of them would sell his share of the collar for this thing, and for nought else-- that she should lie a night by each of them: wherefore, whether she liked it better or worse, on such wise did she strike the bargain with them; and so the four night being outworn, and all conditions fulfilled, they delivered the collar to Freyia: and she went home to her bower, and held her peace hereof, as if nought had befallen.

Chapter II

Of the Stealing of Freyja's Collar, and how she may have it again

There was a man called Farbauti, which carl had a wife called Laufey; she was both slim and slender, therefore was she called Needle. One child had these, a son called Loki; nought great of growth was he, but betimes shameless of tongue and nimble in gait; over all men had he that craft which is called cunning; guileful was he from his youth up, therefore was he called Loki the Sly.

He betook himself to Odin at Asgard and became his man. Ever had Odin a good word for him, whatsoever he turned to; yet withal he oft laid heavy labours upon him, which forsooth he turned out of hand better than any man looked for: moreover, he knew wellnigh all things that befell, and told all he knew to Odin.

So tells the tale that Loki knew how that Freyia had gotten the collar, yea, and what she had given for it; so he told Odin thereof, and when Odin heard of it he bade Loki get the collar and bring it to him. Loki said it was not a likely business, because no man might come into Freyja's bower without the will of her; but Odin bade him go his ways and not come back before he had gotten the collar. Then Loki turned away howling, and most of the men were glad thereof whenas Loki throve nought.

But Loki went to Freyia's bower, and it was locked; he strove to come in and might not; and cold it was without, so that he fast began to grow a-cold.

So he turned himself into a fly, and fluttered about all the locks and the joints, and found no hole therein whereby he might come in, till up by the gable-top he found a hole, yet no bigger than one might thrust a needle through; none the less he wriggled in thereby. So when he was come in he peered all about to see if any waked, but soon he got to see that all were asleep in the bower. Then he goeth unto Freyia's bed, and sees that she hath the collar on her with the clasp turned downward. Thereon Loki changed himself into a flea, and sat on Freyia's cheek, and stung her so that she woke and turned about, and then she fell asleep again. Then Loki drew from off him his flea's shape, and undid the collar, and opened the bower, and gat him gone to Odin therewith.

Next morn awoke Freyia and saw that the doors were open, yet unbroken, and that the goodly collar was gone. She deemed she knew what guile had wrought it, so she goeth into the hall when she is clad, and cometh before Odin the king, and speaketh to him of the evil he has let be wrought against her in the stealing of that dear thing, and biddeth him give her back her jewel.

Odin says that in such wise hath she gotten it, that never again shall she have it. "Unless forsooth thou bring this to pass, that two kings, each served of twenty kings, fall to strife, and fight under such weird and spell, that they no sooner fall adown than they stand up again and fight on: always unless some christened man be so bold of heart, and the fate and fortune of his lord be so great, that he shall dare go into that battle, and smite with weapons these men: and so first shall their toil come to an end, to whatsoever lord it shall befall to loose them from the pine and trouble of their fell deeds."

Hereto said Freyia yea, and gat her collar again.

Freyja Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*
translated by Lee M. Hollander

Ynglings Saga chapter 4

Óthin appointed Njorth and Frey to be priests for the sacrificial offerings, and they were *díar* [gods] among the Æsir. Freya was the daughter of Njorth. She

was the priestess at the sacrifices. It was she who first taught the Æsir magic such as was practiced among the Vanir. While Njorth lived with the Vanir he had his sister as wife, because that was the custom among them. Their children were Frey and Freya. But among the Æsir it was forbidden to marry so near a kin.

Ynglings Saga chapter 10

Freya kept up the sacrifices for she was the only one among the godheads who survived. Therefore she became most famous, so that all women of rank came to be called by her name. They are now called *frúvur* [ladies]. Thus everyone who is mistress over her own property is called *freya*, and *húsfreya* ["lady of the house"] one who owns an estate.

Freyja Lore

From The Poetic *Edda*
translated by Carolyne Larrington

Grimnismal

Folkvang is the ninth, and there Freyia arranges
the choice of seats in the hall;
half the slain she chooses every day,
and half Odin owns.

Lokasenna

Freyja said

'Mad you are, Loki, when you reckon up your ugly, hateful deeds;
Frigg knows, I think, all fate,
though she does not speak out.'

Loki said

'Be silent Freyia, I know all about you;
you aren't lacking in blame;
of the Æsir and the elves who are in here,
each one has been your lover.'

Freyja said

'False is your tongue, I think you just want

to yelp about wicked things;
the Æsir are furious with you, and the Asynior,
you'll go home discomfited.'

Loki said

'Be silent, Freyia, you're a witch
and much imbued with malace,
you were astride your brother, all the laughing gods surprised you,
and then, Freyia, you farted.'

Thrymskvida

[Thor awakes to find that his hammer is missing. He and Loki set out to retrieve it.]

They went to the beautiful court of Freyia
and these were the first words that he spoke:
'Will you lend me, Freyia, your feather cloak,
to see if I can find my hammer?'

Freyia said

'I'd give it you even if it were made of gold,
I'd lend it to you even if it were made of silver.'

[Loki flies off to visit the giant Thrym and returns to report to the gods]

'It was an effort and I've had some success;
Thrym has your hammer, the lord of the ogres;
no man will ever take it back from him again,
unless he's brought Freyia as his wife.'

Then they went to see the beautiful Freyia,
and these were the first words which he spoke;
'Dress yourself, Freyia, in a bride's head-dress!
We two shall drive to the land of the giants.'

Freyia then was angry and snorted in rage,
all the halls of the Æsir trembled at that,
the great necklace of the Brisings fell from her;
'You'll know me to be the most sex-crazed of women,
if I drive with you to the land of the giants.'

[Thor and Loki dress up in drag and return to Thrym]

Then said Thrym, lord of ogres:

'Be upstanding, giants, and spread straw on the benches!
Now they are bringing me Freyia as my wife,
the daughter of Niord from Noatun!

'Gold-horned cows walk here in the yard,
jet-black oxen to the giant's delight;
many treasures I possess, many necklaces I possess,
Freyia was all I seemed to be missing

[Much hilarity ensues as Loki helps to pass off Thor as Freyia. Thor gets his hammer back.]

Oddrúnargrátr

'May all the kindly beings help you,
Frigg and Freyia and more of the gods,
as you warded away the dangerous illness from me.'

Hyndlulíod

[Hyndla:]

'Deceitful you are, Freyia, when you question me,
when you look at me that way,
when you're taking your lover on the way to Valhall,
young Ottar, son of Innstein.'

[Freyia:]

'You're confused, Hyndla, you must be dreaming,
when you say my lover is on the road to Valhall;
there my boar is glowing with his golden bristles,
Battleswine, whom those skillful dwarves,
Dain and Nabbi, made for me.

Freyja Lore
From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*
translated by Anthony Faulkes

Gylfaginning

Njord of Noatun had afterward two children. The son was called Freyr and the daughter Freyia. They were beautiful in appearance and mighty. Freyr is the most glorious of the Æsir. He is ruler of rain and sunshine and thus of the produce of the earth, and it is good to pray to him for prosperity and peace. He also rules over the wealth of men. And Freyia is the most glorious of the Asyniur. She has a dwelling in heaven called Folkvangar, and whenever she rides into battle she gets half the slain. The other half Odin. It says here:

There is a place called Folkvang, and there Freyia is in charge of allotting seats in the hall. Half the slain she chooses each day, and half has Odin.

Sessrumnir, her hall, it is large and beautiful. And when she travels she drives two cats and sits in a chariot. She is the most approachable one for people to pray to, and from her name is derived the honorific title whereby noble ladies are called *frovur* [noble ladies]. She was very fond of love songs. It is good to pray to her concerning love affairs.

In answer to 'Who are the Asyniur?'

Freyia is highest in rank next to Frigg. She was married to someone called Od. Hnoss is the name of their daughter. She is so beautiful that from her name whatever is beautiful and precious is called *hnossir* [treasures]. Od went off on long travels, and Freyia stayed behind weeping, and her tears are red gold. Freyia has many names, and the reason for this is that she adopted various names when she was travelling among strange peoples looking for Od. She is called Mardoll and Horn, Gefn, Syr. Freyia owned the Brisings' necklace. She is known as Lady of the Vanir.

Here begins the story of the building of Asgard

It was right at the beginning of the gods' settlement, when the gods had established Midgard and built Val-hall, there came a certain builder and offered to build them a fortification in three seasons so good that it would be reliable and secure against mountain-giants and frost giants even though they should come in over Midgard. And he stipulated as his payment that he should get Freyia as his wife, and he wished to have the sun and moon. Then the Æsir went into discussion and held a conference, and this bargain was made with the builder that he should get what he demanded if he managed to build the fortification in one winter, but on the first day of summer if there was anything unfinished in the fortification then he should forfeit his payment. He was to

receive from no man help with the work. And when they told him these terms, then he asked that they should permit him to have the help of his stallion called Svadilfæri. And it was Loki that was responsible for this being granted him. [...] And as winter passed the building of the fortification advanced rapidly and it was so high and strong that it could not be stormed. And when summer was three days away then he had almost got round to the entrance of the fortification. Then the gods took their places on their judgement seats and tried to think of what to do and asked each other who had been responsible for the decision to marry Freyia into Giantland and to spoil the sky and heaven by taking away the sun and the moon and giving them to giants. And there was agreement among them all that he must have been responsible for this decision who is responsible for most evil, Loki Laufeyiarson, and declared he would deserve an evil death if he did not find a scheme whereby the builder would forfeit his payment. [*Loki turns himself into a mare to distract the builder's stallion from work. The builder is overcome by "giant rage" and the gods recognise him as a mountain-giant and send Thor to bash his head in. Loki gives birth to a foal, Sleipnir.*]

At Baldr's Funeral

This burning was attended by beings of many different kinds: firstly to tell of Odin, that with him went Frigg and valkyries and his ravens, while Freyr drove in a chariot with a boar called Gullinbursti or Slidrugianni. But Heimdall rode a horse called Gulltopp and Freya her cats.

Skaldskaparmal

Then Loki was arrested and brought to the parliament and he was threatened with death or torture. Being filled with terror, he said he would go in search of Idunn in Giantland if Freyia would lend him a falcon shape of hers. And when he got the falcon shape he flew north to Giantland.

How shall Heimdall be referred to? By calling him son of nine mothers, guardian of the gods, as was written above, or the white As, Loki's enemy, recoverer of Freyia's necklace. [...] He is also the visitor to Vagasker and Singastein; on that occasion he contended with Loki for the Brisingamen.

Hrungnir was in such a great giant fury that the first thing he knew was that he had rushed in through the As-gates. And when he got to the hall doors, Æsir invited him in for a drink. Then the goblets that Thor normally drank out of were brought out, and Hrungnir drained each one. And when he became drunk

there was no lack of big words: he said he was going to remove Val-hall and take it to giantland, but bury Asgard and kill all the gods, except that he was going to take Freyia and Sif home with him, and Freyia was the only one then who dared to bring him drink, and he declared he was going to drink all the Æsir's ale. And when the Æsir got tired of his boasting they invoked the name of Thor. Immediately Thor entered the hall with hammer raised up and in great anger and asked who was responsible for the cunning giant's being there drinking, and who had guaranteed Hrungrnir safety while he was in Val-hall and why Freyia should be serving him drink as if at the Æsir's banquet. [Needless to say, Thor ends up shattering Hrungrnir's skull with his hammer.]

How shall Freyia be referred to? By calling her daughter of Njord, sister of Freyr, wife of Od, mother of Hnoss, possessor of the fallen slain and of Sessrumnir and tom-cats, of Brisingamen, Van-deity, Van-lady, fair-tear deity.

How shall gold be referred to? By calling it Æir's fire and Glasir's foliage, Sif's hair, Fulla's snood, Freyia's weeping...

Gold is called Freyia's weeping, as was said above. Skuli Thorsteinsson said this: 'Many a death-flame- [sword-] damage- [battle-] challenger [warrior] got the more Freyia's tears in the morning where we felled each other. We were there.'

And as Einar Skulason said: 'With Mardoll's [Freyia's] weeping lying between the grooves [inlaid] we carry the damager [axe] of Gaut's [Odin's] mighty gate [shield], bulging with valley-trout's [serpent's] lair [gold, on which serpents lie]'

And in this poem Einar has further referred to Freyia by calling her Hnoss's mother or Odd's wife; thus it says here: 'The strong ice [axe] of Rodi's roof [shield] is not the worse for Od's bedfellow's [Freyia's] eye-rain [tears]. With such actions [gifts] may the king reach old age.'

And also: 'I am able to possess Horn's [Freyia's] gold-wrapped glorious child [Hnoss; *hnoss*=treasure]. Ocean's fire [gold] rests on shield's damager [axe]. Freyr's niece [Hnoss] bears her mother's eyelash-rain [tears]. Battle-swan's [raven's] feeder [warrior] granted me Frodi's servants' [Fenia and Menia's] seed [gold].

Here it is also implied that Freyia can be referred to by calling her Freyr's sister. And also: 'The ruler's helpful protection was all offered to me. This was close to the sea-hall. I praise highly this child of Niord's daughter [Hnoss].'

Here she is called Niord's daughter. And also: 'The battle-gallant urger [warrior] of Valfud's [Odin's] assembly [battle] who achieves doughtiness gave me a mighty Van-bride's [Freyia's] daughter [Hnoss]. The powerful controller of sword-meetings [battles] led Gefn's [Freyia's] maid to the poet's [my] bed covered with Gautrek's swan's [ships'] road [sea] embers [fire, gold].' Here she is called Gefn and Van-bride. It is normal to qualify weeping by any of the names for Freyia, and to call gold that, and these kennings are varied in many ways, calling it hail or rain or storm or drops or showers or cascades of her eyes or cheeks or jowls or eyelashes or eyelids.

Snorri also includes Freyia in three lists of Asyniur

Frigg

Frigg is a goddess who is well known as the wife of Oðin and the mother of Baldr. She is associated with a wide variety of roles including: protective-parent, seer, textile-worker, ruthless adversary, housekeeper and seductress. Although many popular retellings of the Norse myths portray Frigg as Oðin's faithful partner, in the original sources she is disloyal to her husband on a number of occasions.

The name Frigg is related to Old Saxon *fri* and Anglo-Saxon *freo*, which simply mean 'woman'

Frigg Lore from *The History of the Danes* by Saxo Grammaticus translated by Peter Fisher

Book One

At that time there was a man called Odin who was believed throughout Europe, though falsely, to be a god. He had the habit of staying more frequently than anywhere at Uppsala, deigning to live rather more constantly there either because of the inhabitants' torpor or the beauty of the countryside. The kings of the north, eager to honour his divinity with more enthusiastic worship, executed a representation of him in gold, the arms thickly encircled with heavy bracelets, and as an expression of their devotion sent it with the utmost show of piety to Byzantium. Delighting in his celebrity, Odin avidly greeted the donors' affection. His wife, Frigg, desiring to walk abroad more bedizened, brought in smiths to strip the statue of its gold. Odin had them hanged and then, setting the image on a plinth, by a marvellous feat of workmanship made it respond with a voice to human touch. Subordinating her husband's divine honours to the splendour of her own apparel, Frigg submitted herself to the lust of one of her servants; by his cunning the effigy was demolished and the gold which had been devoted to public idolatry went to serve her personal pleasure. This woman, unworthy of a deified consort, felt no scruples about pursuing unchastity, provided that she could more speedily enjoy what she coveted. Need I add anything but to say that such a god deserved such a wife? Men's

intelligence was once made ridiculous by gullibility of this kind. Consequently Odin, wounded by both his wife's offenses, grieved as heavily over the damage to his likeness as the harm to his bed. Stung by the double embarrassment he took to exile replete with an honest shame, thinking he would thereby obliterate the stain of his disgrace.

Book Eight

Famine strikes Denmark and it is decided that, since there is not enough food for all the people, some must leave the land.

Everyone's fate was thrown into the urn and all who were marked out by lot were pronounced exiles. In the end those who had been unwilling to bow to necessity of their own accord were forced to obey the dictate of chance. First they voyaged to Blekinge, then sailed to Möre and put in at Gotland where, according to Paul the Deacon, prompted by the goddess Frigg, they are said to have adopted the name of Langobards, whose race they later founded. Eventually, they steered their way to Rügen, left the boats and began to journey overland; they traversed a great extent of the earth, fighting and plundering as they went and, after spreading carnage far and wide, sought a home in Italy. There they changed the ancient name of the people for their own.

Frigg Lore

from *The History of the Langobard Folk*
Historia gentis Langobardorum
by Deacon Paul (*Paulus Diaconus*) of Warnfriet

7: After the Vinnili [= Langobards] had emigrated from Scandinavia under the leadership of Ibor and Aion, they came to the part called Scoringa where they stayed for several years. For at that time Ambri and Assi, chiefs the Vandals, harried all the provinces in the vicinity with war, and puffed up with pride over the many victories they had won, they sent a message to the Vinnili that they should either pay taxes to the Vandals, or else make ready for war. Then Ibor and Aion agreed, on the admonition of their mother, Gambara, that it were better to defend their freedom by arms than to mar it by paying taxes. and they sent messengers to the Vandal to tell them that they would rather fight than

become thralls. At that time all the Vinnili were in the flowering of youth, but only few in number, for they had made out only one third of the population of a not very large island (= Scandinavia).

8: And here the old tell a ridiculous fable, that the Vandals went to Godan (= Odin) and asked for victory over the Vinnili, and that he answered that he would give victory to the party he would see first when the sun rose. Then Gambara had visited Godan's wife Frea (= Frigga) and had asked for victory for the Vinnili, and Frea had advised her that the women of the Vinnili should let down their hair and arrange it around the face so that it would look like beards, and come early in the morning together with the men and stand on the spot where Godan used to look first, when he saw the rising sun through the window. And thus it happened. But when Godan saw them at sun-up, he said "who are these long beards?" Frea had answered that to those whom he had given a name he must also give victory, and thus Godan had let the Langobards win. This is ridiculous and not worth considering, for victory is not in the hands of men, but rather given by Heaven. It is certain that the Langobards got this, their later name, from their long beards, untouched by scissors, while they were first called Vinnili, for in their language "lang" means long and "bart" means beard. But Wotan, whom they called, with the addition of one letter, Godan, is the same god whom the Romans call Mercurius [= Greek Hermes] and who is worshipped by all Germanic peoples as a god; but he did certainly not live in these times, but far earlier, and not in Germania, but in Greece.

Frigg Lore

From The Poetic *Edda*

translated by Carolyne Larrington

Völuspá

speaking of Vali (see Rind)

Nor did he ever wash his hands nor comb his hair,
until he brought Baldr's adversary to the funeral pyre;
and in Fen-halls Frigg wept
for the woe of Valhall--do you understand yet, or what more?

(see Hlín)

Then the second grief of Frigg comes about
when Odin advances to fight against the wolf,
and the bright slayer of Beli against Surt;
then the beloved of Frigg must fall.

Vafþrúðnismál

Odin said

'Advise me now, Frigg, I intend to journey to visit Vafthrudnir;
I've a great curiosity to contend in ancient matters with that all-wise giant.'

Frigg said

'I'd rather keep the Father of Hosts
at home in the court of the gods,
for I have always thought no giant is as powerful as Vafthrudnir is.'

Odin said

'Much I have travelled, much have I tried out,
much have I tested the Powers;
this I want to know; what kind of company is found in Vafthrudnir's hall.'

Frigg said

'Journey safely! Come back safely!
Be safe on the way!
May your wisdom be sufficient when, Father of Men, you speak with the giant'

Lokasenna

Prose Introduction

Ægir, who is also called Gymir, had brewed ale for the Æsir, when he got the great cauldron which has just been told about. To the feast there came Odin and Frigg, his wife.

Frigg said

'Your actions ought never to be
spoken in front of people,
what you two Æsir did in past times;
always keep ancient matters concealed.'

Loki said

'Be silent, Frigg, you're Fiorgyn's daughter
and you've always been mad for men:
Ve and Vili, Vidrir's wife,
both were taken into your embrace.'

Frigg said

'You know that if I had here in Ægir's hall
a boy like my son Baldr,
you wouldn't get away from the sons of the Æsir;
there'd be furious fighting against you.'

Loki said

'Frigg, do you want me to say still more about my wicked deeds;
for I brought it about that you will never again
see Baldr ride to the halls.'

Freyja said

'Mad you are, Loki, when you reckon up your ugly, hateful deeds;
Frigg knows, I think, all fate,
though she does not speak out.'

Grímnismál Prose Introduction

Odin and Frigg sat in Hlidskialf and looked into all the worlds. Odin said, 'Do you see Agnar, your foster child, there raising children with a giantess in a cave? But Geirrod, my foster-child, is king and rules over the land.' Frigg says: 'He is so stingy with food that he tortures his guests if it seems to him that too many have come.' Odin says that is the greatest lie. They wagered on the matter.

Frigg sent her handmaid, Fulla, to Geirrod. She told the king to beware lest a wizard, who had come into the country, should bewitch him, and said that he

could be known by this sign: that no dog was so fierce that it would attack him. And that was the greatest slander that Geirrodd was not generous with food; however, he had the man whom no dog could attack arrested. He was wearing a blue cloak and called himself Grimnir, and would say nothing more about himself, though he was asked. The king had him tortured to make him speak and set him between two fires, and he sat there eight nights.

Oddrúnargrátr

'May all the kindly beings help you,
Frigg and Freyja and more of the gods,
as you warded away the dangerous illness from me.'

Frigg Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*
translated by Anthony Faulkes

Prologue

(In his Prologue to the Edda, Snorri attempts to place the gods in a historical setting in order to explain their place in contemporary genealogies.)

[Odin] was an outstanding person for wisdom and all kinds of accomplishments. His wife was called Frigida, whom we call Frigg. Odin had the gift of prophecy and so did his wife, and from this science he discovered that his name would be remembered in the northern part of the world and honoured above all kings.

Gylfaginning

In the city there is a seat called Hlidskialf, and when Odin sat in that throne he saw over all worlds and every man's activity and understood everything he saw. His wife was called Frigg Fiorgvin's daughter, and from them is descended the family line that we call the Æsir race, who have resided in Old Asgard and the realms that belong to it, and that whole line of descent is of divine origin. And that is why he can be called All-father, that he is the father of all the gods and of men and of everything that has been brought into being by him and his power. The earth was his daughter and his wife.

Odin is the highest and most ancient of the Æsir. He rules all things, and mighty though the other gods are, yet they submit to him like children to their father. Frigg is his wife, and she knows men's fates though she does not prophesy.

In answer to 'Who are the Asyniur?'

The highest is Frigg. She has a dwelling called Fensalir and it is very splendid. [...] Fifth is Fulla. She too is a virgin and goes around with her hair flowing free and has a gold band around her head. She carries Frigg's casket and looks after her footwear and shares her secrets. Freyia is highest in rank next to Frigg. [...] Eighth Lofn: she is so kind and good to pray to that she gets leave from All-father or Frigg for people's union, between women and men, even if before it was forbidden or refused. [...] Twelfth Hlin: she is given to the function of protecting people whom Frigg wishes to save from danger. [...] Fourteenth Gna: she is sent by Frigg into various worlds to carry out her business.

Here begins the Story of Baldr's Death

And the beginning of the story is that Baldr the Good dreamed great dreams boding peril to his life. And when he told the Æsir the dreams they took counsel together and it was decided to request immunity for Baldr from all kinds of danger, and Frigg received solemn promises so that Baldr should not be harmed by fire and water, iron and all kinds of metal, stones, the earth, trees, diseases, the animals, the birds, poison, snakes. And when this was done and confirmed, then it became an entertainment for Baldr and the Æsir that he should stand up at assemblies and all the others should either shoot at him or strike at him or throw stones at him. But whatever they did he was unharmed, and they all thought this a great glory. But when Loki Laufeyiarson saw this he was not pleased that Baldr was unharmed. He went to Fensalir to Frigg and changed his appearance to that of a woman. Then Frigg asked this woman if she knew what the Æsir were doing at the assembly. She said that everyone was shooting at Baldr, and moreover that he was unharmed. Then said Frigg:

"Weapons and wood will not hurt Baldr. I have received oaths from them all."

Then the woman asked: "Have all things sworn oaths not to harm Baldr?"

Then Frigg replied: "There grows a shoot of a tree to the west of Val-hall. It is called Mistletoe. It seems young to me to demand the oath from."

Straight away the woman disappeared. And Loki took mistletoe and plucked it and went to the assembly. Hod was standing at the edge of the circle of people, for he was blind. Then Loki said to him:

"Why are you not shooting at Baldr?"

He replied: "Because I cannot see where Baldr is, and secondly because I have no weapon."

Then said Loki: "Follow other people's example and do Baldr honour like other people. I will direct you to where he is standing. Shoot at him this stick."

Hod took the mistletoe and shot at Baldr at Loki's direction. The missile flew through him and he fell dead to the ground, and this was the unluckiest deed ever done among gods and men. [...]

And when the gods came to themselves then Frigg spoke, and asked who there was among the Æsir who wished to earn all her love and favour and was willing to ride the road to Hel and try if he could find Baldr, and offer Hel a ransom if she would let Baldr go back to Asgard. Hermod the Bold, Odin's boy, is the name of the one who undertook the journey.

Baldr's body is placed on a ship, and the ship set on fire. Baldr's wife Nanna dies from grief and her body is placed beside his.

This burning was attended by beings of many different kinds: firstly to tell of Odin, that with him went Frigg and valkyries and his ravens, while Freyr drove in a chariot with a boar called Gullinbursti or Slidrugtanni. But Heimdall rode a horse called Gulltopp and Freya her cats. [...]

Meanwhile Hermod rides through the gates of Hel.

In the morning Hermod begged Hel that Baldr might ride home with him and said what great weeping there was among the Æsir. But Hel said that it must be tested whether Baldr was as beloved as people said in the following way,

"And if all things in the world, alive and dead, weep for him, then he shall go back to the Æsir, but be kept with Hel if any objects or refuses to weep."

Then Hermod got up and Baldr went with him out of the hall and took the ring Draupnir and sent it to Odin as a keepsake, and Nanna sent Frigg a linen robe and other gift's too; to Fulla a finger-ring.

Everything weeps for Baldr except one old giantess sitting in a cave, who announces, "Let Hel hold what she has." Presumably this giantess is Loki in disguise.

Skaldskaparmal

Thiodolf of Hvinir said this:

The fallen lay there on the sand, destined for the one-eyed dweller in Frigg's embrace [i.e. for her husband Odin in Val-hal]. We rejoice in such achievement.

[...] For it had befallen Loki, having gone flying once for fun with Frigg's falcon form, that out of curiosity he had flown into Geirrod's courts [...]

How shall Baldr be referred to? By calling him son of Odin and Frigg, [...]

How shall Frigg be referred to? By calling her daughter of Fiorgyn, wife of Odin, mother of Baldr, rival of Iord and Rind and Gunnlod and Gerd, mother-in-law of Nanna, queen of Æsir and Asyniur, of Fulla and falcon form and Fensalir.

How shall earth be referred to? By calling it Ymir's flesh and mother of Thor, daughter of Onar, bride of Odin, rival of Frigg and Rind and Gunnlod [...]

Snorri also includes Frigg in three lists of Asyniur

Frigg Lore from a 10th Century MS., Merseburg translated by Bill Griffiths in *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Magic*

The Second Merseburg Charm

Phol and Woden travelled to the forest.

Then was Baldur's foal its foot wrenched.

Then encharmed it Sindgund (and) Sunna her sister,

then encharmed it Frija (and) Volla her sister,

then encharmed it Woden, as best he could:

As the bone-wrench, so the blood wrench, (and) so the limb-wrench
bone to bone, blood to blood,
limb to limb, so be glued.

Note: *Frija* is generally interpreted as a German form corresponding to Old Norse *Frigg*

Frigg Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*
translated by Lee M. Hollander

Ynglings Saga chapter 3

Óthin had two brothers. One was called Vé, and the other, Víli. These, his brothers, governed the realm when he was gone. One time when Óthin was gone to a great distance, he stayed away so long that the Æsir thought he would never return. Then his brothers began to divide his inheritance; but his wife Frigg they shared between them. However, a short while afterwards, Óthin returned and took possession of his wife again.

Frigg Lore

From *The Saga of the Volsungs*
translated by Jesse L. Byock

Chapter 1

Now Rerir took much booty for himself, as well as the woman he thought most suitable for him. Although they lived together with intimacy for a long time, they had neither heir nor child. That lack displeased them both, and they fervently implored the gods that they might have a child. It is said that Frigg heard their prayers and told Odin what they asked. Odin was not without resources. He called one of his wish maidens, the daughter of the giant Hrimnir, and placed in her hand an apple, telling her to present it to the king. She took the apple, assumed the shape of a crow, and flew until she reached the place where the king was sitting on a mound. She let the apple fall into the king's lap.

He took the apple, suspecting its purpose. Then he came back from the mound to his men. He visited with the queen and ate some of the apple.

Frigg Lore

From *The Fljotsdale Saga*
translated by Eleanor Hayworth and Jean Young

During a snowstorm, Helgi and his brother Grim blunder into the hof maintained by Helgi's foster-father, Bersi. Helgi breaks in, over Grim's protests.

Helgi answered, "I want to see what sort of hosts these fiends will be to us, because I doubt if I shall ever be in greater need than I am now, and if they don't behave well now, they won't on another occasion."

Then Helgi went into the temple; it was light inside, but the light cast no shadow. All the walls were hung with tapestry and both benches were occupied; the whole place glowed with silver and gold. The gods stared straight ahead and did not welcome those who had come. Frey and Thor sat side-by-side on the high-seat of the lower bench.

Helgi calls the gods "devil's limbs" and demands that they "stand up and invite us in."

Then Helgi crossed the floor to where Frigg and Freya were seated. He spoke the same words to them, saying he would be gentle with them if they would give him better entertainment.

Helgi then robs the gods of their treasures, pushes them off their benches, and boasts:

"I don't think I've ever in my life done a better deed than this. It was the gods who confused the path before me today, because this is the first time in my life that I've ever lost my way."

Fulla

Fulla is best known as Frigg's trusty maid-servant, although heathens tend to see her as a goddess in her own right.

The name Fulla means "plenty" or "bounty"

Fulla Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* translated by Anthony Faulkes

Gylfaginning

Who are the Asyniur?...

Fifth is Fulla. She too is a virgin and goes around with her hair flowing free and has a gold band around her head. She carries Frigg's casket and looks after her footwear and shares her secrets.

...Then Hermod got up and Baldr went with him out of the hall and took the ring Draupnir and sent it to Odin as a keepsake, and Nanna sent Frigg a linen robe and other gift's too; to Fulla a finger-ring.

Skaldskaparmal

How shall Frigg be referred to? By calling her daughter of Fiorgyn, wife of Odin, mother of Baldr, rival of Iord and Rind and Gunnlod and Gerd, mother-in-law of Nanna, queen of Æsir and Asyniur, of Fulla and falcon form and Fensalir.

How shall gold be referred to? By calling it Ægir's fire and Glasir's foliage, Sif's hair, Fulla's snood, Freyja's weeping...[usw]

Here you can hear how gold is referred to in terms of Fulla's snood, in this poem by Eyvind Skaldaspillir: [tenth century skald]

"The falling sun [gold] of the plain [forehead] of Fulla's eyelashes shone on the poets' Ull's boat-[shield-]fells [arms] throughout the life of Hakon."

Snorri also includes Fulla in two lists of Asyniur

Fulla Lore
from *The Poetic Edda*
translated by Carolyne Larrington

Grimnismal (introductory prose)

Frigg sent her handmaid, Fulla, to Geirodd. She told the king to beware lest a wizard, who had come into the country, should bewitch him...

Fulla Lore
from a 10th Century MS., Merseburg
translated by Bill Griffiths in *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon Magic*

The Second Merseburg Charm

Phol and Woden travelled to the forest.
Then was Baldur's foal its foot wrenched.
Then encharmed it Sindgund (and) Sunna her sister,
then encharmed it Frija (and) Volla her sister,
then encharmed it Woden, as best he could:
As the bone-wrench, so the blood wrench, (and) so the limb-wrench
bone to bone, blood to blood,
limb to limb, so be glued.

Gná

Gná is known as the goddess who rides through the sky on her horse Hófvarpnir carrying out errands for Frigg.

Snorri indicates that the name Gná is related to the Old Norse verb *gnæfa*, to rise high.

Gná Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*
translated by Anthony Faulkes

Gylfaginning

In answer to 'Who are the Asyniur?'

'Fourteenth Gna: she is sent by Frigg into various worlds to carry out her business. She has a horse that gallops across sky and sea, called Hofvarpnir. It happened once as she was riding that some Vanir saw her travelling through the sky, then said one:

"What is flying there? What is travelling there, passing through the sky?"

'She said:

"I am not flying, though I travel and pass through the sky on Hofvarpnir whom Hamskerpir begot on Gardrofa."

*[Note: The name of Gná's horse, **Hófvarpnir**, means 'hoof-thrower'. It's parents were **Hamskerpir**, 'skinny-sides' and **Garðrofu**, 'fence-breaker'.]*

'From Gna's name a thing is said to tower (*gnæfa*) when it goes high up.'

Snorri also includes Gná in another list of Asynjur.

Gefjon

The Norse goddess Gefjon is best known for creating the island of Zealand (Danish *Sjaelland*).

The name Gefjon means 'the giving one'.

Gefjon Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*
translated by Anthony Faulkes

Gylfaginning

King Gylfi was a ruler in what is now Sweden. Of him it is said that he gave a certain vagrant woman, as a reward for his entertainment, one plough-land of his kingdom, as much as four oxen could plough in a day and a night. Now this woman was one of the race of the Æsir. Her name was Gefiun. She took four oxen from the north, from Giantland, the sons of her and a certain giant, and put them before the plough. But the cart cut so hard and deep that it uprooted the land, and the oxen drew the land out into the sea to the west and halted in a certain sound. There Gefiun put the land and gave it a name and called it Zealand. Where the land had been lifted from there remained a lake; this is now called Lake Mälär in Sweden. And the inlets in the lake correspond to the headlands in Zealand. Thus says the poet Bragi the Old:

Gefiun drew from Gylfi, glad, a deep-ring of land [the island of Zealand] so that the swift pullers [oxen] steam rose: Denmark's extension. The oxen wore eight brow stars [eyes] as they went hauling their plunder, the wide island of meadows, and four heads.

In answer to "Who are the Asyniur?"

Fourth is Gefiun. She is a virgin, and is attended by all who die virgins.

(Snorri also includes Gefion in three other lists of Asyniur).

Gefjon Lore
From *The Poetic Edda*
translated by Carolyne Larrington

Lokasenna

Gefjon said:

'Why should you two Æsir in here
fight with wounding words
Loki knows that he's joking
and all living things love him.'

Loki said:

'Be silent Gefjon, I'm going to mention this
how your heart was seduced;
the white boy gave you a jewel
and you laid your thigh over him.'

Odin said:

'Mad you are, Loki, and out of your wits,
when you get Gefjon as your enemy,
for I think she knows all about the fates of men,
as clearly as I myself.'

Gefjon Lore
From Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*
translated by Lee M. Hollander

Ynglings Saga chapter 5

Then [Óthin] journeyed north to the sea and fixed his abode on an island. That place is now called Óthinsey, on the island of Funen.

Thereupon he sent Gefjon north over the sound to seek for land. She came to King Gylfi, and he gave her a ploughland. Then she went to Giantland and there bore four sons to some giant. She transformed them into oxen and attached them to a plough and drew the land westward into the sea, opposite Óthin's Island, and that is [now] called Selund [Seeland], and there she dwelled afterwards. Skjold, a son of Óthin married her. They lived at Hleithrar. A lake was left [where the land was taken] which is called Logrin. The bays in that lake correspond to the nesses of Selund. Thus says Bragi the Old:

Gefjon, glad in mind, from
Gylfi drew the good land,
Denmark's increase, from the
oxen so the sweat ran.
Did four beasts of burden--
with brow-moons eight in foreheads--
walk by the wide isle
won by her from Sweden.

Gerð

Gerð is best known as Frey's reluctant Jötun lover.

The name Gerð is related to the Old Norse word *garð* (as in *Asgarð* or *Miðgarð*), signifying an enclosed area or a piece of land surrounded by a wall or fence. Thus Gerð's name means something akin to 'fenced in,' which may be a reference to the ring of fire that Skirnir must traverse in order to get to her, or to the wooden fence surrounding her hall.

Gerð Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* translated by Anthony Faulkes

Gylfaginning

There was someone called Gymir, and his wife Aurboda. She was of the race of mountain-giants. Gerd is their daughter, the most beautiful of all women. It happened one day that Freyr has gone into Hlidskialf and was looking over all worlds, and when he looked into the north he saw on a certain homestead a large and beautiful building, and to this building went a woman, and when she lifted her arms and opened the door for herself, light was shed from her arms over both sky and sea, and all the worlds were made bright by her. And his punishment for his great presumption in having sat in that holy seat was that he went away full of grief. And when he got home he said nothing, he neither slept nor drank; no one dared to speak with him. Then Niord sent for Freyr's servant Skirnir, and bade him go to Freyr and try to get him to talk and ask who he was so angry with that he would not speak to anyone. Skirnir said he would go though he was not keen, and said unpleasant answers were to be expected from him. And when he got to Freyr he asked why Freyr was so downcast and would not speak to anyone. Then Freyr replied and said he had seen a beautiful woman and for her sake he was so full of grief that he would not live long if he were not to have her.

"And now you must go and ask for her hand on my behalf and bring her back here whether her father is willing or not, and I shall reward you well for it."

Then Skirnir replied saying that he would undertake the mission, but Freyr must give him his sword. This was such a good sword that it would fight on its own. But Freyr did not let the lack of that be an obstacle and gave him the sword. Then Skirnir went and asked for the woman's hand for him and received the promise from her, and nine nights later she was to go to the place called Barey and enter into marriage with Freyr. But when Skirnir told Freyr the result of this errand he said this:

"Long is a night, long is a second, how can I suffer for three? Often has a month seemed shorter to me than half this wedding eve."

This is the reason for Freyr being unarmed when he fought Beli, killing him with a stag's antler.

Skaldskaparmal

How shall Frigg be referred to? By calling her [...] rival of Iord and Rind and Gunnlod and Gerd

Snorri also includes Gerð in two lists of Asyniur

Gerð Lore

from *The Poetic Edda*
translated by Elsa-Brita Titchenell
in *The Masks of Odin: Wisdom of the Ancient Norse*

Skírnismál

Frey, son of Njord, sat on the Shelf of Compassion one day and looked over all the worlds; he gazed into the realm of the giants and there saw a fair maiden walking from her father's hall to the women's quarters. Thence had he much heartache. Skirner was Frey's squire. Njord's wife Skade sent him to engage Frey in conversation.

1. SKADE: Stand forth, Skirner;
Go try to engage our son in speech;

Ask who it is
Who makes the wise one unhappy.

2. SKIRNER: I may expect angry words
If I ask your son
Whom he wishes to espouse.

3. Tell me, Frey, prince among gods:
Why sit you alone
In your infinite hall,
Day after day, my lord?

4. FREY: How can I reveal to you,
Friend of my youth,
My heart's great sorrow?
Though the sun shines
Blessingly each day,
It shines not on my desire.

5. SKIRNER: Surely your wish could not be so lofty
It might not be told to me;
We were young together in ancient days;
We two may trust each other!

6. FREY: In Gymer's courts I saw walking
A maid who pleases me;
Her arms glistened so they reflected
All the heavens and seas;

7. The maid is more dear to me
Than my childhood friend;
But of Aesir and elves
None wish to see us united.

8. SKIRNER: Bring me the horse that can bear me at dusk
Over the protective purging fires;
That sword as well that wields itself
In battle with giants.

9. FREY: I bring you the steed that can bear you at dusk
Over the protective purging fires;

The sword also that wields itself
If the bearer thereof is resourceful.

10. SKIRNER TO THE HORSE:

It is dark outside; our aim is to journey
Over moist mountains, close to the thurses;
We both shall be safe or both shall be taken
By the greedy giant.

Skirner rode into the giant world, to Gymer's courts; there angry hounds were bound by the gate of the yard surrounding Gerd's hall. He rode to a herdsman seated on a mound.

11. SKIRNER: Tell me, herdsman who sit on the mound
Watching all roads;
How shall I gain speech with the maiden
For Gymer's angry hounds?

12. HERDSMAN: Are you condemned to death or dead already,
You so high on your horse?
It will be hard for you to gain speech
With Gymer's maiden, the virtuous one.

13. SKIRNER: There are better things to do than haggle,
When wishing to advance.
One day only is my age waxed now,
And all my destiny laid forth.

14. GERD TO HER SLAVE GIRL: What is the noise,
The roaring din I hear?
The earth trembles
And Gymer's courts quake.

15. SLAVEGIRL: Here is a man, dismounted,
Letting his horse crop grass.

16. GERD: Bid him enter our hall
And drink splendid mead!
Yet I sense a foreboding
That outside stands my brother's bane.

17. Who among elves or of Asa-sons,
Or of wise Vaner are you?
Why came you alone over oak-lighted fires
To see our hall?

18. SKIRNER: I am not of the elves, nor of Asa-sons,
Nor yet am I one of wise Vaner;
Yet came I alone over oak-lighted fires
To see your hall.

19. Eleven golden apples I have
To give, Gerd, to you,
To buy your peace and that you
Be not indifferent to Frey.

20. GERD: Eleven apples I will not take
To have a man;
Frey and I may not build
Our lives together.

21. SKIRNER: Then I offer you the ring
That was burned with Odin's young son;
Eight like itself drop therefrom
Every ninth night.

22. GERD: I care not for the ring
Though it was burned with Odin's young son;
For gold I lack not
In Gymer's courts.

23. SKIRNER: See you this sword,
Supple, adorned with runes,
Which I hold in my hand?
I shall sever your head from your neck
If you refuse.

24. GERD: Force shall never cause me
To take a man;
But I know that if you and Gymer meet in battle,
It will be a lusty fight.

25. SKIRNER: See you the sword,
Supple, adorned with runes?
By it shall fall the ancient giant;
Your father were doomed to die.

26. I smite you with a magic wand,
For I must tame you to my wish;
You shall go where the children of men
Nevermore shall see you.

27. You shall sit on the eagle's mound
With your gaze turned from the world,
Staring toward Hel's house;
Food shall disgust you more
Than the shining serpent does men.

28. You shall be a monster on the road;
Rimner shall stare at you;
Your aspect confusing all;
Better shall you be known
Than the watcher of the gods,
As you greedily gawk at the gate.

29. Emptiness, lamentation, compulsion, impatience,
Your tears shall swell in anguish;
Sit while I conjure over you a flow of bitter curses,
Double lust and disgust.

30. You shall be hagridden from morning till night
In the giants' courts;
To the frost giants' hall shall you daily walk
Defenseless and lame,
Weeping shall be as joy to you,
And sorrow suffered with tears.

31. With a threeheaded thurse shall you walk,
Or be without man and mate;
Lust shall burn you, yearning tear you,
You shall be like the thistle that grows under the eaves.

32. I went to the woods,
To the damp willow thicket,

The wand to take.
The wand I took.

33. Wroth at you is Odin,
Wroth at you is Brage,
Frey shall heartily hate you;
Ill-willing maid,
You have provoked
The wrath of the gods in a matter of import.

34. Hear ye, titans,
Hear ye, frostgiants,
Sons of Suttung (fire),
And even you, Aesir:
Hear how I curse, how I ban the maid
From pleasuring with man.

35. Rimgrimmer is the giant that shall hold you
Beneath the gates of death;
There shall slaves by the roots of trees
Give you sour liquid of goats;
No nobler drink shall you ever have, maid,
By your desire, by your own decree.

36. "Giant" I carve you three rune-staves:
Powerlessness, witlessness, and lust.
Then I tear off that on which I scribed it,
If need be.

37. GERD: Hail you, lad, rather now
Receive the festive beaker filled with aged mead!
Never dreamed I that I ever would wish
The Vana-son well.

38. SKIRNER: I would know all
Before I ride homeward:
When shall you at Ting
Plight your troth to the son of Njord?

39. GERD: Barre is the grove where one travels in peace,
As we both know.

Nine nights from now shall Gerd there plight her troth
To the son of Njord.

Skirner rode home. Frey stood outside, greeted him and asked for news.

40. FREY: Tell me, Skirner, before you unsaddle
The steed and take one step:
How went the matter in the giant world?
According to your way or mine?

41. SKIRNER: Barre is the grove where one travels in peace,
As we both know.
Nine nights from now shall Gerd there plight her troth
To the son of Njord.

42. FREY: Long is one night;
Longer two;
How shall I for three be yearning?
Often a month seems less to me.

Gerð Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*
translated by Lee M. Hollander

Ynglings Saga chapter 10

There were good harvests at that time in all countries. The Swedes attributed that to Frey. And he was worshipped more than other gods because in his day, owing to peace and good harvests, the farmers became better off than before. His wife was called Gerth, the daughter of Gymir. Their son was Fjelnir. Frey was also called Yngvi; and the name of Yngvi was for a long time afterward kept in his line as a name for kings, and his race were thereafter called Ynglings.

Gerð Lore
From the *Flateyjarbók*
translated by A. Æ. Hunt-Anschütz

Hyndluljóð 30

Baldr's father was
Buri's heir,
Frey married Gerð,
she was Gymir's daughter
and Aurboða's,
descended from Jotuns;
and Þiassi
that skirt-eager Jotun,
was also their kinsman,
Skaði was his daughter.

Hel

Hel is primarily known as the goddess who oversees the Germanic realm of the dead, also called Hel.

The name Hel literally means 'that which hides' (compare Anglo-Saxon *helan* 'to hide'). Some scholars suggest that *Hel*, as both a place and a goddess, is related to the concept of the grave mound which served to hide the dead.

Hel Lore from *The Prose Edda* translated by Anthony Faulks

Gylfaginning

There was a giantess called Angrboda in Giantland. With her Loki had three children. One was Fenriswolf, the second Iormungard (i.e. the Midgard serpent), the third is Hel. And when the gods realized that these three siblings were being brought up in Giantland, and when the gods traced prophecies stating that from these siblings great mischief and disaster would arise for them, they all felt evil was to be expected from them, to being with because of their mother's nature, but worse still because of their fathers.

Then All-father sent the gods to get the children and bring them to him. [...] Hel he threw into Niflheim and gave her authority over nine world, such that she has to administer board and lodging to those sent to her, and that is those who die of sickness or old age. She has great mansions there and her walls are exceptionally high and the gates great. Her hall is called Eliudnir, her dish Hunger, her knife Famine, the servant Ganglati, servingmaid Ganglot, her threshold where you enter Stumbling-block, her bed Sick-bed, her curtains Gleaming-bale. She is half black and half flesh-covered --thus she is easily recognizable-- and rather downcast and fierce-looking.

After the death of Baldr

Frigg spoke, and asked who there was among the Æsir who wished to earn all her love and favour and was willing to ride the road to Hel and try if he could find Baldr, and offer Hel a ransom if she would let Baldr go back to Asgard. Hermod the bold, Odin's boy, is the name of the one who undertook this journey. [...]

Then Hermod rode on until he came to Hel's gates. Then he dismounted from the horse and tightened its girth, mounted and spurred it on. The horse jumped so hard and over the gate that it came nowhere near. Then Hermod rode up to the hall and dismounted from his horse, went into the hall, saw sitting there in the seat of honour his brother Baldr; and Hermod stayed there the night. In the morning Hermod begged Hel that Baldr might ride home with him and said what great weeping there was among the Æsir. But Hel said that it must be tested whether Baldr was as beloved as people said in the following way,

"And if all things in the world, alive and dead, weep for him, then he shall go back to the Æsir, but be kept with Hel if any objects for refuses to weep."

Skaldskaparmal

How shall Baldr be referred to? By calling him [...] Hel's companion

Hel Lore

from *The Poetic Edda*
translated by Carolyne Larrington

Grimnismal

Three roots there grow in three directions
under the ash of Yggdrasill;
Hel lives under one, under the second, the frost giants,
the third, humankind.

Fafnismal

Sigurd said:

'You've given your advice, but I shall ride
to where the gold lies in the heather
and you, Fafnir, lie in mortal fragments,
there where Hel can take you!

Atlamal

'There were four of us brothers when we lost Budli,
now Hel has half of us, two lie cut down there.

[...] 'You are lying now, Atli, though I don't really care;
I was hardly ever docile but you lorded it greatly.
You young brothers fought each other, sent strife round
amongst yourselves,
half your line were sent off to Hel.
Everything which we should have enjoyed collapsed and
disappeared.

Hel Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*
translated by Lee M. Hollander

Yngling Saga, Chapter 18

Heard I have
that high-born Dag,
to death doomed,
undaunted came
to avenge
on Vorvi strand,
with spear armed,

his sparrow's loss.
and eke that
in eastern lands,
the king's host
of combat told:
that this thane
by throne hay-fork
from hind's hands
to Hel should fare.

Yngling Saga, Chapter 44

All have heard
that Halfdan King
then was mourned
by men of peace,
and that Hel,
the howes' warder,
in Thotn took
the thane from life.
And Skæreith
in Skáringssal
droops above
the dead thane's bones.

Hlín

Hlín is known as a goddess who assists Frigg with protecting humans.

The name *Hlín* means 'protectress' in Old Norse.

Hlín Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*
translated by Anthony Faulkes

Gylfaginning

In answer to 'Who are the Asyniur?'

Twelfth Hlin: she is given to the function of protecting people whom Frigg wishes to save from danger. From this comes the saying that someone who escapes finds refuge (*hleinir*).

Elsewhere Snorri includes Hlín in a list of Asynjur.

Hlín Lore

from *The Poetic Edda*
translated by Lee M. Hollander

Völuspá

Another woe awaited Hlín,
when forth goes Óthin to fight the wolf

and the slayer of Beli to battle with Surt:
then Frigg's husband will fall lifeless.

Holda

Holda (aka Hulda, Holle, Hulle) is a goddess associated with winter, snow, spinning, and wells (among other things) whose legends have survived in German, Norwegian, and Danish folktales.

The name Holda means 'the kind one', and is related to Gothic *hulps* and Old Norse *holtr*, gracious, loyal.

Holda Lore

Burchard, Bishop of Worms (c.1015 CE)

quoted in Jacob Grimm's *Teutonic Mythology*

passage translated by Nick Ford

Credidisti ut aliqua femina sit, quae hoc facere possit, quod quaedam a diabolo deceptae se affirmant necessario et ex praecepto facere debere, id est cum daemonum turba in similitudinem mulierum transformata, quam vulgaris stultitia Holdam (al. unholdam) vocat, certis noctibus equitare debere super quasdam bestias, et in eorum se consortio annumeratum esse.

"It was believed that somehow it was possible for some female to do this, who had been deceived by the Devil, and who confessed herself compelled to do it by a spell; that is, by a demon changed into the form of a woman whom vulgar stupidity calls Holda (or Unholda), being forced on certain nights to ride upon certain beasts, and to be numbered among their company."

Comments:

The parenthetical remark (*or Unholda*) is a pun on the name of the goddess. Holda means "kind" so this bishop, who is convinced she is a demon, remarks that she is really "unkind" i.e. diabolical.

Holda Folklore

The Gift of Flax

from *Myths of the Norsemen* by H.A. Guerber

There was once a peasant who daily left his wife and children in the valley to take his sheep up the mountain to pasture; and as he watched his flock grazing

on the mountain-side, he often had opportunity to use his cross bow and bring down a chamois, whose flesh would furnish his larder with food for many a day.

While pursuing a fine animal one day he saw it disappear behind a boulder, and when he came to the spot, he was amazed to see a doorway in the neighbouring glacier, for in the excitement of the pursuit he had climbed higher and higher, until he was now on top of the mountain, where glittered the everlasting snow.

The shepherd boldly passed through the open door and soon found himself in a wonderful jeweled cave hung with stalactites, in the centre of which stood a beautiful woman clad in slivery robes, and attended by a host of lovely maidens crowned with Alpine roses. In his surprise, the shepherd sank to his knees, and as in a dream heard the queenly central figure bid him choose anything he saw to carry away with him. Although dazzled by the glow of the precious stones around him, the shepherd's eyes constantly reverted to a little nosegay of blue flowers which the gracious apparition held in her hand, and he now timidly proffered a request that it might become his. Smiling with pleasure, Holda, for it was she, gave it to him, telling him he had chosen wisely and would live as long as the flowers did not droop and fade. Then, giving the shepherd a measure of seed which she told him to sow in his field, the goddess bade him begone; and as the thunder pealed and the earth shook, the poor man found himself out upon the mountain-side once more, and slowly wended his way home to his wife, to whom he told his adventure and showed the lovely blue flowers and the measure of seed.

The woman reproached her husband bitterly for not having brought some of the precious stones which he so glowingly described, instead of the blossoms and seed; nevertheless the man proceeded to sow the latter, and found to his surprise that the measure supplied seed enough for several acres.

Soon the little green shoots began to appear, and one moonlight night, while the peasant was gazing upon them, as was his wont, for he felt a curious attraction to the field which he had sown, and often lingered there wondering what kind of grain would be produced, he saw a misty form hover above the field, with hands outstretched as if in blessing. At last the field blossomed, and countless little blue flowers opened their calyxes to the golden sun. When the flowers had withered and the seed was ripe, Holda came once more to teach the peasant and wife how to harvest the flax--for such it was--and from it to spin, weave, and bleach linen. As the people of the neighbourhood willingly purchased both linen and flax-seed, the peasant and his wife soon grew very rich indeed, and while he ploughed, sowed, and harvested, she spun, wove, and bleached the linen. The man lived to a good old age, and saw his grandchildren and great-

grandchildren grow up around him. All this time his carefully treasured bouquet had remained fresh as when he first brought it home, but one day he saw that during the night the flowers had drooped and were dying.

Knowing what this portended, and that he too must die, the peasant climbed the mountain once more to the glacier, and found again the doorway for which he had often vainly searched. He entered the icy portal, and was never seen or heard of again, for, according to the legend, the goddess took him under her care, and bade him live in her cave, where his every wish was gratified.

Holda Folklore
Mother Holle
from *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*
Translated by Jack Zipes

A widow had two daughters, one was beautiful and industrious, the other ugly and lazy. But she was fonder of the ugly and lazy one because she was her own daughter. The other had to do all the housework and carry out the ashes like a cinderella. Every day the poor maiden had to sit near a well by the road and spin and spin until her fingers bled.

Now, one day it happened that the reel became quite bloody, and when the maiden leaned over the well to rinse it, it slipped out of her hand and fell to the bottom. She burst into tears, ran to her stepmother, and told her about the accident. But the stepmother gave her a terrible scolding and was very cruel. "If you've let the reel fall in," she said, "then you'd better get it out again."

The maiden went back to the well but did not know where to begin. She was so distraught that she jumped into the well to fetch the reel, but she lost consciousness. When she awoke and regained her senses, she was in a beautiful meadow where the sun was shining and thousands of flowers were growing. She walked across the meadow and soon she came to a baker's oven full of bread, but the bread was yelling, "Take me out! Take me out, or else I'll burn, I've been baking long enough!" She went up to the oven and took out all the loaves one by one with the baker's peel. After that she moved on and came to a tree full of apples.

"Shake me! Shake me!" The tree exclaimed. "My apples are all ripe."

She shook the tree till the apples fell down like raindrops, and she kept shaking until they had all come down. After she had gathered them and stacked them in a pile, she moved on. At last she came to a small cottage where an old woman was looking out of a window. She had such big teeth that the maiden was scared and wanted to run away. But the woman cried after her, "Why are you afraid, my dear child? Stay with me, and if you do all the housework properly, everything will turn out well for you. Only you must make my bed nicely and carefully and give it a good shaking so the feathers fly. Then it will snow on earth, for I am Mother Holle." [*Whenever it snowed in olden days, people in Hessa used to say Mother Holle is making her bed.*]

Since the old woman had spoken so kindly to her, the maiden plucked up her courage and agreed to enter her service. She took care of everything to the old woman's satisfaction and always shook the bed so hard that the feathers flew about like snowflakes. In return, the woman treated her well: she never said an unkind word to the maiden, and she gave her roasted or boiled meat every day. After the maiden had spent a long time with Mother Holle, she became sad. At first she did not know what was bothering her, but finally she realised that she was homesick. Even though everything was a thousand times better there than at home, she still had a desire to return. At last she said to Mother Holle, "I've got a tremendous longing to return home, and even though everything is wonderful down here, I've got to return to my people."

"I'm pleased that you want to return home," Mother Holle responded, "and since you've served me so faithfully, I myself shall bring you up there again."

She took the maiden by the hand and led her to a large door. When it was opened and the maiden was standing right beneath the doorway, and enormous shower of gold came pouring down, and all the gold stuck to her so that she became completely covered with it.

"I want you to have this because you've been so industrious," said Mother Holle, and she gave her back the reel that had fallen into the well. Suddenly the door closed, and the maiden found herself back up on earth, not far from her mother's house. When she entered the yard, the cock was sitting on the well and crowed:

"Cock-a-doodle-do!
My golden maiden, what's new with you?"

She went inside to her mother, and since she was covered with so much gold, her mother and sister gave her a warm welcome. Then she told them all about

what had happened to her, and when her mother heard how she had obtained so much wealth, she wanted to arrange it so her ugly and lazy daughter could have the same good fortune. Therefore, her daughter had to sit near the well and spin, and she made the reel bloody by sticking her fingers into a thornbush and pricking them. After that she threw the reel down into the well and jumped in after it. Just like her sister, and she reached the beautiful meadow and walked along the same path. When she came to the oven, the bread cried out again, "Take me out! Take me out, or else I'll burn! I've been baking long enough!"

But the lazy maiden answered, "I've no desire to get myself dirty!"

She moved on, and soon she came to the apple tree that cried out, "Shake me! Shake me! My apples are all ripe."

However, the lazy maiden replied, "Are you serious? One of the apples could fall and hit me on my head."

Thus she went on, and when she came to Mother Holle's cottage, she was not afraid because she had already heard of the old woman's big teeth, and she hired herself out to her right away. On the first day she made an effort to work hard and obey Mother Holle when the old woman told her what to do, for the thought of gold was on her mind. On the second day she started loafing, and on the third day she loafed even more. Indeed, she did not want to get out of bed in the morning, nor did she make Mother Holle's bed as she should have, and she certainly did not shake it so the feathers flew. Soon Mother Holle became tired of this and dismissed the maiden from her service. The lazy maiden was quite happy to go and expected that now the shower of gold would come. Mother Holle led her to the door, but as the maiden was standing in the doorway, a big kettle of pitch came pouring down over her instead of gold.

"That's a reward for your services," Mother Holle said, and shut the door. The lazy maiden went home covered in pitch, and when the cock on the well saw her, it crowed:

"Cock-a-doodle-do!
My dirty maiden, what's new with you?"

The pitch did not come off the maiden and remained on her as long as she lived.

Hreða

Hreða is an obscure Anglo-Saxon goddess. According to Bede, the heathen English named the month of March *Hreðmonað* in her honour.

In *Teutonic Mythology*, Grimm tells us that the Anglo-Saxon name *Hreða* is related to Old High German *hruod* and Old Norse *hroðr* 'glorious', "so that we get the meaning of a shining and renowned goddess."

Hreða Lore

From Bede's *The Reckoning of Time*
translated by Faith Wallis

Chapter 15: The English Months

In olden times the English people --for it did not seem fitting to me that I should speak of other nations' observance of the year and yet be silent about my own nation's-- calculated their months according to the course of the Moon. Hence, after the manner of the Greeks and the Romans, [the months] take their name from the Moon, for the moon is called *mona* and each month *monath*.

The first month, which the Latins call January, is Giuli; February is called Solmonath; March Hrethmonath [...]

Hrethmonath is named for their goddess Hretha, to whom they sacrificed at this time.

Note: In *Teutonic Mythology* Jakob Grimm presents evidence that in some parts of Germany the old name for March was *Retmonat* or *Redtimonet*, names which seem to be directly cognate with the Anglo-Saxon. This is the only evidence we have that the goddess Hreða was known outside of England.

Iðun

Iðun is primarily known as the goddess who holds the apples of life, which serve to keep the gods from growing old.

The name Iðun contains the Old Norse words *ið* 'again' and *unna* 'to yield' and can be roughly translated as "the renewer".

Iðun Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*
translated by Anthony Faulkes

Gylfaginning

'There is one called Bragi. He is renowned for wisdom and especially for eloquence and command of language. Especially he is knowledgeable about poetry, and because of him poetry is called *brag*, and from his name a person is said to be a *brag* [chief] of men or women who has eloquence beyond others, whether it is a woman or a man. Idunn is his wife. She keeps in her casket apples which the gods have to feed on when they age, and then they all become young, and so it will go on right up to Ragnarok.'

Then spoke Gangleri: 'It seems to me that the gods are staking a great deal on Idunn's care and trustworthiness.'

Then spoke High, laughing: 'It nearly led to disaster on one occasion.'

Skaldskaparmal

[Snorri explains how the giant Thiassi, in eagle form, has Loki at his mercy.]

He shouted and begged the eagle most earnestly for a truce but it said that Loki would never get free unless he vowed solemnly to get Idunn to come outside Asgard with her apples, and Loki accepted. Then he got free and went to his comrades. And nothing else noteworthy was told for the moment of their expedition until they got home. But at the agreed time Loki lured Idunn out through Asgard to a certain forest, saying that he had found some apples that she would think worth having, and told her she should bring her apples with her and compare them with these. Then the giant Thiassi arrived in eagle shape and snatched Idunn and flew away with her to his home in Thrymheim.

But the Æsir were badly affected by Idunn's disappearance and soon became grey and old. Then the Æsir held a parliament and asked each other what was the last that was known about Idunn, and the last she had been seen was that she had gone outside Asgard with Loki. Then Loki was arrested and brought to the parliament and he was threatened with death or torture. Being filled with terror he said he would go in search of Idunn in Giantland if Freyia would lend him a falcon shape of hers. And when he got the falcon shape he flew north to Giantland and arrived one day at giant Thiassi's; he was out at sea in a boat, but Idunn was at home alone. Loki turned her into the form of a nut and held her in his claws and flew as fast as he could.

[Thiassi changes into eagle-shape and chases after Loki. The Æsir start a fire and the eagle flies into it and burns.]

How shall Idunn be referred to? By calling her wife of Bragi and keeper of the apples, and the apples the Æsir's old-age cure. She is also giant Thiassi's booty in accordance with the story told above about his abducting her from the Æsir.

Iðun Lore
from *The Poetic Edda*
translated by Elsa-Brita Titchenell
in *The Masks of Odin: Wisdom of the Ancient Norse*

Lokisenna

Loki: May you be robbed of horse and bangle, Brage!
Of all Aesir and elves here you are the most craven.

Brage: Were I outside instead of inside Äger's hall I should
bear your head in my hand. It would serve your
lie right.

Idun: I beg of you, Brage, by your children and your
wished-for sons, tease not Loki reproachfully here
in Äger's hall.

Loki: Shut up Idun. You of all women I think are the
most man-crazy since your dazzling arms clasped
your brother's bane.

Idun: I will not tease Loki with accusations here in Äger's
hall. I would rather appease Brage who is wrought
up; I do not want you two angered to fight.

Oðins Korpgalder

Dwells in the dells the knowing maiden,
Fallen from Yggdrasil down, from the ash;
The elves named her Idun; she is the oldest
Of Ivalde's younger brood.

Unhappy she seemed over this misfortune,
Lying captive under the lofty tree.
She liked it not with the daughter of Night,
Accustomed to having world's for her dwelling.

Iðun Lore

From *The Haustlöng of Þjóðólfr of Hvinir*
translated by Richard North

Haustlög 9-12

The kin-branch of Hymir [Þjazi the giant] bade the rouser of tales, who was mad with pain, to bring him a girl, the one who knew the old-age medicine of the Æsir; the thief of the gods' Brising-girdle [Loki] later got the gods' lady of the brook of the well-spring's corn-field [wave of the eddy: ið[u]-unnar] into the courtyards of the rock- Niðuðr [Þjazi].

Those who dwell in the bright mountain-tops [giants] did not become downcast after that; this was when Eddy-Wave [Ið-unnr] had newly arrived from the south among the giants; all the kin of Ingvi-freyr (the divine rulers were looking rather ugly) deliberated in the assembly, grey-haired and old,

until they met the hound of the falling sea corpses of the nourishing- Gefn [wolf: robber of the goddess: Þjazi] and bound the servant who had led her *with a spear of* the tree of venoms [with a magic wand]; 'you shall be tricked out of your mind', angry, he [Ingvi-freyr] spoke, 'with trickery, Loki, you lead the glorious joy-increasing girl of the gods [Iðunn] back here.'

I heard this, that afterwards, he who was putting Hoenir's courage to the test [Loki], increased by a hawk's flying-fur, betrayed the playmate of the Æsir [Iðunn] back and that the ruler-diety of the feather's swinging leafblade, the loon-minded father of Mörn [Þjazi], laid an eagle's vigorous wing-draft right onto the child of the bird of prey.

Lofn

Lofn is an obscure goddess who helps lovers to marry.

The name Lofn means 'the comforter'.

Lofn Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*
translated by Anthony Faulkes

Gylfaginning

In answer to 'Who are the Asyniur?'

Eighth Lofn: she is so kind and good to pray to that she gets leave from All-father or Frigg for people's union, between women and men, even if before it was forbidden or refused. Hence, it is from her name that it is called *lof* [permission], as well as when something is praised (*lofat*) greatly by people.

Elsewhere Snorri includes Lofn in a list of Asynjur.

Nanna

Nanna is primarily known as the wife of the god Baldr and the mother of the god Forseti.

Scholar's are not in agreement as to the origin of the name Nanna. It may be related to the Germanic root *nanþ-*, in which case Nanna would mean "the daring one". On the other hand, it could just be a variant of "mama" --as in the current use of the word in some English dialects to mean grandmother.

Nanna Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*
translated by Anthony Faulkes

Gylfaginning

Forseti is the name of the son of Baldr and Nanna Nep's daughter. He has a hall called Glitnir, and whoever comes to him with difficult legal disputes, they all leave with their differences settled. It is the best place of judgement among gods and men.

Snorri tells the story of the death of Baldr. Baldr dreams that he will die, so his mother Frigg gets all potentially harmful things to promise that they will not hurt her son. As a consequence the gods make sport of throwing things at Baldr, knowing that he cannot be hurt. Loki disguises himself as a woman and discovers from Frigg that mistletoe hasn't sworn the oath. Loki gives a sprig of mistletoe to blind Hod and aims him in Baldr's direction. "The missile flew through him and he fell dead to the ground." The gods arrange a ship-funeral for Baldr.

Then Baldr's body was carried out to the ship, and when his wife Nanna Nep's daughter saw this she collapsed with grief and died. She was carried on to the pyre and it was set fire to.

Hermod rides to Hel to negotiate with the goddess Hel for Baldr's release. She says she will let him go if all things in the world weep for him.

Then Hermod got up and Baldr went with him out of the hall and took the ring Draupnir and sent it to Odin as a keepsake, and Nanna sent Frigg a linen robe and other gifts too; to Fulla a finger-ring.

Loki refuses to weep for Baldr.

Skaldskaparmal

How shall Baldr be referred to? By calling him son of Odin and Frigg, husband of Nanna, father of Forseti, owner of Hringhorni and Draupnir, enemy of Hod, Hel's companion, god of lamentations.

How shall Frigg be referred to? By calling her daughter of Fiorgyn, wife of Odin, mother of Baldr, rival of Iord and Rind and Gunnlod and Gerd, mother-in-law of Nanna, queen of Æsir and Asyniur, of Fulla and falcon form and Fensalir.

(Snorri also includes Nanna in two lists of Asyniur.)

Nanna Lore

from *The History of the Danes*
by Saxo Grammaticus
translated by Peter Fisher

Book Three

Saxo lists the many skills of Høther, foster son of King Gevar, then goes on to tell us that

Gevar's daughter Nanna, was much taken by the youth's [Høther's] many accomplishments and began to seek his embraces. Girl's warm to young men's prowess and accept manliness in lieu of good looks. [...]

Now it happened that Balder, the son of Odin, was stirred at the sight of Nanna bathing and then gripped by an unbound passion. The sheen of her graceful body inflamed him and her manifest charms seared his heart, for there is no stronger incitement to lust than beauty. As he was afraid that Høther would constitute the most obvious block to his wishes, he decided to kill him with a

sword, so that there should be no delay or obstacle to the swift satisfaction of his desires.

Some valkuries tell Høther about Balder's plan to seduce Nanna. But warn him that he should not challenge Balder to combat because he can't beat a god. Høther interprets the encounter as magical trickery and decides to ask Gevar for Nanna's hand. Gevar informs him that Balder has already laid claim to his daughter and that the only way to get rid of the son of Odin, is with a certain sword belonging to a satyr named Miming. Høther manages to obtain the sword and has various other adventures.

While this was happening in Halogaland, Balder armed himself and entered Gevar's territory in order to claim Nanna, The king told him to ascertain the feelings of Nanna herself and he therefore addressed himself to the girl with carefully considered inducements. When, however, he made no progress with her, he pressed her to learn her reasons for rejecting him, to which she replied that a god could not possibly wed a mortal, as the huge discrepancy in their natures would preclude any congruous union between them. Sometimes, too, dieties were in the habit of revoking their contracts and suddenly fracturing the ties which they had made with their inferiors. [...] By countering him with such sophistries the clever girl wove arguments for declining Balder's proposal and so dodged his entreaties.

Høther and his men go to war with Balder and the gods. Høther manages to lop off the handle of Thor's hammer, causing the gods to retreat. But then Balder defeats Høther in another battle and Høther flees back to the protection of King Gevar. Meanwhile...

Balder was incessantly tormented at night by phantoms which mimicked the shape of Nanna and caused him to fall into such an unhealthy condition that he could not even walk properly. For this reason he took to travelling in a chariot or carriage. The violent passion that soaked his heart brought him almost to the verge of collapse. He judged that the victory had yielded nothing if it had not given him Nanna as a prize.

Balder and Høther continue to battle each other intermittently until finally Høther kills Balder with Miming's sword.

Nehalennia

Nehalennia is a goddess associated with abundance and sea-faring honored in the Zeeland area of the Netherlands.

Scholars have not settled on a satisfactory explanation for the origin of the name *Nehalennia*. Some have speculated that the name means "protector". The second part of the name may contain the Germanic verb *helan* 'to hide' (which is also the basis for the name of the Norse goddess Hel).

Nerthus

Nerthus is primarily known as an earth goddess honored by several Germanic barbarian tribes, including the Angles [*Anglii* in Latin] who eventually settled the island which was later to be called *Angleland*, or England for short.

Scholars are not in agreement about the origin of the name *Nerthus*. It may stem from the Proto-Indo-European root **ner-*, 'virility'. While it may seem strange that a goddess would be associated with a male trait, this origin might explain some of the confusion over Nerthus' gender. The Proto-Germanic name Nerthus corresponds phonologically to the Old Norse name Njörð. The popular explanations of the diety's apparent sex change over a few centuries are: 1) The name Nerthus was originally associated with a male/female (possibly brother/sister) pair of dieties. 2) Nerthus was originally a hermaphrodite. According to Germanic language professor Rudolf Simek, "The usage of the plural form of the god's name Njörð, which occurs in several skaldic poems points to the first solution. The fact that the masculine and feminine of the grammatical u-stem fall together means that a formal differentiation according to gender becomes impossible."

Nerthus Lore from *The Germania* by the Roman historian Tacitus translated by H. Mattingly

The Langobardi, by contrast, are famous because they are so few. Hemmed in as they are by many mighty peoples, they find safety, not in submission, but in facing the risks of battle. After them come the Reudigni, Aviones, Anglii, Varini, Eudoses, Suarines, and Nuitones, all of them safe behind ramparts of rivers and woods. There is nothing noteworthy about these tribes individually, but they share a common worship of Nerthus, or Mother Earth. They believe that she takes part in human affairs, riding in a chariot among her people. On an island of the sea stands an inviolate grove, in which, veiled with a cloth, is a chariot that none but the priest may touch. The priest can feel the presense of the goddess in this holy of holies, and attends her with deepest reverance as her

chariot is drawn along by cows. Then follow days of rejoicing and merrymaking in every place that she condescends to visit and sojourn in. No one goes to war, no one takes up arms; every iron object is locked away. Then, and then only, are peace and quiet known and welcomed until the goddess, when she has had enough of the society of men, is restored to her sacred precinct by the priest. After that, the chariot, the vestments, and (believe it if you will) the goddess herself, are cleansed in a secluded lake. This service is performed by slaves who are immediately after drowned in the lake. Thus mystery begets terror and a pious reluctance to ask what that sight can be which is only seen by men doomed to die.

Rán

Rán is best known as a sea-goddess who hosts those who drown at her hall.

In Old Norse, *rán* means "robber." Thus, Rán's name may refer to her habit of using her net to steal away the lives of seafarers.

Rán Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*
translated by Anthony Faulkes

Skaldskaparmal

How shall the sea be referred to? By calling it Ymir's blood, visitor to the gods, husband of Ran, father of Ægir's daughters, whose names are Himinglæva [heaven bright], Dufa [dip], Blodughadda [bloody-haired], Hefring [lifting], Unn [wave], Hronn [wave], Bylgia [billow], Bara [wave], Kolga [cold one]; land of Ran and of Ægir's daughters.

[Snorri explains how Ægir invited the Æsir to a feast and lit up his hall with glowing gold.]

Rán is the name of Ægir's wife, and the names of their nine daughters are as written above. At this feast everything served itself, both food and ale and all the utensils that were needed for the feast. Then the Æsir discovered that Ran had a net in which she caught everyone that went to sea. So this is the story of gold being called fire or light or brightness of Ægir, Ran or Ægir's daughters, and from such kennings the practice has now developed of calling gold fire of the sea and of all terms for it, since Ægir and Ran's names are also terms for sea.

The following are also terms for sea, so that it is normal to use them in kennings for ship or gold: Ran, who, it is said, was Ægir's wife, as in this example:

*The main's embers were tossed up into the sky,
the sea moved with force.
I think the prows cut the clouds.
Ran's way hit the moon.*

Rán Lore
from *The Poetic Edda*
translated by Carolayne Larrington

Helgakvida Hundingsbana I, 30

And Sigrun above, brave in battle,
protected them and their vessel;
the king's sea-beasts twisted powerfully
out of Ran's hand toward Gniplund

Helgakvida Hiorvardssonar 18

'Ogress, you stood before the prince's ships
and blocked the fjord mouth;
and king's men you were going to give to Ran,
if a spear hadn't lodged in your flesh.'

Reginmal (introductory prose)

There was a dwarf named Andvari; he spent a long time in the falls in the form of a pike and got himself food in that way. 'Otter is the name of our brother,' said Regin, and he used to go to the falls in the form of an otter. He had caught a salmon and was sitting on the river bank, eating it with his eyes shut. Loki struck him with a stone and killed him. The Æsir thought this was a good fortune and flayed off the otter's skin for a bag. That same evening they stayed the night with Hreidmar and showed what they had caught. Then we seized them and made them ransom their lives by filling the otterskin bag with gold

and also by covering the outside with red gold. Then they sent Loki to collect the gold. He went to Ran, and borrowed her net and then went to Andvara-falls and spread the net ahead of the pike; and he jumped into it.

Rán Lore
from *Egil's Saga*
translated by Gwyn Jones

Sonnatorek 6-9

Grim was the breach
Broke by the sea
In the closed fence
Of my father's line.
Bare now I know
And open stands
That gap in my sons
Sea won on me.

Deeply has Rán
Wrought for my ill;
Naked I'm laid
Of loving friends.
Sea has cut bonds,
Severed my line,
Kinrope's strand
Struck from my heart.

Know, if my wrongs
I could right with the sword,
Soon for the Alesmith
All would be over.
The stormwind's brother,
Might I bear weapons,
I would go match him
And Ægir's moonmate.

Rán Lore
from *Friðþjófs Saga*
translated by Eiríkr Magnússon and William Morris

Friðþjófs Saga 6

Therewith so great a sea smote them, that the bulwark was broken and both the sheets, and four men were washed overboard and all lost.

Then sang Frithiof:

"Both sheets are bursten
Amid the great billows,
Four swains are sunk
In the fathomless sea."

"Now meseems," said Frithiof, "it may well be that some of us will go to the house of Ran, nor shall we deem us well sped if we come not thither in glorious array; wherefore it seems good to me that each man of us here should have somewhat of gold on him."

Then he smote asunder the ring, Ingibiorg's gift, and shared it between all his men, and sang a stave withal:

"The red ring here I hew me
Once owned of Halfdan's father,
The wealthy lord of erewhile,
Or the sea waves undo us,
So on the guests shall gold be,
If we have need of guesting;
Meet so for mighty men-folk
Amid Ran's hall to hold them."

"Not all so sure is it that we come there," said Biorn; "and yet it may well be so."

Rán Lore
from *Eyrbyggja Saga*
translated by Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards

Eyrbyggja Saga 54

Next morning Thorodd and his men put out of Ness with their dried fish, and they were all drowned off Enni. The boat and the fish were washed ashore there, but the bodies were never found.

When the news came from Frodriver, Kjartan and Thurid invited their neighbours to a funeral feast, at which they used the Christmas ale. On the first evening of the feast, when all the guests were seated, Thorodd and his companions came into the room drenched to the skin. Everyone welcomed Thorodd and his men, and thought this a happy omen because in those days it was believed that drowned people had been well received by the sea-goddess, Rán, if they came to their own funeral feast.

Rind

Rind is primarily known as the mother of Oðin's son Váli.

Scholars are not in agreement as to the etymology of the name Rind, but if the goddess originated south of Scandinavia, her name may be related to the old Anglo-Saxon, Dutch, and German word *rind* meaning 'bark'. According to Saxo, Oðin charms Rind with a spell carved into a piece of bark.

Rind Lore

from *The Poetic Edda*
translated by Carolyne Larrington

Baldrs Draumar

'Rind will give birth to Vali in western halls,
Odin's son will fight when one night old;
he won't wash his hands nor comb his hair,
until he's brought to the pyre Baldr's enemy.'
Reluctantly I told you, now I'll be silent.'

Rind Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*
translated by Anthony Faulkes

Gylfaginning

(*In a description of the Æsir*) 'Ali or Vali is one, the son of Odin and Rind. He is bold in battles and a very good shot.'

Thor's mother Iord and Vali's mother Rind are reckoned among the Asyniur.

Skaldskaparmal

Kormak said this:

The land-getter, who binds the mast-top straight, honours the provider of the dieties' fiord [the mead of poetry, whose provider is the poet] with a head-band. Ygg [Odin] won Rind by spells.

How shall Vali be referred to? By calling him son of Odin and Rind, stepson of Frigg, brother of the Æsir, Baldr's avenging As, enemy of Hod and his slayer, father's homestead-inhabiter.

How shall Frigg be referred to? By calling her daughter of Fiorgyn, wife of Odin, mother of Baldr, rival of Iord and Rind and Gunnlod and Gerd, mother-in-law of Nanna, queen of Æsir and Asyniur, of Fulla and falcon form and Fensalir.

How shall the earth be referred to? By calling it Ymir's flesh and mother of Thor, daughter of Onar, bride of Odin, rival of Frigg and Rind and Gunnload.

Thiodolf said this:

The spear-sky [unwarlike] wretch kept far off when the battle-gleam- [sword]-impeller [warrior, ruler] once took Rind's rival [Iord, the land] without bride-price [by violence].

Snorri also includes Rind in his list of all the Asyniur.

Rind Lore

from *The History of the Danes*
by Saxo Grammaticus
translated by Peter Fisher

Book Three

Now although Odin was regarded as the chief of the gods, he would constantly approach seers, soothsayers and others whom he had discovered strong in the finest arts of prediction, with a view to prosecuting vengeance for his son.

Divinity is not always so perfect that it can dispense with human aid. Rostiof the Finn foretold that Rinda, daughter of the Rutenian king, must bear him

another son, who would take reprisal for his brother's killing; the gods had destined that their colleague should be avenged by his future brother's hand. Acting on this intelligence Odin muffled his face beneath a hat so that his features would not be recognised and went to the king to offer his services as a soldier. By him Odin was made general, took over his master's army and achieved a glorious victory over his enemies. On account of his adroit conduct of this battle the monarch admitted him to the highest rank in his friendship, honouring him no less generously with gifts than decorations. After a brief lapse of time Odin beat the enemy's line into flight single-handed and, after contriving this amazing defeat, returned to announce it. Everyone was astounded that one man's strength could have heaped massacre on such countless numbers. Relying on these achievements Odin whispered to the king the secret of his love. Uplifted by the other's friendly encouragement, he tried to kiss the girl and was rewarded by a slap across the face.

Neither the indignity nor distress at the affront deflected him from his purpose. The following year, to avoid feebly dropping the quest which he had begun so enthusiastically, he put on foreigner's clothing and once more sought his patron. It was difficult for anyone meeting him to discern his true countenance because he had disguised his wonted appearance under deceptive splashes of fresh mud. He made out that his name was Rofar and that he was a practiced metal worker. By undertaking the construction of a diversity of bronze shapes with the most beautiful outlines he so recommended his skill in workmanship that the king awarded him a lump of gold and commissioned him to fashion personal adornments for the womenfolk. So he hammered out many trinkets for feminine embellishment, and at length presented the girl with a bracelet more painstakingly finished than the rest and several rings finished with equal care.

But none of his services could bend her disdain. Whenever he wished to offer her a kiss she boxed his ears. Presents from someone antipathetic to us are unacceptable, while those of friends give much greater pleasure; so it is that at times we rate the value of a gift by its giver. The obstinate girl was quite certain that the sly old fellow was searching for an opening to exercise his lust by a pretence of generosity. His nature was sharp and indomitable, so that she recognised some trickery was afoot beneath his deference and that his plying her with offerings meant that secretly he was up to no good. Her father attempted to browbeat her for refusing the match, but, finding the idea of sexual union with an elderly man loathsome, she claimed that over-early embraces were not suitable for a girl of tender years, and by pleading immaturity lent support to her rejection.

Odin, however, had found by experience that nothing served eager lovers more than a tough persistence, and although he had been humiliated by two rebuffs he altered his looks a third time and approached the king, claiming unparalleled competence in military arts. It was not merely desire which led him to take such trouble, but a wish to eliminate his discredit. At one time gifted sorcerers had the ability to change their aspect instantaneously and present different images of themselves; they were expert at reproducing the qualities as well as the normal appearance of any age group. Consequently the old veteran would give a most admirable display of his professional skills by riding proudly to combat along with the most courageous. Despite this tribute, the young woman remained inflexible. The mind cannot easily move to a genuine regard for someone whom it once heartily disliked. When on one occasion, just before departing, he wanted to snatch a kiss from her, she gave him such a shove that he was sent flying and banged his chin on the floor. Immediately he touched her with a piece of bark inscribed with spells and made her like one demented, a moderate sort of punishment for the continual insults he had received.

Still he did not shrink from pursuing his plans (for confidence in his greatness had puffed up his hopes) and so this indefatigable wayfarer journeyed to the king a fourth time, after putting on girl's clothing. Once more received at court, he proved himself not only solicitous but even rather pushing. Because he was dressed more or less like a woman, the majority imagined him to be one. He called himself Vecha and swore he was a female physician, giving warrant to his claim by his great readiness to help in such matters. At length he was enlisted in the queen's entourage and acted as her daughter's attendant. He used to wash the dirt from her feet in the evenings and, as he rinsed them, was allowed to touch her calves and upper thighs. Yet since Fortune walks at varying speeds, what he had been unable to manage through ingenuity was brought to him by chance.

The princess happened to fall sick. Looking round for suitable treatments, she called upon the hands she had once cursed to save her life, and employed a person she had always distained to preserve her. He closely examined her symptoms and then declared that she must take a certain medicine to counteract the disease as swiftly as possible; unfortunately this perscription would taste so bitter that unless the girl allowed herself to be tied down she would not be able to bear the potency of the cure. The elements of her distemper must be expelled from her inmost fibres.

Once her father had heard this she was laid on a bed, bound, and ordered to submit passively to everything her doctor applied. The king was quite deceived by the female garments with old Odin wore to disguise his pertinacious

scheming, and it was this which enabled a seeming remedy to become a license for his pleasures. Her physician stopped attending her and seized the opportunity to make love, rushing to wreak his lust before he dispelled her fever, and finding that where in sound health she had been antagonistic he could now take advantage of her disposition.

The reader will be interested to hear an alternative version of the story. Some say that the king realised Odin was groaning with passion yet achieving nothing, at great cost to his body and soul; rather therefore than deprive him of a due reward for his services he allowed him to have intercourse secretly with his daughter. Sometimes a father can be vicious towards his offspring if he lacks all sense of duty and an impetuous disposition destroys his natural humanity. When his daughter gave birth to a child, his mistake resulted in utter shame and remorse.

Saga

The goddess Saga is associated with story-telling and family history

Saga's name is most likely directly related to the word *saga* (epic story) which in turn comes from the Old Norse verb *segja* 'to say, tell'.

Saga Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*
translated by Anthony Faulkes

Gylfaginning

In answer to 'Who are the Asyniur?'

'The highest is Frigg. She has a dwelling called Fensalir and it is very splendid. Second is Saga. She dwells at Sokkvabekk, and that is a big place.'

Notes: *Fensalir* means 'marsh hall'; *Sokkvabekk* means 'sunken bank' or 'treasure bank'

Saga Lore

from *The Poetic Edda*
translated by Carolyne Larrington

Grimnismal

Oðin is describing the halls of the gods

'Sokkvabekk a forth is called and cool waves
resound over it;
there Odin and Saga drink everyday,
joyful, from golden cups.'

Sif

The goddess Sif is primarily known for two things: her marriage to Thor and her golden hair.

The Norse word *sif* comes from the same root as the English word 'sibling' and signifies a relative by blood or marriage. The name Sif, therefore, simply means 'relation' or 'family member'.

Sif Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*
translated by Anthony Faulkes

Prologue

(In his Prologue to the Edda, Snorri attempts to place the gods in a historical setting in order to explain their place in contemporary genealogies.)

In the Northern part of the world [Thor] came across a prophetess called Sibyl, whom we call Sif, and married her. No one is able to tell Sif's ancestry. She was the most beautiful of all women, her hair like gold. Their son was Loridi, who took after his father.

Gylfaginning

In answer to 'Which are the Æsir that men ought to believe in?'

'Ull is the name of one, son of Sif, stepson of Thor. He is such a good archer and skier that no one can compete with him. He is also beautiful in appearance and has a warrior's accomplishments. He is a good one to pray to in single combat.'

Skaldskaparmal

Hrungnir [*a giant*] was in such a great giant fury that he had rushed in through the As-gates. And when he got to the hall doors, Æsir invited him in for a drink.

He went into the hall and demanded that he should be given a drink. Then the goblets that Thor normally drank out of were brought out, and Hrungrnir drained each one. And when he became drunk there was no lack of big words: he said he was going to remove Val-hall and take it to Giantland, but bury Asgard and kill all the gods, except that he was going to take Freyia and Sif home with him, and Freyia was the only one then who dared bring him drink, and he declared he was going to drink all of Ægir's ale. And when the Æsir got tired of his boasting, they invoked the name of Thor. Immediately Thor entered the hall with his hammer raised up and in great anger...

Note: also in Skaldskapmal, Snorri quotes a verse by the skald Bragi in which "the thief of Thrud" is used as a kenning for Hrungrnir. So, whereas in the quote above Hrungrnir threatens to steal Sif, there was apparently another myth lost to us in which he steals Thor and Sif's daughter Thrud.

How shall Sif be referred to? By calling her wife of Thor, mother of Ull, the fair-haired diety, rival of Iarnsaxa, mother of Thrud.

Why is gold called Sif's hair? Loki Laufeyiarson had done this for love of mischief: he had cut off all Sif's hair. And when Thor found out, he caught Loki and was going to break every one of his bones until he swore that he would get black-elves to make Sif a head of hair out of gold that would grow like any other hair. [*Here follows the story of how Loki got the dark-elves to make a bunch of magick items for the gods*] Then Loki gave [...] the head of hair which was to be Sif's to Thor [...] the hair was rooted in the flesh as soon as it came on to Sif's head.

Sif Lore

from *The Poetic Edda*
translated by Carolyne Larrington

Harbarddzljod

Odhin in the guise of a ferryman says to Thor

'Sif has a lover at home, he's the one you want to meet, then you'd have that trial of strength which you deserve.'

Lokasenna

Then Sif went forward and poured out mead for Loki into a crystal cup and said:

'Welcome, now, Loki, and take the crystal cup
full of ancient mead,
you should admit, among the children of the Æsir,
that I alone am blameless'

He took the horn and drank it down:

'That indeed you would be, if you were so,
if you were shy and fierce towards men;
I alone know, as I think I do know,
your lover besides Thor,
and that was the wicked Loki.'

Sigyn

Sigyn is mainly know as Loki's faithful wife.

Her name comes from Old Norse *sigr* 'victory' and *vina* 'girlfriend'

Sigyn Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*
translated by Anthony Faulkes

Gylfaginning

Sigyn is the name of his [Loki's] wife, Nari or Narfi their son.

Then the Æsir turned Vali into the form of a wolf and he tore his brother Narfi to pieces. Then the Æsir took his guts and bound Loki with them across the three stones --one under his shoulders, one under his loins, the third under the backs of his knees-- and these bonds turned to iron. Then Skadhi got a poisonous snake and fixed it up over him so that the poison would drip from the snake into his face. But his wife Sigyn stands next to him holding a basin under the drops of poison. And when the basin is full she goes and pours away the poison, but in the meantime the poison drips into his face. Then he jerks away so hard that the whole earth shakes. That is what you call an earthquake. There he will lie in bonds until Ragnarok.

Sigyn Lore

From *The Poetic Edda*
translated by Carolyn Larrington

Volupsa

"She saw a captive lying under the grove of hot springs,
that evil-loving form, Loki she recognized;
there sits Sigyn, not all happy
about her husband --do you understand yet, or what more?"

Lokasenna end prose

And after that Loki hid in the waterfall of Franagr, disguised as a salmon. There the Æsir caught him. He was bound with the guts of his son Narfi changed into a wolf. Skadhi took a poisonous snake and fastened it over Loki's face; poison dripped down from it. Sigyn, Loki's wife, sat there and held a basin under the poison. But when the basin was full, she carried the poison out; and meanwhile the poison fell on Loki. Then he writhed so violently at this that all the earth shook from it; these are now called earthquakes.

Sigyn Lore

From *The Haustlög of Þjóðólfr of Hvinir*
translated by Richard North

Haustlög 7

"Then set fast was the cargo of Sigyn's arms [Loki], whom all the divine powers glare at in the bonds"

Sjöfn

Sjöfn is an obscure goddess concerned with love and affection.

Sjöfn's name may be related to Old Norse *sefi*, a poetic term which can indicate either a feeling or a family relation.

Sjöfn Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*
translated by Anthony Faulkes

Gylfaginning

In answer to 'Who are the Asyniur?'

'Seventh is Siofn. She is much concerned to direct people's minds to love, both women and men. It is from her name that affection is called *siafni*'

Elsewhere Snorri includes Sjöfn in a list of Asynjur.

Skaði

Skaði is a Jotun associated with archery and skiing who married and divorced the Vanic seagod Njörd.

The Old Norse noun *skaði* (roughly 'harm') is directly related to the Mod. English adj. 'scathing' (harmful, searing, caustic).

Skaði Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*
translated by Anthony Faulkes

Skaldskaparmal

Skaði's father, the giant Thiassi, kidnapped the goddess Iðun and ended up being killed by the Æsir after a complicated series of events in which Loki played a major role. Snorri continues the story...

But Skadi, daughter of giant Thiassi, took helmet and mail-coat all all weapons of war and went to Asgard to avenge her father. But the Æsir offered her atonement and compensation, the first item of which was to choose herself a husband out of the Æsir and choose by the feet and see nothing else of them. Then they saw one person's feet that were exceptionally beautiful and said:

'I choose that one; there can be little that is ugly about Baldr.' But it was Niord of Noatun. It was also in the terms of her settlement that the Æsir were to do something that she thought they would not be able to do, that was to make her laugh. Then Loki did as follows: he tied a cord round the beard of a certain nanny-goat and the other end round his testicles, and they drew each other back and forth and both squealed loudly. The Loki let himself drop into Skadi's lap, and she laughed. Then the atonement with her on the part of the Æsir was complete.

It is said that Odin, as compensation for her, did this: he took Thiassi's eyes and threw them up into the sky and out of them made two stars.

Gylfaginning

Njord has a wife called Skadi, daughter of the giant Thiassi. Skadi wants to have the home her father had had-- this is in some mountains, a place called Thrymheim --but Njord wants to be near the sea. They agreed on this, that they should stay nine nights in Thrymheim and then alternate nines at Noatun. But when Njord came back to Noatun from the mountain he said this:

'I hate mountains--not long was I there, just nine nights: wolves' howling I thought ugly compared with the swans' song.'

Then Skadhi said this:

'I could not sleep on the sea's beds for the birds' screaming; he wakes me who comes from the sea every morning, that gull.'

Then Skadhi went up into the mountain and lived in Thrymheim and generally travels on skis and carries a bow and shoots game. She is called ski-deity or ski-lady. As it says:

'It is called Thrymheim where Thiassi dwelt, that most mighty giant, but now Skadhi, bright bride of gods, inhabits her fathers old abode.

Skaði Lore

From *The Poetic Edda*
translated by Carolyne Larrington

Grimnismal

'Thrymheim the sixth is called, where Thiazi lives,
the terrible giant;
but now Skadi, the shining bride of the gods,
lives in her father's ancient courts.

Hyndluliod

'Baldr's father was heir to Bur,
Freyr married Gerd, she was Gymir's daughter,

of the giant race, and Aurboda's;
though Thiazi was their kinsman,
the giant who loved to shoot; Skadhi was his daughter.

Skirnismal

Freyr, the son of Niord, had seated himself in Hlidskialf and looked into the worlds. He looked into Giantland and saw there a beautiful girl, as she was walking from her father's hall to the storehouse. From that he caught great sickness of heart. Skirnir was the name of Freyr's page. Niord asked him to go and talk to Freyr. Then Skadi said:

'Get up now, Skirnir, and go and ask to speak
with the young man
and ask this: with whom the wise, fertile one
is so terribly angry

Lokasenna

Skadi said:

'You're light-hearted, Loki; you won't for long
play with your tail wagging free
for on a sharp rock, with your ice-cold son's guts,
the gods shall bind you.'

Loki said:

'You know, if on a sharp rock, with my ice-cold son's guts,
the gods shall bind me,
first and foremost I was at the killing
when we attacked Thiazi.'

Skadi said:

'You know, if first and foremost you were at the killing
when you attacked Thiazi,
from my sanctuaries and plains shall always come
baneful advice to you.'

Loki said:

'Gentler in speech you were to the son of Laufey
when you invited me to your bed;
we have to mention such things if we're going to reckon up
our shameful deeds

Lokasenna end prose

And after that Loki hid in the waterfall of Franagr, disguised as a salmon. There the Æsir caught him. He was bound with the guts of his son Narfi changed into a wolf. Skadhi took a poisonous snake and fastened it over Loki's face; poison dripped down from it. Sigyn, Loki's wife, sat there and held a basin under the poison. But when the basin was full, she carried the poison out; and meanwhile the poison fell on Loki. Then he writhed so violently at this that all the earth shook from it; these are now called earthquakes.

Skaði Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*
translated by Lee M. Hollander

Ynglings Saga chapter 8

"Njorth married a woman who was called Skathi. She would not have intercourse with him, and later married Othin. They had many sons. One of them was called Saeming. About him, Eyvind Skaldaspillir composed these verses:

That scion
his sire gat, of
Æsir's kin
with etin maid,
the time that
this fair maiden,
Skathi hight,
the skalds' friend had.

...of sea-bones
and sons many

the ski-goddess
gat with Othin."

Sól

Sól (aka Sunna) is primarily known as a goddess associated with the sun.

The Old Norse word *Sól* means 'sun'.

Sól Lore from *The Prose Edda* translated by Anthony Faulks

Gylfaginning

There was a person whose name was Mundilfaeri who had two children. They were so fair and beautiful that he called the one moon and his daughter Sol [sun], and gave her in marriage to a person called Glen. But the gods got angry at this arrogance and took the brother and sister and set them up in the sky. They made Sol drive the horses that drew the chariot of the sun which the gods had created, to illuminate the worlds, out of a molten particle that had flown out of the world of Muspell. The names of these horses are Arvak and Alsvinn. Under the shoulders of the horses the gods put two bellows to cool them, and in some sources it is called ironblast...

Then spoke Gangleri: 'The sun moves fast, almost as if she was afraid, and she would not be able to go any faster if she was in terror of her death.'

Then High replied: 'It is not surprising that she goes at great speed, he comes close who is after her. And she has no escape except to run away.'

Then spoke Gangleri: 'Who is it that inflicts this unpleasantness on her?'

High said: 'It is two wolves, and the one that is going after her is called Skoll. She is afraid of him and he will catch her...'

Snorri later comments:

Sol and Bil are reckoned among the Asyniur, but their characteristics are mentioned above.

Sól Lore

From *The Poetic Edda*
translated by Carolyn Larrington

Vafthrudnismal

Odin said:

'Tell me this second thing if your knowledge is sufficient
and you, Vafthrudnir, know,
from where the moon came, so that it journeys over
men
and likewise the sun.'

Vafthrudnir said:

'Mundifaeri he is called, the father of the Moon
and likewise the Sun;
they must pass through the sky, every day
to count the years for men.'

Grimnismal

'Arvak and Alsvið, they must pull wearily
the sun from here;
and under their saddle-bows the cheerful gods,
the Æsir, have hidden iron bellows.

'Svalin is the name of a shield which stands before the sun,
before the shining god;
mountain and sea I know would burn up
if it fell away in front.

Sól/Sunna Lore
from *Sólarljóð*
translated by Benjamin Thorpe

The Song of the Sun verses 38-45

I alone knew, how on all sides my pains increased.
The maids of Hel each eve with horror bade me to their home.

The sun I saw, true star of the day, sink in its roaring home;
but Hel's grated doors on the other side I heard heavily creaking.

The sun I saw with blood-red beams beset: (fast was I then
from this world declining) mightier she appeared, in many ways, than she was
before.

The sun I saw, and it seemed to me as if I saw a glorious god;
I bowed before her, for the last time, in the world of men.

The sun I saw: she beamed forth with quivering eyes, appalled and shrinking;
for my heart in great measure was dissolved in languor.

The sun I saw seldom sadder; I had then almost from the world declined;
my tongue was as wood become, and all was cold without me.

The sun I saw never after, since that gloomy day;
for the mountain-waters closed over me, and I went called from torments.

Sól/Sunna Lore
from a 10th Century MS., Merseburg
translated by Bill Griffiths in *Aspects of Anglo-Saxon*
Magic

The Second Merseburg Charm

Phol and Woden travelled to the forest.
Then was Baldur's foal its foot wrenched.
Then encharmed it Sindgund (and) Sunna her sister,
then encharmed it Frija (and) Volla her sister,
then encharmed it Woden, as best he could:
As the bone-wrench, so the blood wrench, (and) so the limb-wrench
bone to bone, blood to blood,
limb to limb, so be glued.

Snotra

Snotra is a goddess said to be wise and well behaved.

The name *Snotra* means "the clever one" in Old Norse.

Snotra Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*
translated by Anthony Faulkes

Gylfaginning

In answer to 'Who are the Asyniur?'

Thirteenth Snotra: she is wise and courteous. From her name a woman or man who is a wise person is called *snotr*.

Elsewhere Snorri includes Snotra in a list of Asynjur.

Syn

Syn is known as a protective, guardian goddess.

The Old Norse word *syn* means 'refusal' or 'denial'.

Syn Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*
translated by Anthony Faulkes

Gylfaginning

In answer to 'Who are the Asyniur?'

Eleventh is Syn: she guards the doors of the hall and shuts them against those who are not to enter, and she is appointed as a defence at assemblies against matters that she wishes to refute. Thus there is a saying that a denial (*syn*) is made when one says no.

Elsewhere Snorri includes Syn in a list of Asynjur.

Þorgerðr Hölgabrúðr

Þorgerðr Hölgabrúðr was patron goddess of the family of Earl Hakon Sigurdarson, ruler of Norway from 970-995. (She may have been an ancestor of Hakon who became a *dís*, a sort of guardian spirit.) In the ninth century a temple was dedicated to her in Gundbrandsdal, Norway. She appears to have been a local diety honoured in Hálogaland.

Þorgerðr is woman's name commonly found in the sagas. It combines the names of two well known Norse dieties, Þor (Thor) and Gerð. Hölgabrúðr means "Hölgi's bride." Hölgi is a legendary king associated with Hálogaland.

Þorgerðr Hölgabrúðr Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*

translated by Anthony Faulkes

Skaldskaparmal

They say that a king known as Holgi, after whom Halogaland is named, was Thorgerd Holgabrud's father. Sacrifices were offered to them both, and Holgi's mound was raised with alternately a layer of gold or silver-- this was the money offered in sacrifice-- and a layer of earth and stone.

Comment:

Snorri appears to be a bit confused here. Since Hölgabrúðr means "Hölgi's bride", Þorgerðr was likely his wife, not his daughter. But it could be that Snorri was familiar with a rather complicated myth that explained what looks to us like an inconsistency.

Þorgerðr Hölgabrúðr Lore

from *The History of the Danes*

by Saxo Grammaticus

translated by Peter Fisher

Book Three

Gusi, prince of the Finns and Biarmians, had a daughter Thora, who was being wooed at the time by Helgi, king of Halogaland, through a series of emissaries. Weakness is generally recognised by the way it needs others' help. Although in that age young men used regularly to set about a request for marriage in their own persons, Helgi was hampered by such a disability of speech that he was ashamed when strangers and even members of his own household heard him. People always avoid advertising their failings, since natural defects are a greater curse the more they are made public. Gusi scoffed at his deligations and replied that a man who relied so little on his own capacities and used diplomatic appeals to gain his end did not deserve a wife. On hearing this, Helgi begged Höther, who he was aware was a more accomplished advocate, to further his suit, promising that he would promptly fulfil any demand he cared to make. The other was overcome by the young man's persistent solicitation and sailed to Norway with a navel force, determined to achieve by power what he had failed to effect with words. After he had delivered a most persuasive piece of oratory on Helgi's behalf, Gusi answered that he must consult his daughter's inclination, as he didn't want to be seen as the heavy-handed father encroaching on her wishes. He summoned her and enquired whether she found pleasure in her suitor; when she said yes, he promised to marry her to Helgi. Thus Höther unstopped Gusi's ears and by the well-tuned, fluent mellifluousness of his eloquence made his listen to his petition.

Þorgerðr Hölgabrúðr Lore
From *The Saga of the Jómsvíkings*
translated by Lee M. Hollander

The Saga of the Jómsvíkings chapter 21

Earl Hákon said: "It seems to me that the battle is beginning to go against us. I had thought it a bad thing to have to fight these men, and so indeed it turns out. Now this will not do. We must bethink ourselves of some wise course. I shall go up on land, and you are to look after the fleet meanwhile, in case they attack."

Thereupon the earl went up on the island of Primsigned, and away into a forest, and fell on his knees and prayed looking northward. And in his prayer he called upon his patron goddess, Thorgerd Holgabrúd. But she would not hear his prayers and was wroth. He offered to make her many a sacrifice, but she refused each one, and he thought his case desperate. In the end he offered her a human sacrifice, but she would not have it. At last he offered her his own seven-year-old-son; and that she accepted. Then the earl put the boy in the hands of his slave Skopti, and Skopti slew him.

Afterwards the earl returned to his ships and urged his men on to make renewed attack; "for I know now surely that victory will be ours. Press the attack all the more vigorously, because I have invoked for victory both the sisters, Thorgerd and Irpa."

Then the earl boarded his ship and prepared for the fight, and the fleet rowed to the attack, and again there was the most furious battle. And right soon the weather began to thicken in the north and the clouds covered the sky and the daylight waned. Next came the flashes of lightning and thunder, and with them a violent shower. The Jómsvíkings had to fight facing into the storm, and the squall was so heavy that they could hardly stand up against it. Men had to cast off their clothes, earlier, because of the heat, and now it was cold. Nevertheless, no one needed to be urged on to do battle. But although the Jómsvíings hurled stones and other missiles and threw their spears, the wind turned all their weapons back upon them, to join the shower of missiles from their enemies.

Hávard the Hewing was the first to see Thorgerd Holgabrúd in the fleet of Earl Hákon, and then many a second-sighted man saw her. And when the squall abated a little they saw that an arrow flew from every finger of the ogress, and each arrow felled a man. They told Sigvaldi, and he said: "it seems we are not fighting men alone, but still it behooves us to do our best."

And when the storm lessened a bit Earl Hákon again invoked Thorgerd and said that he had done his utmost. And then it grew dark again with a squall, this time even stronger and worse than before. And right at the beginning of the squall Hávard the Hewing saw that two women were standing on the earl's ship, and both were doing the same thing that Thorgerd had done before.

Then Sigvaldi said: "Now I am going to flee, and let all men do so. I did not vow to fight against trolls, and it is now worse than before, as there are two ogresses."

[All of Earl Hákon's enemies flee.]

Then they weighed the hailstones on scales to see what power Thorgerd and Irpa had, and one hailstone weighed an ounce.

Þorgerðr Hölgabrúðr Lore

From *Njal's Saga*

translated by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pásson

Njal's Saga chapter 88

Earl Hakon was attending a feast at Gudbrand's home. During the night, Hrapp the killer went to their temple. Inside it, he saw the statue of Thorgerd Holgi's-Bride enthroned, massive as a fully-grown man; there was a huge gold bracelet on her arm, and a linen hood over her head. Hrapp stripped off the hood and the bracelet. He then noticed Thor in his chariot, and took from him another gold bracelet. He took a third bracelet from Irpa. He dragged all three of the idols outside and stripped them of their vestments; then he set fire to the temple and burned it down. [...]

Early that morning, earl Hakon and Gudbrand went out to the temple and found it burned down, with the three idols lying outside stripped of all their riches.

Then Gudbrand said, 'Our gods are powerful indeed. They have walked unaided from the flames.'

'The gods have nothing to do with it,' said Earl Hakon. 'A man must have fired the temple and carried the gods out. But the gods are in no haste to take vengeance; the man who did this will be driven out of Valhalla for ever.'

Þorgerðr Hölgabrúðr Lore

From *Færeyinga Saga*

translated by F. York Powell

Chapter 23: Of Earl Hacon and Sigmund

Of Sigmund it must be now told that he fell to talk with Earl Hacon, and told him that he was minded to leave warring and hie out to the Færeys [...]

And when he was fully bound, Earl Hacon said to him, "One should speed well one would fain welcome back." And he went out of doors with Sigmund. Then spake Hacon, "What sayest thou to this? In what dost thou put thy trust?" I put my trust in my own might and main," said Sigmund. "That must not be," the Earl answered, "but thou shalt put thy trust where I have put all my trust, namely in Thorgerd Shinebride," said he. "And we will go and see her now and luck for thee at her hands." Sigmund bade him settle this matter as he would. They set forth along a certain path into the wood, and thence by a little bypath into the wood, till they came where a ride lay before them, and a house standing in it with a stake fence round it. Right fair was that house, and gold and silver was run into the carvings thereof. They went into the house, Hacon and Sigmund together, and a few men with them. Therein were a great many gods. There were many glass roof-lights in the house, so that there was no shadow anywhere. There was a woman in the house over against the door, right fairly decked she was. The Earl cast him down at her feet, and there he lay long, and when he rose up he told Sigmund that they should bring her some offering and lay the silver thereof on the stool before her. "And we shall have it as a mark of what she thinks of this, if she will do as I wish and let the ring loose which she holds in her hand. For thou, Sigmund, shall get luck by that ring." Then the Earl took hold of the ring, and it seemed to Sigmund that she clasped her hand on it, and the earl got not the ring. The Earl cast him down a second time before her, and Sigmund saw that the earl was weeping. Then he stood up again and caught hold of the ring, and now, behold, it was loose; and he took it and gave it to Sigmund, and told him that with this ring he must never part, and Sigmund gave his word on it. With that they parted.

Vár

Vár is known primarily as the goddess who oversees oaths, especially marriage vows.

The name Vár means 'vow' or 'pledge'

Vár Lore

From Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* translated by Anthony Faulkes

Gylfaginning

Who are the Asyniur?

Ninth Var: She listens to people's oaths and private agreements that women and men make between each other. Thus these contracts are called varar. She also punishes those who break them.

Vár Lore

from *The Poetic Edda*
translated by Carolyne Larrington

Thrymskvida

Then said Thrym, lord of ogres:
'Bring in the hammer to sanctify the bride,
lay Miollnir on the girl's lap,
consecrate us together by the hand of Var!'