



Old Norse Images of Women (The Middle Ages Series)

By Jenny Jochens

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Working from the Poetic Edda, the Prose Edda, and Old Norse prose narratives and laws, Jenny Jochens argues for an underlying cultural continuum of a pagan pantheon and a set of heroic figures shared by the Germanic tribes in Europe, Britain, Scandinavia, and Iceland from A.D. 500 to 1500. *Old Norse Images of Women* explores the female half of this legacy, which involves images both divine and human.

In a society marked by sharp gender divisions, women were frequently portrayed as one of four conventional types. The warrior woman was exemplified by the valkyrie, sheildmaiden, or maiden king. The wise woman was a prophetess or sorceress. The avenger is best seen in Gudrun, whose focus of revenge shifted from husband to brothers. Last, there were the whetters or inciters, who appear both in the Continental setting as Brynhildr and as ubiquitous figures in medieval Icelandic literature, ranging from Norwegian queens to humble milkmaids.

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