Cassel's Encyclopedia of Literature, 1953
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Nibelungenlied article by Frederick A. Pickering.
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powerful account of the suffering and confusion of Negroes in America today.

H.L.C.

New Zealand Literature. The early literature of New Zealand is sparse and, as literature, a by-product. Only in the second half of the 19th century do we encounter verse and stories of explicitly literary pretensions; and even then the literature is New Zealand only on the surface. The authors are absent only in body from the England of Victoria and are as loyal to its conventions as to its queen. The verse, if it is smooth, belongs to the provincial drawing-room: if it is vigorous, its life is topical, rough and ephemeral. The novels differ from their mediocre English equivalents only in a romanticized setting, a more ingenuous didacticism.

In the last decade of the century New Zealand-born writers began to dream of having a literature of their own; but, of the two most promising, politics allowed Pember Reeves to leave only a history, and Jessie MacKay, though she remains one of the best New Zealand poets, did not always escape the crudities of a too explicit social purpose. And novelists like Edith Howitt Grossman, though aiming high, confused the seriousness of the preacher with that of the artist.

Indeed, in a country which demanded hard work at home—'Ditchers are more esteemed than poets' wrote A. S. Thomson in 1859—and looked to England to provide the culture there might be any leisure left for, the fate of the professional writer was too hard: politics or journalism—often abroad—claimed him. A few only—Jessie Mackay in verse, William Satchell in the novel were among the more notable—wrote enough and well enough to be recognizable artists.

Katherine Mansfield marks the watershed. She alone of those writing before 1914 escaped the provincial and the derivative. Had she not gone to Europe she might not have done so. The end of the first world war brought change. Jane Mander in *The Story of a New Zealand River* showed that the New Zealand novel could approach a European standard without being enslaved to it. Poets like Eileen Duggan and, younger, Cresswell and R. A. K. Mason began to write verse which was indigenous without being inferior.

The depression of the early 1930s sharpened in part a sense of national separateness. The brief flare of the university magazine Phoenix (1932) burnt some wooden idols and was itself a beacon: Tomorrow, another university journal, from 1934 onwards nursed a radical and sardonic brood of poets. In 1935 the Caxton Press was founded by Denis Glover and began to look beyond the norm of hedge-publishing. Robin Hyde's novels stood head and shoulders above the provincial ruck. The names of Frank Sargeson and Roderick Finlayson began to be known and their work to show younger writers that something could be done with the vernacular and the material they knew.

Death cancelled Robin Hyde's promise But other promises were kept. Since the second world war, verse, story and criticism have found a vehicle in Charles Brasch's Landfall, a quarterly of high standard: its issues show that young writers of quality now abound. An English imprint still confers cachet; but it is conferred increasingly often. And at home presses like the Caxton Press, the Pelorus Press and the Porcupine Press have stimulated established firms to better standards of production and a more receptive eye to talent. The State Literary Fund has supplied a patronage which has often been discriminating. Books like E. H. McCormick's *Letters and Art in New Zealand* (1940), *The New Zealand Arts Yearbook* and M. H. Holcroft's essays in criticism have revealed a literature with a past already beginning to consolidate, a present that demands modesty but not shame, and a future whose promise is less remote than a politician's.

T. M. Hocken, *Bibliography of the Literature Relating to New Zealand* (1909); Percival Serle, *Bibliography of Australasian Poetry and Verse* (1925); G. H. Scholefield, *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (1940) and *Who's Who in New Zealand* (5th ed. 1951); E. M. Smith, *A History of New Zealand Fiction* (1939; fairly complete bibliog.).—ANTHOLOGIES: Frank Sargeson, *Speaking for Ourselves* (1945); Allen Curnow, *A Book of New Zealand Verse* (rev. ed. 1951).

D.M.D.

Nibelungenlied, the German national epic. Of three main 13th-century MSS, B with 2,379 stanzas is the most trustworthy (A 2,326, C 2,439). The 39 cantos (*Aventiure*) fall into the divisions 16+7+16. These proportions and the re-creation of a poetic tradition, already some 7 centuries old, are the achievement of an unknown Austrian in *c.* 1200–05, writing in Passau (?).

(*Av. I–XVI*): Prince Siegfried of the Netherlands comes to the Burgundian court of Worms. For his services in wooing Brunhild of Iceland for king

Gunther he receives the latter's sister, Kriemhild, in marriage. In a quarrel over precedence Kriemhild taunts Brunhild with having been Siegfried's 'concubine'. For this Hagen, Gunther's henchman, slays Siegfried. (*XVII–XXIII*): Kriemhild mourns. Years later, married to Etzel, king of the Huns, she invites her kinsmen and Hagen to Etzel's court. (*XXIV–XXXIX*): Neither Dietrich of Bern nor Etzel is able to foil Kriemhild's plotting: she provokes a general carnage. With Siegfried's sword she slays the last, bound and defenceless Burgundian: Hagen. Dietrich's last follower, Hildebrand, summarily executes her. (See HILDEBRANDSLIED; MINSTREL.)

The ethos of the NL is still Merovingian. Modernization of ceremony and the conduct of battle, scores of secondary characters and the armies given to the protagonists towards 1200 cannot prevent the final slaughter. We glory in Hagen's defiance of doom, and with Dietrich lament the destruction of two kingdoms. Subdued is *Die Klage* (*c.* 1215), an independent sequel (which in MS. C has affected the main story): laments, obsequies, dispersal: 'Hagen was to blame'.

K. Lachmann's explanation (1816) of the NL as an arrangement of 20 original lays was influential for a century. We now prefer A. Heusler's general theory (indebted to W. P. Ker) of two main lays, ideally independent in origin, which were expanded from within and progressively fused. The role of Siegfried is in part determined by his 'other stories': his obscure birth, his upbringing, his slaying of the dragon etc.—the first is ignored, the others are referred to episodically and partly exploited in NL.

A rich but unstable German Siegfried (Sigurd) tradition is reflected in Scandinavian literature, where it receives a strong admixture of myth: in *Edda* (*Reginsmál, Fáfnirsmál*), *Völsungasaga, þiðrekssaga*. Only the dragon-slaying produces late German texts: the 16th-century *Hürnen Seyfrid*, Hans Sachs' drama and an 18th-century chapbook.

(*a*) LAY OF THE BURGUNDIANS.—We postulate a late 5th-century Frankish lay, in which 'memorable' history (the annihilation of the Burgundians in 437, the death by violence of Attila in 453) is treated as a dynastic feud: Etzel (Attila), married to Grimhild, invites her kinsmen (sons of Gibicho, Gunther, Gotmar, Giselher—roughly thus—and their half-brother Hagen) to his court, to wrest from them their treasure. They defy him. Gunther is the last to fall. Grimhild avenges her kinsmen on Etzel. The *Atlakviða* (*Edda*, 9th-century in conception) varies this slightly but preserves, we think, the style and mood of the lay. An 8th-century Bavarian lay (postulated) takes the momentous step of representing the massacre of the Burgundians, in conformity with 'the other story', as Kriemhild's vengeance on her kinsmen for the murder of Siegfried. At the same time it exonerates Etzel, who in the south-east was the good king whom the popular hero, Dietrich of Bern, had elected to serve. An offshoot of this is a lost Saxon version transferring the story to the town of Soest (source of the Norse *þiðrekssaga, c.* 1250 and, indirectly, of *Atlamál-Edda*). Heusler postulates for about 1160 the so-called *ältere Not*, a possibly tenfold expansion of the Bavarian lay introducing new roles including Rüdeger's, one of the greatest of all, and written in the NL-stanza. The esteem in which we hold this version (midway between *þiðrekssaga* and NL) is a constant threat to NL itself. It included, however, Heusler holds, the merest outline of the

(*b*) LAY OF BRUNHILD, about the history of which we are less certain. There are fairy-tale elements in the German story of Siegfried and Brunhild from the beginning. For a 6th-century Frankish lay we assume roughly the content and certainly the grandeur of *Sigurðarkviða* of the *Edda*. Of the developing tradition (of Brunhild, Siegfried, Kriemhild=Gudrun) other *Edda* lays, *Völsungasaga* and Faroese ballads give uncertain evidence. The penultimate German version will be the work of a 12th-century minstrel who substituted for Brunhild's 'wall of fire' her prowess as an athlete. But no version seems, except in the main scenes (the quarrel of the queens and the slaying of Siegfried), to have been satisfactory—the NL itself often 'creaks' in the first 16 cantos.

Of modern adaptations Fr. Hebbel's trilogy *Die Nibelungen* (1862) seems worthy both of the subject and the poet. Richard Wagner's *Ring* is an unpalatable pseudo-Nordic brew. William Morris's adaptation of *Völsungasaga* and NL (*Sigurd the Volsung*, 1876) does not measure up to his translation of the saga (1870).

Ed. K. Lachmann, *Der N. Not mit der Klage* (1826, 14th ed. 1927), based on MS. A; Fr. Zarncke, *Das NL* (1856, 16th ed. 1920), MS. C; K. Bartsch, *Das NL* (1886), *Der N. Not* (3 vols, 1870–80; text only, H. de Boor, 1949); E. Sievers, *Der N. Not* and *Kudrun* (2nd ed. 1930), based on MS. B.—Modernized: K. Simrock (1827); Eng. tr. W. N. Lettsom (1850)

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