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... she sees the possibilities for vengeance this match could offer her. After many years she persuades Etzel to invite her to his court, and is particularly insistent that Hagen should come. Hagen suspects Kriemhild's motives and warns his masters against accepting, but he only succeeds in persuading them to go armed; and it is not until they have crossed the Danube that they are convinced. On their arrival Kriemhild's plan is quickly revealed and, although there is much large-scale fighting, the poet makes clear the essentially personal nature of the drama; the climax is reached when Hagen—as the last survivor of the Burgundians and, though bound, still defiant—faces Kriemhild who kills him when he still refuses to reveal where Siegfried's treasure is hidden. She in turn is executed by Hildebrand, who is Etzel's courtier with his master Dietrich von Bern (*q.v.*). "Daz der Nibelunge nôt" ("that is the story of the destruction of the Nibelungs [or Burgundians]") are the final words; and they are an apt description of the second half of the poem.

**The Elements in the Story.**—In this story some elements of great antiquity are discernible. In the first part one recognizes the story of Brunhild, which retains its separate existence in Old Norse literature; there are also the brief allusions in Canto 3 to the two ancient stories of the heroic deeds of Siegfried; and finally the whole of the second part is the story, albeit with a different motivation, of the Fall of the Burgundians which exists in older form in the *Eddaic* poem *Atlakvida* ("Lay of Atli"). It is the great merit of the scholar Andreas Heusler to isolate the stories of Brunhild and the Fall of the Burgundians as the two mainstays of the action. It is, however, no mere formal joining together of two separate stories, which is what they originally were; the poet sought by various devices to combine the different elements into a meaningful whole in which the component elements would be integrated. One of the major alterations is in making Kriemhild, and not Etzel, as was originally the case, send the treacherous invitation; but this must have been done much earlier for Saxo Grammaticus refers to the recital, in 1131, of the poem of the "well-known treachery of Kriemhild against her brothers." Once this step had been taken it would not be difficult to envisage a combination of the Burgundian and the Brunhild stories into one; for, although the emphasis in the latter was on Brunhild, Kriemhild suffers a blow through the death of her husband which she may well be expected to wish to avenge. Other inconsistencies and contradictions, which could not be revealed in the summary above, emphasize the long history of the subject matter. Karl Lachmann's view that it is a collection of 20 originally separate short poems was held, and debated, for many years; it was, however, superseded after the appearance of Heusler's principal work, in which he demonstrated the central position of two themes, and explained the difference in length between the old short lays and the long epic in terms of a different style of narration.

Heusler's views on the role of these two stories in the history and structure of the poem found such general acceptance that the importance of the other elements, with which he also dealt, tended to be overlooked. After about 1940, however, attention was concentrated on them, perhaps excessively. An example of these elements is the scene in which Siegfried meets his death. In the older versions, particularly in the older ones, the death of Siegfried is dismissed in a few words as a fact which has to be recorded, and this is perfectly consonant with the theme of the original story, in which Brunhild was the principal character and Siegfried the means by which her problem arose. The role Siegfried plays in the corresponding part of the *Nibelungenlied* is not comparable. Much is made, it is true, of his conduct of the expedition and of the part he plays in the actual contests, but from the time of Brunhild's arrival at Worms he becomes a passive participant, until the plot for his death is hatched. From this moment all attention is concentrated on him and Kriemhild. After Hagen has elicited his vital secret from Kriemhild there follows a carefully constructed scene in which she confesses her premonitions and tries to dissuade Siegfried from participating in the hunt which has been arranged: she claims to have had dreams which point to her husband's sudden death. He, however, with

unquestioning confidence in his own powers and—note the dramatic irony—equally confident of the friendship of all, brushes aside her objections and goes out, utterly happy, to what is to be his last hunt. This picture of a young hero, in the fullness of his powers and at the height of his happiness, is further developed in the hunt itself, culminating in a boisterous practical joke which he plays on his fellows. In the final act, the race to the spring, he again demonstrates his physical superiority and, in his refusal to drink until Gunther has drunk, his meticulous regard for courtly precedence. By this very delay he gives Hagen the opportunity to strike the fatal blow while he is bending over the water. There is no source in Germanic antiquity for the details which make this scene so effective, and the poet would appear to have had his inspiration from a contemporary Romance epic, *Dauwre e Beton*.

Similarly there is a scene in the second half which also serves to heighten the tragedy by relieving the tension. The purpose of the journey of Gunther and his followers is known to the audience from the beginning; and although the participants, apart from Hagen, at first suspect nothing, the tension rises as they proceed. It is, however, relieved by a few days' rest at Bechelaren, where the party is entertained by the margrave Rudeger and his wife and daughter. The idyllic nature of the interlude is stressed by the betrothal of the youngest of the Burgundian princes Giselher and the margrave's daughter; it is agreed that the marriage shall take place on their return. The effectiveness of the scene has long been universally recognized, and in 1940 Friedrich Panzer suggested a source, not a literary one, but an event in 12th-century history. In 1189, when passing through Hungary on his crusade, the emperor Frederick I was festively entertained by King Bela of that country and his wife, and the marriage of Frederick's second son with King Bela's daughter was arranged; the marriage was to take place on the return of the emperor and his son from the crusade in which, in fact, both met death. Panzer has drawn attention to possible contemporary literary and topical historical sources for other incidents.

Both approaches have proved fruitful in determining the author's theme, or whether in fact he had a single theme, and in estimating his poetic achievement. It cannot be disputed that the second part of the poem deals with the disaster that overcame the Burgundians, or Nibelungs (and to that extent the title *Die Nibelunge Nôt* is apt), nor that this disaster was the deliberate purpose of Kriemhild. It is preceded by a story in which Siegfried plays a prominent part, and to the extent that Siegfried is Kriemhild's husband and attention is concentrated on his death, the events of this first part may be considered integrally connected with those of the second. There are other indications that it was the poet's intention to present the story in this way. Kriemhild is the first person to be introduced and the poem ends when she is killed. She is introduced, too, in a way which leads one to believe that she is to play an important role. The poet's treatment of Brunhild is consonant with such a purpose; her story once existed in its own right and ended when her honour was satisfied, but in the *Nibelungenlied* the death of Siegfried is presented in the very different light discussed above. Further there is the attention paid to Hagen. Early in the story his words to and about Siegfried indicate anger and resentment; he takes the initiative in the plot against him and strikes the blow earning Kriemhild's uncompromising hatred by having tricked her into revealing his one vulnerable spot. Particularly striking is the scene in the second part where, on their arrival at the court of the Huns, Hagen remains defiantly seated before Kriemhild with Siegfried's sword ostentatiously laid across his knees. To what extent this concentration on Kriemhild and on the enmity between her and Hagen was already present in the sources must remain a matter of conjecture, but the consistency with which it is carried through would seem to suggest that it was the poet's intention to stress the theme.

**Dating and Manuscripts.**—The poem was written in the classical period of medieval German literature, but it holds a special position in it. A characteristic feature of the literature of that period is the emphasis on the current "courtly" virtues of