

... a privileged position.

... new element is introduced, which is for a long time: the story of the wooing news from overseas reaches the court of queen of outstanding strength and beauty by a man capable of matching her in her expresses his intention of wooing her, Siegfried of the danger to which he would suggests that Gunther allow Siegfried to accept the suggestion and Siegfried agrees, her promise him the hand of his sister Brunhild. Throughout the expedition Siegfried is decisively than he did in the Danish instructions on the conduct of the smallest details; his ability to pilot the ship abode on Isenstein is a variant of the medieval German literature of the much-able to give advice and help to the master service. It is in the same tradition when he singles out among the newcomers one named "Brunhild." This is no surprise to Brunhild because of her vow, which was to marry only the first, however, presents himself not as the vassal; and in the ensuing contests Gunther's motions of deeds in fact performed by Siegfried invisibly. When Brunhild is defeated by her husband. After an interlude in which Siegfried "Nibelung" lands—where his treasure is hidden, he is sent on ahead to Worms to await his impending arrival with his sister Kriemhild also are married, as promised, at ease, ostensibly because she is hurt at being married to one who is, as she has been told, a vassal. After a period during which Siegfried returns to his own domains, they are invited, at Worms. During this visit the two queens quarrel. In the course of the quarrel Kriemhild accuses Siegfried of treachery which had been practised on her in the bridal chamber invisibly to overcome her.

... the figure of Hagen becomes prominent, his initiative in plotting vengeance. The plan is to way from the court so that he can be necessary to ascertain where and how he is needed in ingratiating himself into Kriemhild's confidence. He learns the secret of Siegfried's one vulnerable spot, and strikes the fatal blow.

... during and after these events Brunhild is the focus of the story, and the death of Siegfried is a vengeance by her, but rather as a blow which she has been becoming suspicious of Siegfried's treachery. Her basis is on Kriemhild's grief and her hatred of Siegfried. Her funeral is conducted with great ceremony, and she remains at Worms with her mother and sister. Siegfried long remains estranged from Gunther, and it is only through the mediation of Brunhild that he is persuaded to attempt a reconciliation. The treasure is divided, and Siegfried and Brunhild have the benefit of Siegfried's treasure. Siegfried makes peace with Gunther. The treasure is divided, but Hagen, seeing that Kriemhild is the more influential, she may gain, seizes it.

... to be garmed; and it is not until they have crossed the Rhine 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 conflict; 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 had been at Etzel's court with his master Dietrich von Bern (*q.v.*). "Das Ende 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 an 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 these 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 at the time of Brunhild's arrival at Worms he becomes a passive participant until the plot for his death is hatched. From this

... 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 *Daurel 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 1945 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 *Der 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