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Source: *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Oct., 1962), pp. 615-630

Published by: University of North Carolina Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4173396>

Accessed: 16/10/2009 07:28

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## THE PROPOSED SOURCES OF THE *NIBELUNGENLIED*

By HENRY KRATZ

Ever since Karl Lachmann, swayed by the current theories regarding the origin of the Homeric epics, postulated no fewer than twenty episodic poems which he believed had been combined by a purely additive process to form the *Nibelungenlied* (NL), a controversy has raged intermittently as to its immediate sources. Andreas Heusler's famous work, *Nibelungensage und Nibelungenlied*,<sup>1</sup> which for twenty years enjoyed almost canonical standing, finally brought greater clarity to the situation. Heusler asserted that the NL in the form in which we know it today was the work of an Austrian poet of the early 13th century who combined a shortish poem that narrated the main events of the first part ("Sigfrid's Death") with a much longer poem that already in epic breadth narrated the main events of the second part ("Krimhild's Revenge"). He claimed that the poem on which the first half is built, which he called the "younger Brünhild poem," was composed toward the end of the 12th century, and was in turn derived from a Frankish original from the 5th or 6th century. He hypothesized a more complicated history for the second half: he believed that the immediate source was an Austrian "Burgundian epic" from about 1160, this having been derived from a Bavarian "Burgundian poem" of the 8th century, this in turn built on a Frankish original from the 5th-6th centuries.

Heusler maintained that there was no such thing as episodic heroic poetry—that is, there were no poems that described only a small portion of a larger story, but that rather they all told complete stories, albeit in terse, non-epic style. The first half of the NL could therefore not have been formed by the stringing together of several short poems, but rather by a process of *Aufschwellung*, by stylistic diffusion, by embellishment, description, by the insertion of extraneous material, incidents or episodes garnered from other sources. Heusler also brushed aside the possibility of a number of different versions of a *Heldenlied* existing side by side. He looked

<sup>1</sup> Dortmund, 1921,<sup>1</sup> 1922,<sup>2</sup> 1929.<sup>3</sup> Reference in the following is to the 1922 edition.

upon them as exceedingly stable literary products that were sung only by professional minstrels whose concern it was to keep them letter perfect, and that only rarely would one be re-composed by a poet. That oral legend, passed down from generation to generation, could preserve prose versions that might have existed parallel to the poetic ones, or indeed served as inspiration for them at any stage, is for Heusler out of the question. Modern scholarship has come to reject Heusler's opinions in these respects. On the one hand it has been demonstrated that episodic *Heldenlieder* did exist, and on the other it has been made plausible that *Heldenlieder* existed in numerous variant forms.<sup>2</sup> It also seems likely that oral prose tradition played an important rôle.<sup>3</sup>

Dietrich von Kralik<sup>4</sup> tried to demonstrate—but quite unconvincingly<sup>5</sup>—that the first part of the NL is an amalgamation of three more or less parallel poems: a *Brünhildlied* (BL), telling of the deception played on Brünhild and its consequences, with Sigfrid killed in a hunting scene; a *Krimhildlied* (KL) dealing with Sigfrid's winning of his treasure, the killing of the dragon, his limited vulnerability, his murder on a war expedition due to Krimhild's unwitting betrayal of his vulnerable spot; a comedy called *Sigfrid's Wedding*, in which Sigfrid helps Gunther to obtain Brünhild in order to obtain Krimhild for himself, and which is loaded with crude burlesque, such as the athletic contests and Brünhild's trussing up of Gunther on their wedding night.

In 1947 Hermann Schneider<sup>6</sup> tried to prove two sources, one a BL that was also the source of the *Thidrekssaga* (Ths), another a parallel KL, to which he ascribes all the motifs not present in the Ths. He thus ends up with one poem exactly like the Ths in plot and another exactly like the NL minus those episodes and motifs

<sup>2</sup> See e. g. F. R. Schröder, "Sigfrids Tod," *GRM* XLI (1960), 116, and Hans Kuhn, "Kriemhilds Hort und Rache," *Festschrift für P. Kluckhohn und H. Schneider* (Tübingen, 1948), 84-100.

<sup>3</sup> See e. g. Hans Kuhn, "Heldensage vor und ausserhalb der Dichtung," *Edda—Skalden—Saga: Festschrift für F. Genzmer* (Heidelberg, 1952), 262-78.

<sup>4</sup> *Die Sigfridtrilogie im Nibelungenlied und in der Thidrekssaga* (Halle, 1941).

<sup>5</sup> See e. g. the reviews by H. Schneider, *AfdA* LX (1941), 59-70, and W. Mohr, *Dichtung und Volkstum* XLII (1942), Heft 4, 83-123.

<sup>6</sup> *Die deutschen Lieder von Siegfrieds Tod* (Weimar, 1947).

present only in the Ths, so that no originality is left to the final poet of the NL.

Recently Joachim Bumke<sup>7</sup> used the best in Kralik's method to re-examine "Sigfrid's Death," and has made a quite persuasive case for the existence of two parallel poems with divergent details. His method is to search for inherent contradictions in the epic, and, proceeding from them, and from a comparison of the Norse sources, to attempt a reconstruction of the originals. Like Hermann Schneider and Kralik, he thinks that one source for the first part of the NL must have been the BL that was likewise the source of the Ths, but his other postulated source is much different from Schneider's or from Kralik's two. In spite of Bumke's persuasiveness there are serious flaws in his argument, as we shall see.

Any consideration of the sources of the NL is inevitably bound up with the question of the contribution of the final poet. Since Heusler it has generally been assumed that he greatly expanded the original poem that formed the nucleus of the first part of the NL to make it attain the length of the second part. He is responsible for a generally increased wordiness, due in no small part to the exigencies of filling out the strophic form he had (probably) adopted from the source of the second part. It was also he who added a chivalric gloss to the whole by the addition of material that was supposed to make the doughty warriors of the older versions into the faultless knights of courtly romance. Mostly this courtly element is a purely superficial thing, but it attains significant proportions when an important part of the plot is changed because chivalric features are used to replace older, less chivalric ones: for example, the use of the church as a background for the quarrel between Krimhild and Brünhild.

Heusler and most of the scholars since have also attributed to the final poet a number of episodes and motifs, such as the episodes dealing with Sigfrid in Xanten, the Saxon wars, Sigfrid's trip to the land of the Nibelungs, the ruse of the war in the death plan, many of which Kralik, Schneider and Bumke have relegated to parallel sources.

As we judge the case for parallel sources we must constantly bear the following considerations in mind: Is an apparent contradiction

<sup>7</sup> "Die Quellen der Brünhildfabel im *Nibelungenlied*," *Euphorion* LIV (1960), 1-38.

due to the endeavor of the final poet to expand or to modernize and chivalrize? Is it due to an episode added by the final poet—from other works, from oral legend, from contemporary events, from his own imagination? Is it due to a contradiction already there from an amalgamation at a previous stage? Bumke, like Kralik, tends to think that the final poet would never have added anything of his own containing a contradiction. But if he was as sensitive to inconsistencies as that, why did he not remove some of those that came about by the postulated amalgamation, or were already present, especially in view of the complete rewriting job he must have undertaken on the first part of the NL. If he was tolerant toward, or oblivious to contradictions in the text before him, why should he have been less so toward those that would have occurred if he had introduced innovations? In fact, Ploss has demonstrated that he is at one point inconsistent in details of description when there can be no question of any one else's being involved.<sup>8</sup>

Also, one must inevitably face up to the necessity of finding some way to connect the personage of Sigfrid with the historical Burgundian personages. In spite of the efforts to find his origins in historical Merovingian kings, his whole nature and the nature of his youthful exploits indicate strongly a mythological rather than a heroic origin.<sup>9</sup>

Bumke (pp. 5-6) professes to see in the NL version of the wooing of Brünhild an amalgamation of two distinct tales. On the one hand he finds the *Märchen*-motif of the reluctant strong helper, Sigfrid, whose help, together with his *tarnkappe*, is needed, and who agrees to give it only in exchange for promises from Gunther. Sigfrid is unacquainted with Brünhild. On the other hand he sees a willing Sigfrid who is well acquainted with the road and with Brünhild, and who willingly takes charge of the journey. In strophe 331<sup>10</sup> Hagen advises Gunther to ask Sigfrid to go with him on his wooing expedition, "since he knows so much about Brünhild." Bumke claims that this is an indication of a parallel source because in the NL Sigfrid had not told Hagen that he was acquainted with Brünhild. Then, he says, Hagen's remark is ignored, and the theme is not taken up until strophe 377, when

<sup>8</sup> "Die Datierung des *Nibelungenlieds*," *PBB* LXXX (1959), 88-89.

<sup>9</sup> See especially among recent works F. R. Schröder, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> References are to *Das Nibelungenlied*. Nach der Ausgabe von Karl Bartsch hrsg. von Helmut de Boor. 13. Aufl. (Wiesbaden, 1956).

Sigfrid volunteers to be ship's master. However, this gives a false picture of the actual narrative: In strophe 329 Gunther avers that he is going to woo Brünhild, and in strophe 330, immediately before Hagen's remark, Sigfrid advises against it, saying that anyone who courts her will have a hard time of it. These words certainly seem to indicate expert knowledge of the matter, and are not at all inconsistent with Hagen's ensuing words. It is also hard to say that Hagen's remark is ignored, for in the very next strophe (332) Gunther asks Sigfrid to help him, and as soon as the conditions have been met, and oaths have been exchanged, Gunther asks Sigfrid for advice as to how they should proceed thither (339), and Sigfrid answers in some detail—again, seemingly, an indication of his expert knowledge. Then, after a number of interpolated strophes pertaining to raiment and a few strophes devoted to farewells, comes the strophe where Sigfrid volunteers to be ship's master (378). Sigfrid leads the party safely to Isenstein, where he points out Brünhild to Gunther from a number of ladies standing watching them from the ramparts of her stronghold. It can thus be seen that through this entire portion of the narrative Sigfrid is consistently depicted as being familiar with Brünhild, her country, and the way to it. One must assume that this familiarity is an old feature that antedated the source of the NL and Ths, and, indeed, was present in the source of the Eddic versions.

In all versions, the wooing of Brünhild is connected, Bumke points out, with performances that Gunther cannot himself fulfill: flame-wall, athletic contests, or bridal night. Only the NL has two different performances that Gunther cannot fulfill, and thus two deceptions perpetrated against Brünhild. Bumke (pp. 6-10) from this deduces two different parallel traditions: one in which the wooing is connected with a test (flame-wall or athletic contests); one in which Brünhild is reluctant to be wooed, but is persuaded by her relatives, and in which she is recalcitrant on her wedding night. In the one source, Bumke argues, after the contests Brünhild admits herself vanquished (cf. NL 466), and the wooing episode ends; in the other, where there has been no contest, she sends for her relatives to ask their advice. However, in the NL (475) Brünhild does not say she is going to ask for advice, but merely that she is going to say farewell in a proper fashion. This does not seem unreasonable, but rather to fit in well with the many additions made by the final poet to bring the work into line with courtly

mores. Apart from this scene, the only other support for Bumke's claim is Brynhild's remark in the Ths version of the *senna* (chap. 343):<sup>11</sup> "Powerful King Gunnar came to my stronghold, and with him many noble warriors. And with the advice of my friends I took him as a husband." In the actual wooing chapter (227) the whole decision is hers. It is questionable how much weight should be attached to the one remark in the *senna*, which, after all, does not say she took him against her will because of advice, but rather simply that her friends concurred with her choice.

This whole line in the NL was most likely concocted by the final poet, and rather poorly concocted at that, to find an excuse to send Sigfrid off to the land of the Nibelungs. The purpose of this much-disputed, half-farcical episode was probably to serve as padding. As has been pointed out, the final poet was familiar with some Young-Sigfrid legend, and it seems that he is here using elements from this to make an extraneous episode similar in scope and purpose to the Saxon war.<sup>12</sup>

Heusler<sup>13</sup> believed that the Scandinavian version of the wooing, with the wall of flame and the chaste bed, was the original one, and that the NL contests were derived from the wall of flame, the chaste bed debased to the semi-comical scenes featuring the unwilling Brünhild. In the Eddic versions (cf. *Völs*, chap. 27)<sup>14</sup> Brynhild is passive behind the wall and in her bed, whereas in the NL she is an aggressive fighter in the contests and in bed. Heusler claims that this step from passive to active could only have been taken once, so that both the test and the bridal scene in the NL must go back to the same tradition, while Kralik<sup>15</sup> argues that the contests and the bridal night struggle were both derived from a serious battle between Brünhild and Sigfrid. There seems to be substantiation for the primacy of the wall of flame or some similar obstacle in the Ths, where there is a barrier in Sigfrid's path when he first comes

<sup>11</sup> References are to *Saga Thithriks Konungs af Bern*, udgivet af C. R. Unger (Christiania, 1853).

<sup>12</sup> Bumke's attempt in "Sigfrids Fahrt ins Nibelungenland," *PBB* LXXX (1958), 253-68, to explain the episode as a mixture of tales of Sigfrid's winning his treasure and his first visit to Brünhild is hardly convincing.

<sup>13</sup> *Op. cit.*, 33 ff.

<sup>14</sup> References are to *Die Völsungasaga*, hrsg. von Wilhelm Ranisch (Berlin, 1891).

<sup>15</sup> *Op. cit.*, 485 ff.

to Brynhild in his youth: he must break down an iron gate to get to her (chap. 168). It seems likely that both flame-wall and iron gate are remnants of an original obstacle, but that the Ths removed it to the time of Sigfrid's previous encounter with Brynhild,<sup>16</sup> and at the same time disposed of the rationalistically objectionable shape-shifting. The NL poet then may have had a double, interlocking inspiration: first, to replace the flame-ride by contests with which he was familiar from popular tales,<sup>17</sup> and the shape-shifting by means of the magic cloak, and secondly to have the Burgundians come to Iceland in a fashion more reminiscent of courtly romances: the approach to Brünhild's stronghold allows him to expand in his favorite manner.

Bumke (p. 8) assumes that the deceptive taking of Brünhild's maidenhead by Sigfrid is the original version, and that the chaste-bed versions have been derived from this. He points to the similarity in substance here between the Völs and the NL as evidence that there must have been a common source with a chaste-bed scene, as it would be "more than strange" for the NL poet and the Eddic source to have independently made the same change. Kralik (p. 485 ff.) from this postulates a second NL source wherein the bridal bed remains chaste—to which Schneider agrees.<sup>18</sup> Heusler considered the double use of the *tarnkappe* in the contests and in the bridal scene as evidence that both episodes are from the same source. But Bumke (pp. 8-9) argues rightly that the *tarnkappe* has no real purpose in a bridal night tussle, as the kind of deception that it imposes would do no good. He believes that the *tarnkappe* is simply taken over into the bridal scene from the contests, its sole function being to get Sigfrid into Brünhild's chamber unobserved. He thinks that one NL source depicted Brünhild as resisting on her bridal night and being deflowered by Sigfrid, while the other source depicted Sigfrid as not taking her virginity.

If we examine the elements the three chief versions of the wooing (NL, Völs and Ths) have in common, we see that all of them have a bridal night which Sigfrid and Brünhild spend together, with or without loss of virginity; a token taken by Sigfrid, and a conceal-

<sup>16</sup> Thus interpreted by Kralik, *op. cit.*, 526.

<sup>17</sup> A strikingly similar plot is found in a Slavic "*Brautwerbermärchen*" that is attested in many versions—cf. Friedrich Panzer, "Nibelungische Ketzereien I," *PBB* LXXII (1948), 463-98.

<sup>18</sup> *Op. cit.*, 21-25.



ment of Sigfrid's identity. We also have in each version the vestige of some kind of test or obstacle. I do not believe that there is any conclusive evidence to indicate that the final poet of the NL amalgamated two different parallel sources, but that two different traditions—not parallel—once existed and were here joined together seems a necessary conclusion from the apparent variations and contradictions.

Heusler considered the flame-ride together with the shape-shifting to be the original elements, but the actual concealment of Sigfrid's person is necessary only after the obstacle has been surmounted, so that it has all the earmarks of a developed element here. The use of the *tarnkappe* in the NL contests is a clumsy affair at best. Shape-shifting would certainly be a more appropriate solution: Heusler's thought (p. 33 ff.) that the *tarnkappe* was the secondary and rationalistic development is a good one. But there is no evidence in any of the other sources for the games themselves. If we agree that they are the invention of the final poet, then we are left with a *tarnkappe* developed from a shape-shifting that has no inherent purpose at all. The thought then occurs that instead of the shape-shifting's having been transferred from the games to the bridal night, the opposite might have taken place. In spite of the fact that some of the versions have Brünhild losing her virginity and some have her keeping it, the common element of the symbolic theft of the ring seems for one thing to indicate clearly that a deception in the loss of her virginity must have taken place. There is little doubt that the Ths, with Sigfrid taking Brynhild's virginity, reflects the original, the NL and Eddic versions being the altered ones. In this particular instance the objection that both Völs and NL would not have independently altered in the same manner is not as strong as it would be for most other motifs. In the first place, they did not exactly change it in the same manner: NL uses a subterfuge to get around the loss of Brünhild's virginity without Sigfrid's having actually taken it, while the Völs source author substitutes the motif of the naked sword placed between them, and for a quite different reason.

I believe that the NL's change, in spite of objections made to this explanation, was simply a concession to the sexual code of chivalry. It got the spirit of the deception across without the concomitant grossly deviant sexual behavior. That a man should ask another to

deflower his wife for him is certainly more than the chivalric code could easily accept!

For the flame-ride motif in the Eddic sources the loss of virginity presented other difficulties. If Sigurd deflowered Brynhild, Gunnar would know it, and there was no reason for it, as she had not proved recalcitrant, and he had not asked Sigurd to do it. I assume that the original from which the Eddic version was derived had an obstacle similar to the flame-wall, and that it contained a bridal night scene in which Sigurd in Gunnar's shape took Brynhild's maidenhead.

One of the most important elements of the story in all the versions of "Sigfrid's Death" is the *senna*, or quarrel between the two queens, Brünhild and Krimhild. Here, as Bumke says (p. 11), the deception comes to light, and here the murder plan starts. In spite of the highly divergent details, all of the extant versions have a nucleus in which Brünhild and Krimhild quarrel over a question of status, sparked by an incident involving precedence. What the original incident was, in the face of the great disparity of the events in the sources, is hard to say. The encounter in front of the church in the NL is without doubt a later version, in all probability part of the final poet's plan to infuse his work with courtly elements. The Ths version, with its staid, rationalized setting of an old Norwegian hall, seems patently an altered one. The only incident that has the ring of authenticity about it is the one delineated in Eddic sources (Völs, chap. 28, and especially Snorri's *Edda*,<sup>19</sup> Skm, chap. 50): Brynhild and Gudrun wash their hair in a stream, Brynhild is vexed when Gudrun washes hers farther upstream than she, and the quarrel begins.

The consensus of opinion until recently with regard to the first encounter between Brünhild and Krimhild in the NL has been Heusler's, namely that it was created by the final NL poet. But Bumke (12-18) regards it as further evidence of parallel sources. His view in short is that the first encounter in the NL has Brünhild and Krimhild quarreling about the relative merits of Sigfrid and Gunther, and must be part and parcel of a source that contained wooing tests and no bridal night deception, whereas the dispute before the church concerns the rank and prestige of Brünhild and

<sup>19</sup> *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, udgivet af Finnur Jónsson (København, 1931).

Krimhild themselves, and must go with a version containing a bridal night deception, such as the BL. Bumke maintains that in the BL, as evidenced by the Ths version and the NL scene before the church, Sigfrid and Gunther enter the quarrel only incidentally as appurtenances of the ladies' rank, whereas in the Eddic versions the wall of flame and Sigurd's youth are made the center of the quarrel. But he forgets that once the plot had been changed to one containing a chaste bed, the loss of virginity could not very well be mentioned.<sup>20</sup> And, after all, what could such a "comparison of women" be but an indirect comparison of their husbands? The incident that sparked things in the original involved rank, precedence, status of the women, so that their husbands were of course immediately involved, this in turn inevitably leading to the revelation of the deceptions carried out in the wooing and taming of Brünhild.

The final poet of the NL must have thought that the big scene of Brünhild and Krimhild's encounter before the church needed some preparation. He thus lifted the elements involving a direct comparison between Sigfrid and Gunther out of the scene containing the active, symbolic encounter, and made a separate scene out of them that led up to the church scene. This at the same time helped to pad out the first half of the epic.

Considerable confusion attaches to the scenes in the NL immediately following Krimhild and Brünhild's quarrel (852-876). First Sigfrid offers to take oaths that he never boasted of taking Brünhild's maidenhead, but Gunther absolves him of that necessity, and all seems patched up. But immediately thereafter Hagen learns about the quarrel from Brünhild, and promises that Sigfrid will atone for his misconduct. Then, without any transition, the reader finds himself in the midst of a confusing council of war among Gunther, Hagen, Ortwin, Giselher and Gernot, in which two motives are put forth for Sigfrid's destruction (on the one hand, for having deceived Brünhild; on the other, in order to seize his

<sup>20</sup> The fact that in the Völs Gudrun *does* taunt Brynhild with the claim that Sigurd took her virginity is generally considered to be evidence of the influence of the Ths on the Völs—cf. Jan de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte* (Berlin, 1941-42), II, 438-40. In Snorri's *Edda* the reading is "the one who went to bed with you" (sa . . . at gengi ireckiv hia þer). It is of course possible that the Völs version was original, a vestige of a former stage, and that Snorri altered it so that it would fit the facts.

lands), and two for his being spared (on the one hand, his innocence; on the other, his strength and invulnerability).

Bumke (p. 23) asserts that the large council has been taken over as "an unhewn block" from the second source he postulates. It is an unhewn block, all right, and rather extraneous material, but it is doubtful that it came from Bumke's second source or that it is to be reckoned to the account of the final poet. For if we concede Bumke's second source, we still leave unexplained the irrelevancies and inconsistencies in the NL council scene, namely the emphasis on Sigfrid's strength and the lands that will accrue to Gunther at his death. This is more likely evidence of a former motif in which Sigfrid is murdered because he is getting too powerful and is usurping lands belonging to Gunther and his brothers.<sup>21</sup> Surely Brynhild's words to that effect in the *Ths* (chap. 344) are likewise a reflex of this "large council." While it is plausible that the *Völs* version (chap. 30) is, as Bumke says, derived from a large council scene, this council is really no more apparent here than it is in the *Ths*. When in this work Brynhild tells Gunnar of Grimhild's taunts, Högni and Gernoz are also present—certainly reminiscent of the large council scene in the NL. The fact that the council is reflected in some way in all our sources indicates that the death council and the deceptive wooing must have merged into one clumsy whole quite early—early enough for an amalgamated version to be at the bottom of both Nordic and continental versions.

This early amalgamation must have first presented Brünhild complaining to Gunther (as in all extant versions), inciting him to kill Sigfrid (as in all versions save the NL), then turning to Hagen (as in the *Ths* and NL). Then a council was depicted in which the original version (in which Sigfrid's death was necessitated by his increased power) was only imperfectly adapted to the new twists of the plot. The Eddic sources removed the extraneous elements of the council scene and the incident in which Brünhild persuades Hagen to avenge her, while the *Ths* dropped the council but left the framework of it, and some of the argument used in it, putting it into Brynhild's mouth. The NL poet retained the council scene in greater detail, clumsily adapting it to the new turns of the plot, and confusing everything even more by the oath-taking

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Siegfried Beyschlag, "Das Motiv der Macht bei Siegfrieds Tod," *GRM* XXXIII (1951-52), 95-108.

motif, which is doubtless his invention, there being no hint of it in the other sources.

Bumke (p. 22) uses Hagen's question about Sigfrid in the death council scene, "Suln wir gouche ziehen?" (877) as evidence that the council was due to a second source. If we translate "Shall we tolerate wantons?"<sup>22</sup> he argues, the remark would presuppose that Sigfrid had actually deflowered Brünhild. As in the BL we must assume that Sigfrid had acted at Gunther's request, and consequently could not be reproached for it, we must conclude that Hagen's words are derived from a different source. There is no force to Bumke's argument unless the final poet copied the word *gouch* from his source. As the first attestation of the word in the meaning "wanton" is from Neidhart,<sup>23</sup> the farther back we have to postulate this meaning, the less plausible Bumke's conclusion is. It is unlikely that the NL poet would have used the word to render some other one in his source if it would introduce an idea foreign to his plot. Moreover, considering the literal meaning of *gouch* ("cuckoo") and its usual transferred meaning ("fool") in the MHG period, it is quite possible that the word should be interpreted rather as "talkative wanton," one who is so foolish as to talk of his amatory feats—a grave transgressor against the code of *minne*. This interpretation would then fit in well with Hagen's accusation that Sigfrid boasted about Brünhild.

Bumke (pp. 23-30) believes that the confused circumstances attendant upon Sigfrid's death in the NL again indicate two parallel sources, one in which Sigfrid is killed on a war campaign, one in which he is killed during a hunt. He points out that there are two different ruses: on the one hand the salted food and delayed drinks, on the other the cross sewn over Sigfrid's vulnerable spot. Bumke believes the war plan and the limited vulnerability motif go together to form part of the second source, while the hunting plot and the salted foods go back to the BL—as indeed testified by the Ths version. As collateral evidence he points out that Hagen, when he first plots Sigfrid's death, speaks only of the war plan, and that Sigfrid's limited vulnerability has never been mentioned before. Then there is the prize boner connected with the cross that

<sup>22</sup> See L. L. Hammerich, "Zu NL 867 (*gouch* "Bastard"?)," *Neophil.* XVI (1931), 96-98.

<sup>23</sup> See DWb s. v. *Gauch* II, 2 c.

Krimhild sews on: when the war plan is abandoned, Sigfrid changes into his hunting clothes, but when Hagen kills Sigfrid he finds the cross still there, even though it was sewn on a different garment.

Here Heusler's solution<sup>24</sup> seems preferable. He supposed that the NL poet had only one source for the murder plan, and that this source had only the hunting plan and the ruse of the salted foods. But our final poet may well have heard some other tale wherein the limited vulnerability motif reaches its logical conclusion, have decided to incorporate this motif into his work, and thus also expand it some more. But an adequate exploitation of the limited vulnerability motif demands a danger to which the prospective victim will be exposed, one so great that his confidante will betray his secret in order to ward it off, and such a danger is hardly to be found on a hunt. So the final poet raked out the same old chestnut of the Saxon war that he had already used before (139-264). This leaves the embarrassing change of clothing to be explained as simply a clumsy oversight on the part of our poet. As has already been pointed out, he did not concern himself greatly over inconsistencies of detail.

Bumke (pp. 26-28) looks upon the counterblow that the dying Sigfrid strikes as also indicative of a second source. It is not in the *Ths*, and Bumke deduces from the accoutrements of war that Sigfrid has with him on the hunt that it is an attribute of the war plan that is fitted into the hunt plan. Of course, a counterblow *in se* could just as well belong to a hunt plan murder—Sigfrid could have used a hunting spear. The fact that the counterblow appears in Eddic sources seems to indicate that the latter is its origins. While the *Völs* (chap. 30) and Snorri (*Skm*, chap. 50) have the murder taking place in bed, one of the poems of the poetic *Edda* presupposes a forest death with counterblow.<sup>25</sup> Most probably the bed murder was derived from the forest murder—a simplification of it, the actual murder being blended with the informing of Gudrun. The war accoutrements are then the invention of the final

<sup>24</sup> *Op. cit.*, 147.

<sup>25</sup> The bed-death is in "Sigurðarkviða in skamma," 22 ff; "Guðrúnarhvot" 4; "Hamðismál" 6-7; the forest-death is presupposed in "Brot af Sigurðarkviðu" 5. Cited from *Edda: die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern*, hrsg. von Gustav Neckel. I, Text. (Heidelberg, 1914).

poet. Slightly incongruous as they may seem on a mere hunt, they allow the poet the inclusion of several devices: the handicap in the race to the spring, the killing of the bear with the sword, the striking of Hagen with a shield, so as not to kill him off. Whether the original blow was lethal or not is, as Bumke points out, connected with whether Hagen or one of Gunther's (other) brothers was the original assassin. In all probability, at the oldest stage the blow was lethal, but to keep Hagen alive for the second part of the story its force was later eased. It is most likely that the author of the *Ths* repressed the counterblow—further evidence of his deletion of irrational elements. Probably the *NL* final poet changed the weapon Sigfrid used for the counterblow to a shield so as to make Hagen's escape from death more reasonable. Probably, also, the counterblow had already lost its lethal quality in his source. There is further indication that the paraphernalia of war were present in the *Ths* hunt episode, too, for in his dying speech Sigurd says that if he had known Högni's purpose when he was on his feet his shield would have been broken and his helmet ruined.<sup>26</sup>

Bumke (27-28) is also concerned about the provenience of the shield upon which Sigfrid is placed to be carried home. It could not be Sigfrid's own, as he broke that to pieces when he struck Hagen with it. Bumke concludes that it can only be derived from a war plan version. But the carrying of a slain warrior on a shield is such a stereotype device that we can well believe that the final poet could have included it without thought of the inconsistency involved.

The second source that Bumke postulates has the merit of containing almost all the elements found in the *NL* and not in the *Ths*—again, it is too perfect a creation. Essentially he fell into the same trap that he chided Hermann Schneider for having fallen into: he, too, leaves little for the final poet to have contributed. Moreover, all else put aside, it is hard to believe that two such completely different versions as Bumke's two sources should have existed side by side at the same time and in the same place. Another failing in his work is that he never considers the possibility that the immediate sources of the *NL* might themselves have contained contradictions.

Our postulated source, essentially the source for the *Ths* as well,

<sup>26</sup> Bumke (p. 26) believes this to be merely metaphorical.

would contain the following elements: a Sigfrid who has known Brünhild before; Brünhild behind an obstacle which Sigfrid surmounts in the form of Gunther; a bridal night in which Sigfrid, again in Gunther's shape, deflowers Brünhild; a quarrel between Krimhild and Brünhild involving prestige and precedence and leading to the unmasking of Sigfrid's deception; an incitement of Gunther and Hagen by Brünhild, together with a large council of war containing contradictory elements probably due to an earlier version; a murder plan involving a hunt with salted foods and delayed drinks, in which Hagen stabs Sigfrid with a hunting spear while he is drinking and is struck non-lethally by Sigfrid. This poem the final poet of the NL expanded by including in it many details and devices from other sources and from his own imagination.

Many of the difficulties in the plot of the NL are probably due to the imperfect amalgamation of tales at an earlier stage of development, one that antedated the formation of the BL as well as the source of the Eddic tradition. Basically it is the story of young Sigfrid, who obtained gold by killing a dragon, welded to the story of the Burgundian kings of the fifth century<sup>27</sup> who had to dispose of someone who was usurping their power. The first connection between these two basic tales is Sigfrid's gold on the one hand and the famous Rhine gold on the other. Among the Sigfrid tales there was doubtless one that dealt with Sigfrid awakening a maiden that dwelled behind some unsurmountable obstacle—ultimately a Dornröschen motif. Then the Burgundian cycle will have contained a story of a wooing expedition in which a reluctant maiden was overcome by a proxy in the shape of her husband.<sup>28</sup> Here a second point of contact—Sigfrid's maiden and the one wooed by the Burgundian king become fused into one, the wedding night deception is expanded to include the overcoming of the obstacle, and Sigfrid is equated with the perpetrator of the bridal night deception. This left many crude sutures showing, some

<sup>27</sup> See esp. M. Lintzel, "Der historische Kern der Sigfridsage," *Historische Studien* 245 (1934), for the historical background of the Burgundians in the NL.

<sup>28</sup> Perhaps Klaus von See in "Die Werbung um Brünhild," *Zsfda* LXXXVIII (1957-58), 1-20, is right in his suggestion that the wooing of Brünhild might have its origin in the custom of sending a proxy to court a woman and bring her to the king.



of which were smoothed out by different revisers in different manners. In none of the sources was Sigfrid's former acquaintance with Brünhild entirely forgotten.

An extension of our hypothesis perhaps gives us a clue to further difficult features. All indications are that Hagen, in the NL regarded as the vassal of Gunther and his brothers, in Eddic sources as their full brother, was probably, in accordance with the *Ths*, their bastard brother, fathered by a supernatural being. As he would then have supernatural powers himself, can we perhaps venture the thought that it was originally he who had by his magic exchanged shapes with Gunther and won Brünhild for him? And who had become so powerful that he had had to be killed? This would perhaps explain how he came to obtain the rôle he has: after Sigfrid was given his former part, he was relegated to the position formerly held by his brother Gernot / Gutthorm. This would explain the uncertainty about the identity of the murderer: the Eddic sources kept the original one. It would explain the basis of Sigfrid's pretending to be Gunther's vassal, and it would explain the very basis of the *senna*: Hagen, as the original wooer's helper, *had* been, as the bastard brother, a vassal; thus Krimhild's husband, Hagen, *was* inferior in station to Brünhild's.

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