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The Internal Source and Function of King Gunther's Bridal Quest

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The *Nibelungenlied* poet's account of Gunther's wooing of Brynhild in Isenstein lacks an exact literary analogue. For almost two centuries, scholars have attempted to trace the origins of this remarkable bridal quest, and of the martial games in particular.¹ There is no evidence that the games, the main interest of the quest, figured in the "Brünhildenlied," the hypothetical common source of both the *Nibelungenlied* and the relevant section of the *Thidrekssaga*.²

Comparing these two extant works, one finds the varying accounts of Gunther's wooing perplexingly different. In the *Thidrekssaga*, Sigurd accompanies Thidrek to Niflungaland and there marries Grimhild, Gunnar's sister. Sigurd advises Gunnar to marry Brynhild and later directs his brother-in-law to Saegard, where he plays the role of proxy wooer. Sigurd is poorly received by a vexed Brynhild, who reminds him of their former engagement, of which the reader has not been informed. After offering excuses for his broken pledge, Sigurd urges Brynhild to marry his honorable friend and relative, the great king Gunnar. Brynhild turns to the famed warrior-king Thidrek for counsel. With Thidrek's help a marriage is arranged.

In the *Nibelungenlied* version, Siegfried, who advises Gunther not to undertake the wooing expedition to Isenstein, agrees to lead Gunther there only on the condition that he gain Kriemhilt's hand in marriage. Arriving on the shores of Brynhild's realm, Siegfried conspicuously plays the role of Gunther's vassal. Despite this role-playing, it is Siegfried who is favored with Brynhild's greeting. Once it is determined that it is Gunther, not Siegfried, who has come to win Brynhild's hand, the mighty queen sets down the rules of the potentially deadly martial games. Clothed in a cape of invisibility (*Tarnkappe*), Siegfried performs the feats while Gunther feigns the motions. Brynhild is deceived and agrees to marry the "victorious" Gunther.

Both Siegfried's reluctance to help Gunther win Brynhild and Brynhild's test of suitability are foreign to the *Thidrekssaga*. In the *Thidrekssaga*, Sigurd is already married to Gunnar's sister; in the *Nibelungenlied* account, this marriage, which has not yet taken place, is set as the condition or reward for Siegfried's aid.³ The changes and alterations which the *Nibelungenlied* poet introduced into his version result in reducing Gunther to a mere shadow of his former mighty self. It is the aim of this paper to suggest an internal source for the *Nibelungenlied* poet's account of Gunther's bridal quest and then to discuss the literary significance of this episode.

I propose that the new motifs which are found in Adventures VI and VII arise not from a second lay of Siegfried and Brynhild, but rather from the poet's conscious remodeling of Gunther's bridal quest on that of Siegfried's, depicted in Adventure III.⁴ Whereas the inconsistencies which these new motifs occasioned in the account of Gunther's quest have been the subject of intensive scholarly inquiry, those in the depiction of Siegfried's wooing expedition, though often mentioned, have never been fully explained. If we turn for a moment to Siegfried's arrival at the court of Worms, we are struck by the hero's brash behavior. Siegfried conducts himself in a most uncourtly manner by threatening to usurp Gunther's realm by force.⁵ This unprovoked verbal attack upon his host seems oddly out of character; one wonders what purpose the poet had in portraying such unseemly conduct in his hero.

Adventure III is generally assumed to have no literary analogue in the *Thidrekssaga*. However, Siegfried's boisterous arrival, his uncourtly behavior, and his threatening speeches all parallel to a certain degree his first arrival at the court of Brynhild. In this arrival scene, the poet of the *Thidrekssaga* describes his impatient young hero's bursting of the gate's iron hinges when no one opens up for him. Confronted by irate guardsmen, Sigurd draws his sword and slays all seven. Word reaches Brynhild that a stranger has penetrated the walls of her fortress and is now doing battle with her knights. Brynhild, aware that this stranger must be Sigurd, goes down to stop the fighting and to offer Sigurd her court's hospitality.

The *Thidrekssaga* and *Nibelungenlied* accounts of Siegfried's arrival at the court of Brynhild and at that of the Burgundians are clearly more similar than those scenes concerning Gunther's wooing of Brynhild. The *Nibelungenlied* poet may have chosen to depict the boisterous and powerful side of his hero, as found in the *Thidrekssaga*, to contrast directly with the courtly and meek posture of Gunther. This intended contrast is borne out by comparing the structure of Adventure III with that of Adventures VI and VII. When comparing the plot lines of these two bridal quests, one is immediately aware of the poet's calculated use of contrast-

tive motifs to point out the strength of his hero, the weakness of his king. The two quests begin as follows:

III/1. Tale heard of a beautiful princess in Burgundy

Den herren muoten selten deheiniu herzen leit.
er hôrte sagen maere wie ein scoeniu meit
waere in Burgonden, ze wunsche wol getân,
von der er sît vil vreuden und ouch arbeit gewan. (44)

VI/1. Tale heard of beautiful maidens in distant land

Iteniuwe maere sich huoben über Rîn.
man sagte daz dâ waere manec scoene magedîn.
der gedâht' im eine erwerben Gunther der künec guot:
dâ von begunde dem recken vil sêre hôhen der muot. (325)

III/2. Princess's exceptional beauty emphasized; definite location given

Diu ir unmâzen scoene was vil wîten kunt,
und ir hôhgemüete zuo der selben stunt
an der juncfrouwen sô manec helt ervant.
ez ladete vil der geste in daz Guntheres lant. (45)

VI/2. Queen's beauty (and strength) emphasized; general location given

Ez was ein küneginne gesezzen über sê,
ir gelîche enheine man wesse ninder mê.
diu was unmâzen scoene, vil michel was ir kraft.
si scôz mit snellen degenen umbe minne den scaft. (326)

III/3. Princess not eager to wed

Swaz man der werbenden nâch ir minne sach,
Kriemhilt in ir sinne ir selber nie verjach,
daz si deheinen wolde ze eime trûte hân.
er was ir noch vil vremde, dem si wart sider undertân. (46)

VI/3. Queen resolutely determined not to wed

Den stein den warf si verre, dar nâch si wîten spranc.
swer ir minne gerte, der muose âne wanc
driu spil an gewinnen der frouwen wol geborn.
gebrast im an dem einen, er hete daz houbet sîn verlorn. (327)

III/4. Siegfried resolves to win Kriemhilt

Do gedâht ûf hôhe minne daz Siglinde kint.
ez was ir aller werben wider in ein wint.
er mohte wol verdienen scoener frouwen lip.
sît wart diu edele Kriemhilt des kûenen Sivrides wîp. (47)

VI/4. Gunther resolves to win Brynhild

Dô sprach der vogt von Rîne: “ich wil nider an den sê
 hin ze Prünhilde, swi ez mir ergê.
 ich wil durch ir minne wâgen mînen lîp:
 den wil ich verliesen, sine werde mîn wîp.” (329)

As we compare these two episodes, we find that both begin with tidings from abroad (44/325), which tell of exceptionally beautiful maidens (45/326) who are reluctant to wed (46/327). Both heroes resolve to risk their lives to obtain the princess (47/328). These similarities are not surprising since they are stock motifs of the bridal quest. The introductions do set different tones, however. In Adventure III we are explicitly told the name of the princess (Kriemhilt 46,2) and the location of her home (“in Burgonden” 44,3; “in daz Guntheres lant” 45,4). In Adventure VI we are told of a nameless queen (“Ez was ein küneginne” 326,1) residing somewhere across the sea (“gesezzen über sê” 326,1). Both queens are steadfast in their resolve not to marry, but Kriemhilt is passive in her resolution (46), whereas Brynhild is prepared to defend her status actively with her famous strength (326–327). It is clear from these differences, then, that Adventure III is introducing a courtly version of the bridal quest; Adventure VI is introducing a fantastic one.

Yet another indication of the fantastic nature of Gunther’s bridal quest might be inferred from the poet’s introduction to the tale. If we take a closer look at the first stanza of Adventure VI, we find that the poet directly hints at the originality, the ‘newness’, of the story which is to follow. The poet’s use of the noun *maere* to introduce a new episode into the plot is typical in all but one respect . . . he modifies it with the attribute *iteniuwe*, which means ‘novel’ or ‘completely new’.⁶ When one considers this particular meaning and the fact that the poet chose to modify *maere* (which occurs 174 times) only once with this attribute, it seems plausible that he was consciously introducing new material into the traditional tale.⁷ If we are willing to allow room for the poet’s own creativity, we may then consider the games his innovation.

As we continue to examine the plot line of these two quests, we find that the underlying structures are all but identical; it is the descriptions of human reaction which are at variance. Whereas the similarity of the structural overlay is maintained, differences in the use of stock motifs soon become evident. Briefly the infrastructure of the two quests continues as follows:

1. After hearing of Kriemhilt, Siegfried decides to woo her; he is supported by the advice of his councilors. / After hearing of Brynhild, Gunther decides to woo her without the aid of counsel. (48/329)

2. Parents express concern for Siegfried's safety and try to dissuade him from the journey. / Siegfried expresses concern for Gunther's safety and warns him not to undertake the journey. (50–51/330)
3. Siegfried remains steadfast in his resolve. / Gunther's resolve is left in question since it is Hagen who responds to this warning. (52/331)
4. Convinced of son's determination, father rejoices in Siegfried's courage and offers his help. Trusting in his own prowess, Siegfried refuses offer. / Prompted by Hagen, Gunther asks Siegfried for his help. (53–54/332)
5. Father warns that Kriemhilt cannot be won by force. He offers Siegfried warriors. Siegfried will go with only twelve men. / Gunther suggests taking 3,000 warriors; Siegfried suggests a party of four. (57–59/339,341)
6. Siegfried asks mother to outfit his party with magnificent attire. / Gunther asks Kriemhilt to outfit his party with magnificent attire. (62/354)
7. Women lament heroes' departure; portent of doom. (70/373)
8. Nibelungen heroes arrive on beach; chargers come ashore at an equal pace. / Burgundian heroes enter Isenstein; Siegfried leads Gunther's horse ashore. (71/396)
9. Nibelungen heroes' splendid raiment admired by all as they come ashore. / Brynhild takes special notice of the splendid raiment worn by the Burgundian heroes as they come ashore. (72–74/400–401)
10. Nibelungen heroes are received; horses and shields are taken. / Burgundian heroes are received; horses and shields are taken. (75/405)
11. Strangers' arrival reported to Gunther. / Strangers' arrival reported to Brynhild. (79/409)
12. Gunther wishes to know the identity of the strangers. / Brynhild wishes to know the identity of the strangers. (80/410)
13. Hagen identifies the hero, Siegfried, although he has never seen him before; he advises Gunther to welcome the fearsome warrior in an hospitable manner. / Member of Brynhild's court identifies the hero, Siegfried, although he has never seen him before; he advises Brynhild to welcome Siegfried in an hospitable manner. (86,101/411)
14. Gunther accepts Hagen's advice. / Brynhild disregards her courtier's advice and readies herself to confront Siegfried. (102/416)
15. Gunther goes with his warriors to welcome Siegfried and to learn the purpose of his visit. / Brynhild enters the hall accompanied by 500 warriors bearing weapons. Welcoming Siegfried, she asks the purpose of his visit. (104–106/417–419)
16. Siegfried announces his intention to take over Gunther's realm by force. / After Brynhild learns that Gunther has come to woo her, she challenges him to life-threatening trials. (109–110/423,425)

17. Gunther is stunned; he makes no effort to accept the challenge. / Gunther is frightened; Siegfried enjoins him to accept the challenge. (112/426)
18. Siegfried remains unshaken in his resolve to wrest Gunther's kingdom from him. / Gunther sees Brynhild's spear and wishes he had never undertaken this journey. (122/441-442)
19. With Gernot's help, Gunther is able to resolve the conflict peaceably with a generous offer of hospitality. / Much against his will, but with Siegfried's crucial help, Gunther is soon participating in the deadly trials. (126-127/452,454)
20. Siegfried's expertise in knightly tournaments is emphasized. / Siegfried performs feats of prowess single handedly, Gunther feigns motions. Gunther (Siegfried) defeats Brynhild. (130/459-60; 463-65)
21. Siegfried's bridal quest is left unresolved. / Gunther's bridal quest is resolved; Brynhild hands the power of her realm over to Gunther. (138/466)

As shown above, the story lines are indeed parallel and yet the author's use of contrastive devices becomes more and more apparent as the tales progress. The majority of these contrasting parallels are used to portray the inherent difference in Siegfried's and Gunther's character.

At the outset of each of these quests, as the hero declares his intent to wed, a small variation in the story line emerges. Whereas Siegfried is advised by his councilors to woo a bride, Gunther alone makes this decision. The fact that Siegfried's plan to win Kriemhilt's hand is supported by his advisors hints at the propriety of his desire. That Gunther receives no such advice, in fact on the contrary is warned against such an undertaking, suggests the inappropriateness of his wish.

The difference in these two warriors' characters is again contrasted as we see Siegfried, steadfast in his resolve to win Kriemhilt by no means other than his own strength, decline his father's offer of troops. Gunther, on the other hand, appears somewhat nonplussed that the adventure might prove dangerous, and, rather than boldly reasserting his intent to woo and win Brynhild as his bride, seems to waver in his resolve, asking for Siegfried's assistance and suggesting that 3,000 troops accompany them to Isenstein. Paradoxically (and unfortunately for Gunther), we are told that Kriemhilt cannot be won by force of arms, whereas Brynhild must be won by knightly prowess.

In both arrival scenes it is Siegfried who is identified as the hero, a fact which suggests that Gunther is physically as well as spiritually the weaker figure. The *Nibelungenlied* poet also draws on parallel welcoming scenes to call attention to Gunther's ineffectual leadership as juxtaposed against Brynhild's aggressive stance. When advised by Hagen not to upset the mighty Siegfried, Gunther is quick to comply with this suggestion.

Brynhild, ignoring similar advice, appears the more heroic leader as she readies herself for physical combat.

When the heroes' entry into the foreign courts is described, the contrasting attitudes of Siegfried and Gunther are no longer alluded to, they are blatant. Upon arriving in Worms, Siegfried provokes the Burgundians to a show of strength upon the battle field. As Gunther enters Brynhild's hall, he is cowed. In both episodes it is Gunther, the obviously weaker contender, who is challenged, and, in each case, Gunther appears less than heroic in dealing with the challenge. In Adventure III Hagen and Gernot come to Gunther's aid; in Adventure VII Siegfried and Hagen intercede.

Siegfried's bravery and Gunther's cowardice become more and more apparent as they respond to their hosts' enmity. Whereas Siegfried remains unshaken in the face of threats from the Burgundians, Brynhild's call to arms makes the anxious Gunther regret the whole journey and wish he were safe at home. Gunther's anxiety is mirrored in the fearful apprehension which Hagen and Dankwart feel for their king as well as for themselves (430; 438; 443-448; 450). Their total lack of confidence in Gunther's ability to defeat Brynhild reinforces anew our opinion of his weakness.

And finally, Siegfried's prowess in knightly tournament is praised at the end of Adventure III. His exceptional ability to put the shot and to throw the javelin foreshadows the crucial role he is to play in Adventure VII. At the conclusion of the martial games, we are told that if the invisible Siegfried had not been there to perform the feats, Gunther would have lost his life during the contests.

By using contrastive motifs throughout these two bridal quests, the *Nibelungenlied* poet leaves little room to speculate about Gunther's character. The supposedly mighty and fearless Burgundian king ("mit kraft unmâzen küene" 5,2) is upon closer inspection revealed to be a weak and impotent ruler who must rely on the strength of others and stoop to deceit in order to preserve his realm and to realize his desires. Nowhere is the depiction of Gunther's personal weakness more pronounced than in the portrayal of the martial games to which we will now turn.

I submit that the *Nibelungenlied* poet used the games on three different levels: they served to entertain his audience, to characterize Gunther, and to underscore the theme of real versus claimed power. As already noted, in the welcoming scene in Adventure VII, Siegfried and Hagen intercede to woo on Gunther's behalf. Gunther remains strangely silent. The poet tells us that Siegfried must actually urge Gunther to bolster his courage and to proclaim his desire to win Brynhild's hand (426). The subdued comedy inherent in Gunther's meek conduct here is heightened during the contests to the level of the burlesque.

Perhaps the most outlandish description of the contestants' activities occurs when Gunther is required to throw a huge boulder twelve ells and then to surpass it with a leap! This feat, of course, can be accomplished only with Siegfried's help:

Sifrit der was küene, vil kreftec unde lanc.
den stein den warf er verrer, dar zuo er witer spranc.
von sînen schoenen listen er hete kraft genouc
daz er mit dem sprunge den künic Gunther doch truoc. (464)

Here the *Nibelungenlied* poet makes excellent use of the *Tarnkappe* to gain full advantage of the farce inherent in the pantomime and to demean Gunther completely in the eyes of his, the poet's, audience. The burlesque depiction of the invisible Siegfried performing these fantastic feats with Gunther in tow is trenchant in two ways: it offers an extreme portrayal of the deceit in the form of heightened comedy; it uses pantomime to symbolize visually the absolute ineffectuality of Gunther. It seems to me that this depiction of Gunther's weakness is of utmost importance to the theme: real versus claimed power. In retrospect we find that the author has hinted at Gunther's impotence throughout the tale; we also discover that these suggestions become less subtle as the story progresses.

When Siegfried arrives in Worms proclaiming his intent to take Gunther's kingdom by force (109–110), the courtly Burgundian king reacts in amazement. Whereas Gunther maintains that the right to rule is inherited (111–112), Siegfried asserts that it is personal power which determines this right:

“Ine wil es niht erwinden,” sprach aber der küene man.
“ez enmüge von dînen ellen dîn lant den fride hân,
ich wil es alles walten. und ouch diu erbe mîn,
erwirbest duz mit sterke, diu sulen dir undertaenec sîn.” (113)

This challenge is answered not by Gunther, but by Hagen and Gernot who know that Gunther is weak (114). Gunther continues to meet Siegfried's challenge to arms with determined resistance. Finally the conflict is peaceably resolved first with Gernot's and then with Gunther's generous offer of hospitality:

Dô sprach der wirt des landes: “allez daz wir hân,
geruochet irs nâch êren, daz sî iu undertân,
und sî mit iu geteilet lîp unde guot.”
dô wart der herre Sîvrit ein lützel sanfter gemuot. (127)

In this scene of welcome, Siegfried's combative behavior contrasts directly with Gunther's reserved courtly manner. While the rejected challenge leaves us somewhat perplexed, we are ready to accept the “right-

ness" of Gunther's civilized settling of the conflict. Here Gunther appears as the diplomatic statesman.

We begin to question Gunther's character, however, in Adventure IV when he takes advantage of Siegfried's bravery and friendship to defend Worms from Saxon attack. It is Siegfried, in his own right a king, who goes off into battle to protect Gunther's realm, while Gunther remains comfortably at home with the ladies:

"Her künec, sît hie heime," sprach dô Sîfrit,
 "sît daz iuwer recken mir wellent volgen mit.
 bêlbet bî den frouwen und traget hôhen muot.
 ich trouwe iu wol behüeten beidiu êre unde guot." (174)

Gunther's acceptance of this offer of help, arouses the suspicion that "der grimme Gunther" (142,4) may not be so grim after all.

In Adventure VI, the unheroic stature of Gunther becomes more evident. Hearing of Gunther's intent to woo the mighty Brynhild, Siegfried strongly advises him against this dangerous undertaking. Hagen, who seems just as skeptical about Gunther's chances of winning Brynhild in knightly contest, is quick to suggest that Gunther once again avail himself of Siegfried's aid:

"Sô wil ih iu daz râten," sprach dô Hagene,
 "ir bittet Sîvrîde mit iu ze tragene
 die vil starken swaere, daz ist nu mîn rât,
 sît im daz ist sô kûndec wi es um Prûnhilde stât." (331)

Siegfried agrees to help, but, ignoring Gunther's offer of loyalty in return ("ich wil durch dînen willen wâgen êre und lîp" 332,4), he demands Kriemhilt's hand as his reward:

Des antwurte Sîvrit, der Sigmundes sun:
 "gîstu mir dîne swester, sô wil ich ez tuon,
 die scoenen Kriemhilde, ein kûneginne hêr.
 sô ger ich deheines lônes nâch mînen arbeiten mêr." (333)

Two important ideas emerge from this scene: Siegfried is little impressed with, or little values, Gunther's willingness to stake life and honor as recompense for his services during the wooing expedition; and Siegfried considers this adventure as *Minnedienst*. Here Siegfried's assistance is not to be construed as an altruistic gesture, nor is it meant as a sign of his affection for Gunther. As he patently states in the stanza quoted below, he is undertaking the journey for Kriemhilt's sake, not for Gunther's:

"Jane lob' ihz niht sô verre durch die liebe dîn
 sô durch dîne swester, daz scoene magedîn.
 diu ist mir sam mîn sêle und sô mîn selbes lîp.
 ich wil daz gerne dienen, daz si werde mîn wîp. (388)

Noteworthy is also the vassalage deception which Siegfried suggests and which Gunther agrees to:

Sô wir die minneclîchen bî ir gesinde sehen.
 sô sult ir, helde maere, wan einer rede jehen:
 Gunther sî mîn herre, und ich sî sîn man.
 des er dâ hât gedingen, daz wirdet allez getân. (386)

Once again we are witness to Siegfried's stepping down to accommodate Gunther's weakness. As Siegfried well knows, were he not to play servant to Gunther, it would be assumed that he, the more famed of the two warriors, were come to woo Brynhild. In order to avoid troublesome questions and to ensure Gunther's success, Siegfried demeans himself thereby calling attention to Gunther's elevated status. This deception is given visual credence as Siegfried first leads Gunther's horse ashore and then helps him to mount, a service observed by all the maidens in the castle.⁸

The stage has now been set for the contest in Isenstein. The audience has slowly come to the realization that the mighty King Gunther is a timid, irresolute, cowardly figure; in every instance he has been slow to act, yet quick to accept aid. Because we are now aware of the vassalage and the *Tarnkappe* deceptions which will be enacted to enhance Gunther's prestige and protect him from any harm, we are likewise aware that Gunther's quest entails little risk. All his former avowals to risk his life for love ("ich wil durch ir minne wâgen mînen lîp" 329,3) are now seen as empty chatter. In Adventure VII, the *Nibelungenlied* poet demeans Gunther by exposing his fear and dread. The weaker facets of his personality, which we have glimpsed in earlier chapters, are given their full expression in the burlesque depiction of Gunther's faint-hearted antics during the games.

In conclusion, I maintain that when one compares Siegfried's wooing expedition to Worms with Gunther's expedition to Isenstein, the structural similarities between these two adventures are marked. The poet's use of parallel structure and of contrasting motifs leads me to suggest that Adventures VI and VII were consciously modeled on Adventure III, which may find its analogue in the *Thidrekssaga*. This amplification of one source adventure into two enabled the poet to expand his account as well as to compare and contrast the personalities of the two suitors, Siegfried and Gunther. Employing the techniques of amplification and characterization, the poet consciously retained the infrastructure of the bridal quest as presented in Adventure III for his depiction of Gunther's wooing of Brynhild and changed only those key details which would throw the differing personalities into stark relief. Aside from the more obvious parallel scenes of arrival, departure, and courtly dress, which

can be considered part and parcel of the epic genre, other parallel scenes emerge which are clearly meant to interconnect Adventure III with Adventures VI and VII.

There seems little doubt that the *Nibelungenlied* poet used Siegfried's wooing expedition as a foil for Gunther's. By juxtaposing Siegfried's valorous feats with Gunther's anxious inactivity, the author effects a devastating portrayal of the Burgundian king. The poet also makes striking use of parallel scenes to foreshadow future events as well as to recall past incidents. For example, in both arrival scenes the poet uses the device of teichoscopy; in these episodes it is Siegfried the illustrious, fearsome warrior who is recognized (86; 411). In each case, the overwhelming praise afforded Siegfried and the lack of such acclaim for Gunther can be read as a criticism of Gunther's warrior status. In Adventure VII Gunther's inferior knightly bearing can be inferred from the fact that Brynhild mistakes Siegfried for her would-be suitor (i.e. the obvious hero) despite the vassalage theatrics which had been enacted on the shore. Coupled with Brynhild's disregard, the brevity and ordinariness of the introductions given him serve to further degrade the Burgundian monarch (412; 420–22). By contrast, the fifteen strophes allotted to Hagen's identification of Siegfried in Adventure III are full of fantastic detail, superlative attributes, and extraordinary tales of Siegfried's youth (86–100).

In both welcoming scenes Gunther is challenged and each time he responds in awed silence, necessitating the quick wits of others to preserve his honor. In both adventures the conflict is resolved by a transfer of power. In Adventure III, in an attempt to accommodate Siegfried's aggressive demands, Gunther offers Siegfried reign over his court in the figurative sense to show his hospitality (127). This scene foreshadows the transfer of power at the conclusion of Adventure VII. Here Brynhild quite literally gives the power of her realm over into Gunther's hands (466).⁹

Yet another example of the *Nibelungenlied* poet's designed use of parallel scenes to mirror important events occurs at the conclusion of Adventure III, as Siegfried's expertise in knightly tournaments is lauded. Siegfried's superior jousting in Burgundy anticipates his victory over Queen Brynhild in Isenstein.

The martial games are particularly important in that they serve as the test of suitability for both quests: Siegfried views them as the *Minnedienst* required to win Kriemhilt; Brynhild sees them as the test of her suitor's worth. The fantastic games are also the means with which the author entertains his audience while at the same time drawing attention to the weak and deceitful side of Gunther. Whether the games, the crux of both quests, were the original invention of the *Nibelungenlied* poet, an ornamental borrowing, or were derived from a secondary source re-

mains an enigma. That they were essential to the resolution of both quests is evidenced by the fact that Siegfried's bridal quest, which is left unresolved in Adventure III, actually culminates in Adventure VII, a clear indication that these two episodes should be viewed together.

¹ For major scholarly inquiries into the origins of the *Nibelungenlied* see, for example, Karl Lachmann, *Über die ursprüngliche Gestalt des Gedichtes von der Nibelungen Noth* (Berlin: F. Dümmler, 1816). In this classic monograph Lachmann characterizes the *Nibelungenlied* as a composite work consisting of several short lays, gathered together by several compilers and connected with poetically inferior transitional material. Convincingly challenging Lachmann's influential *Liedertheorie*, Andreas Heusler, *Nibelungensage und Nibelungenlied* (Dortmund: Ruhfus, 1920), credits a single poet with combining different literary traditions in an imaginative way. He posits two lays as the primary sources for parts one and two of the *Nibelungenlied*: the "Brünhildenlied" and the "Ältere Not," respectively. In his study, *Die Sigfridtrilogie im Nibelungenlied und in der Thidrekssaga*, pt. I, Dietrich von Kralik breaks with Heusler's single source theory for the *Nibelungenlied* part one and posits a separate source for the wooing contest, the *Tarnkappe* motif, as well as for the bridal night episode: a burlesque, humorous wedding song, "Das Lied von Sigfrids Hochzeit." Earlier in the century Friedrich Panzer, *Studien zur germanischen Sagen-geschichte, II Sigfrid* (München: Beck, 1912), looked beyond the German-speaking realm for a prototype of the wooing games. He believes a north Russian fairy tale of the suitor, or *Brautwerbermärchen*, of the 11th or 12th century to be the immediate source of the Siegfried legend. Klaus von See "Die Werbung um Brunhild," *ZDA*, 88 (1958), 1-20; "Freierprobe und Königinnenzank in der Sigfridsage," *ZDA*, 89 (1959), 163-172, conceives the original tale to be one of the proxy wooer, a tale of Brynhild's jealousy and injured pride; Siegfried's and Gunther's deception of the warrior queen, von See maintains, was a later development. Troubled by the inconsistencies which the games occasion in the story line of the *Nibelungenlied*, Joachim Bumke, "Die Quellen der Brunhildfabel im Nibelungenlied," *Euphorion*, 54 (1960), 1-38, assumes two sources to account for the games as well as for the bed conquest. Most recently, Theodore M. Andersson, *The Legend of Brynhild* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980), argues that the structure of the *Nibelungenlied* part one can be explained on the basis of one single source with borrowed motifs from secondary sources. Regarding the poet's use of the martial games in the wooing episode, he suggests that they reflect the poet's innovative use of a motif found in Panzer's *Brautwerbermärchen*, p. 219.

² According to Heusler, both the *Nibelungenlied* part one and the *Thidrekssaga* are based on the same primary source: the Brynhild Lay, p. 84.

³ The *Thidrekssaga* is generally assumed to follow the original source more closely in those instances "where the logical sequence is clear in the *Thidrekssaga*, but obscure or 'blinded' in the *Nibelungenlied*, . . ." A. T. Hatto, *The Nibelungenlied* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1965), p. 393. As Hatto notes, the conflated account given by the *Nibelungenlied* poet occasioned many inconsistencies and blind motifs: "The test of the lover in the first source was the defloration of Brunhild. Thus, in the conflated account of the *Nibelungenlied*, Brunhild is won twice over, though the motif of defloration is blinded, and possibly, in agreement therewith, Siegfried's chaste dealings with Brunhild are adopted from the second source" (p. 393).

⁴ Critics who posit two parallel primary sources to account for the games as well as the bed conquest are: Wolfgang Mohr, *Dichtung und Volkstum* 42 (1942), 116-122; Bumke, pp. 1-38; Hatto, p. 393; and Helmut de Boor, *Das Nibelungenlied*, 19th ed., (Wiesbaden: Brockhaus, 1967), p. xxxvi.

⁵ Strophes 105-109. All subsequent references to the *Nibelungenlied* given parenthetically in the text are based on the 19th edition of de Boor's *Nibelungenlied* (1967).

⁶ According to de Boor (n. 325,1), the word *iteniuwe* means 'completely new' (*ganz neu*). In the Franz H. Bäuml/Eva-Maria Fallone *Concordance to the Nibelungenlied* (Leeds: Maney and Son, 1976) this adjective occurs five times ("Itenuwe maere" 325,1; "iteniuwez

weinen" 1133,4; "mit iteniuwen leiden" 1141,1; "die truogen iteniuwe kleit" 1367,4; "waz iteniuer swerte" 1940,2), p. 354. In each of these instances, the poet uses the attribute to focus on the complete newness of the object described.

⁷ Bäuml/Fallone, occurrences of *maere*: pp. 433–434.

⁸ Both Hugo Kuhn, *Dichtung und Welt im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1969), pp. 198–219, and Bumke, pp. 34–38, have commented on the innate theatricality of the *Nibelungenlied*. The depiction of the Burgundians' arrival in Isenstein and the ensuing contest typify the poet's theatrical bent as well as his sense of comedy. In Adventure VII, the poet relies essentially on the impact which the visual spectacle will have on his listeners' imagination.

⁹ In each of these instances, as well as in Siegfried's challenge to power (110), the word *undertân* with the meaning 'subject or subservient to' is used (110,4; 127;2; 466,4). Concerning the use of this word in verse 127,2, de Boor notes: "*undertân*, auch hier ist nicht von Unterwerfung die Rede, sondern ist eine Formel weitgehender Gastfreundlichkeit etwa des Sinnes: betrachte mein Haus als das deine" (n. 127,2).

The Nibelungenlied on Long-Playing Records

PAN recording company has just issued a two-record set with extensive excerpts from the 1st, 10th, 16th, 25th, and 39th adventures of the *Nibelungenlied*. Selections are sung in the original Middle High German by Eberhard Kummer accompanying himself on the lap-harp and the hurdy-gurdy. Included in the set are also Walther's "Elegie" and selections from the Kürenberger. The recordings are the result of scholarly and artistic cooperation spanning several years as well as numerous concert "try-outs." Accompanying the stereo records is a booklet with extensive notes to the works and authors as well as a reproduction of the original Middle High German texts with modern German translations. The booklet also contains four sketches by Bernhard Hollemann done specifically for this venture. Further information concerning purchase can be obtained from: *PAN-Verlag, Brünbadgasse 14, A-1090 Wien, Austria*.