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# A COMPANION TO THE NIBELUNGENLIED

EDITED BY  
WINDER MCCONNELL

CAMDEN HOUSE

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einer militärischen Lebenslüge am Ende des Ersten Weltkriegs [der *Dolchstoßlegende*] war der Mythos zur politischen Handlungsanweisung am Ende des zweiten Weltkriegs avanciert."<sup>66</sup> This marked, however, the end of its "fatal" potential. The unrelenting national fascination with the *Nibelungenlied* after 1918 came to an end in 1945.

There can be no doubt that the *Nibelungenlied* and the analogous Scandinavian poems were often misused for ideological purposes by both scholars and politicians. We have no idea whether or not, however, the desired effect was achieved by falling back on these texts. It would be a mistake to overestimate their significance in this regard, and certainly no soldier sacrificed his life during either World War I or World War II because the Nibelungs had been held up to him as a role model. The *Nibelungenlied* has probably always appealed to certain listeners and readers solely as one element among a conglomeration of pseudoarguments when audiences are wooed by irrational appeals. This, in itself, is regrettable, and one can only welcome the fact that, in general, the *Nibelungenlied* and its subject matter are approached today in a relatively objective and sober manner.

## Joyce Tally Lionarons

### The Otherworld and its Inhabitants in the *Nibelungenlied*

Every reader of the *Nibelungenlied* soon recognizes that there are at least two different worlds, and perhaps two different times, coexisting within the poem. The first is the "real," historically conceived society of Worms and Xanten: this is a chivalric, courtly world in which normal human beings — albeit sometimes kings and princesses — are born, live, marry, compete for influence and political power, and finally die. The second may be termed the "Otherworld."<sup>1</sup> Not all its inhabitants are human, and those who are seem preternaturally strong, with knowledge and power far surpassing the denizens of the "real" world. The non-human inhabitants of the Otherworld come straight from myth and *Märchen*: there are giants and dwarfs, dangerous dragons, and beautiful elf-like women inhabiting rivers and springs. The Otherworld is a place of essences, in which appearance and reality, intrinsic worth and external status coincide; it has neither politics nor political intrigue, but a hero, if he is both strong and lucky enough to prevail over his adversaries, may win treasures there: gold, land, a specially wrought sword or a magical talisman. And yet the Otherworld is not simply a place for fairytales: its depiction in the poem repeatedly sounds a somber and somewhat disturbing note in suggestions that the Otherworld may in fact be a manifestation of the Underworld, the land of the dead.

Precisely how to characterize the relationship between the two worlds has caused some critical dispute. Many scholars see the dividing line as one of ethos: a "heroic" or "mythic" world is contrasted to the everyday historical world. Walter Johannes Schröder states the opposition clearly: "Dem mythisch-märchenhaften Norden steht der geschichtliche Süden gegenüber."<sup>2</sup> Some also emphasize a difference in time, finding the Otherworld to

<sup>1</sup> Although the term "Otherworld" is a general one, in this context I am borrowing it from Winder McConnell, *The Nibelungenlied*, Twayne's World Authors Series 712 (Boston: Twayne, 1984) 28ff.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Johannes Schröder, *Das Nibelungenlied: Versuch einer Deutung* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1954) 22. See also McConnell 28–45, and Edward R. Haymes's essay in this volume.

represent a more archaic age than that of its courtly counterpart. Jan de Vries argues that the Otherworld “seems to belong to the remotest past.”<sup>3</sup> Still others see the difference as primarily psychological: Walter Falk, for example, draws a distinction between an external world of physical reality and “eine traumhafte, psychische Innenwelt,”<sup>4</sup> where all the supernatural events of the poem occur. Despite their differences, however, most contemporary students of the *Nibelungenlied* would probably agree with Otfried Ehrismann’s assessment of the situation: “Die neue Welt ist politischer, und sie macht den alten Zauber symbolfähig.”<sup>5</sup> This essay will examine the poem’s “old magic” and its practitioners, both as they relate to the mythic and folkloric contexts from which they arise, and as they function, symbolically or otherwise, within the textual world(s) of the *Nibelungenlied* as a whole.

The primary point at which the Otherworld intersects with the historical world is in the character of Siegfried.<sup>6</sup> Siegfried belongs equally to both worlds, and in fact, he seems to have had two different upbringings, one in each. In Xanten, he is a courtly young prince (“eins edelen küneges kint,” 20,1b), educated in the mannered and diplomatic customs of an idealized medieval German society.<sup>7</sup> He is not allowed to ride out alone, being always in the company of his tutors or other wise counselors who are conscious of protecting his honor (“... wîsen, den êre was bekant,” 25,3). He is initiated into knighthood at a spectacularly lavish *Schwertleite*, at which he gives away land and cities to others but refuses the crown of the Netherlands for himself because his parents, Siegmund and Sieglind, are still alive (29–43). Yet as Hagen’s description of Siegfried’s youthful adventures in *Âventiure 3* makes clear, at this point he has already undergone another sort of heroic initiation in the Otherworld. There Siegfried does ride out alone (“al eine,” 88,1a) to find two princes, Schilbung and Nibelung, engaged in dividing their treasure (91). The princes offer him Nibelung’s sword Balmung as a reward for his help (93), and although we are given no explicit account of what follows, it

<sup>3</sup> Jan de Vries, *Heroic Song and Heroic Legend*, trans. B. J. Timmer (London: Oxford University Press, 1963) 64.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Falk, *Das Nibelungenlied in seiner Epoche: Revision eines romantischen Mythos*. (Heidelberg: Winter, 1974) 120.

<sup>5</sup> Otfried Ehrismann, *Nibelungenlied. Epoche — Werk — Wirkung* (Munich: Beck, 1987) 126.

<sup>6</sup> In Ehrismann’s view, Siegfried is “der personifizierte Schwebezustand zwischen Gegenwart und Vorzeit” (113).

<sup>7</sup> Quotations from *Das Nibelungenlied* are from the Karl Bartsch/Helmut de Boor edition, 21st edition by Roswitha Wisniewski, *Deutsche Klassiker des Mittelalters* (Wiesbaden: Brockhaus, 1979) and are identified within the text by strophe and verse number.

is clear that when Siegfried fails to divide the treasure to their satisfaction, a violent conflict erupts and the young hero must fight for his life against the princes, twelve giants, seven hundred warriors, and the dwarf Alberich (93–96). By the end Siegfried has won the land, the hoard, and Alberich’s cloak (or literally “hood”) of invisibility, the *tarnkappe* (97,3a). Moreover, in a seemingly unrelated incident, Siegfried kills a dragon (“einen lint-rachen,” 100, 2a) and bathes in its blood, acquiring horn-hard skin and thus virtual invulnerability in battle. Later, Kriemhild reveals to Hagen that his invulnerability is not total: a leaf fell onto the hero’s back, shielding one spot from the dragon’s blood (902) and leaving him unprotected against anyone who knows the secret.

Both incidents have ample precedent in Germanic myth and legend, and it is important to examine their motifs individually. When Siegfried first finds the two princes, they have brought the treasure, called “Nibelung’s hoard” (“Hort der Nibelunges,” 89,1a) out from its resting place in a hollow mountain (“ûz einem holen berge,” 89,2a). This would seem to indicate that the treasure once belonged to an earlier King Nibelung, most likely the father of Schilbung and Nibelung II, who has died and been buried with his treasure in a mountain cavern. “Hollow hills” of this kind have a long history in Germanic legend, where they are most often represented as habitations of the dead, either as burial mounds or as entrances to the underworld; thus, a hero’s entry into such a hill or mound, or his winning of a hoard associated with a hollow hill, can be interpreted as a symbolic journey into the world of the dead. Ancient Scandinavian folk beliefs, for example, include the idea of “dying into the mountain” to be welcomed by one’s departed friends and ancestors, and there are mountains in southern Sweden that were once believed to be the homes of the dead and therefore given the name *Valholl* (Valhalla), “hall of the slain.”<sup>8</sup> Moreover, in *Njals saga*, after the Icelander Svan dies during a storm on a fishing expedition, it is reported that “[e]nn fiskimenn þeir er vóru í Kaldbak þóttust sjá Svan ganga inn í fjallit Kaldbakshorn, ok var honum þar vel fagnat (“some fishermen at Kaldbak thought they had seen Svan being warmly welcomed into the innermost depths of Kaldbakhorn Mountain”).<sup>9</sup> Closer and perhaps more relevant to the specifically German context of the *Nibelungenlied* may be South and West Germanic stories of buried and entranced kings waiting inside mountain caverns for the day on which they will be called upon to save the world: both

<sup>8</sup> Rudolf Simek, ed., *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, trans. Angela Hall (Cambridge: Brewer, 1993) 347.

<sup>9</sup> Magnús Magnússon and Hermann Pálsson, eds. and trans., *Njal’s Saga* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960) ch. 14. Other notable examples occur in *Gisla saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, and *Landnamabók*.

Friedrich Barbarossa and Charlemagne are reputed to be inside the Untersberg in Austria, while Friedrich II is in the Kyffhäuser in Germany, and King Arthur in Cadbury Hill in Somerset.<sup>10</sup>

Those beings who dwell inside actual burial mounds are neither so heroic nor so well-intentioned. In the Northern tradition such mounds can be inhabited by the corporeal ghosts of their buried occupants — called *draugar* in Old Norse — who at certain times, generally at midwinter, leave their barrows to ravage the countryside. Even mounds that appear outwardly peaceful can turn out quite otherwise, for some *draugar* remain quiescent as long as the gold and weapons they are buried with are untouched. Nevertheless, anyone entering a mound to steal its treasure will find the *draugr* more than able to fight viciously if disturbed. Stories of *draugr*-quellings are found throughout the Scandinavian saga tradition, with notable examples occurring in *Grettis saga*, and in the story of Þórstein Uxafótr in *Flateyjarbók* I.<sup>11</sup> Thus, while the *draugar* have no specific counterparts in the South Germanic tradition of the *Nibelungenlied*, they illustrate graphically the terror and danger a “hollow hill,” filled with the treasure of a (possibly un)dead inhabitant, can possess.

Of course Germanic burial mounds can also be inhabited by dragons, whose nature it is to lie on piles of treasure left in the earth. The most famous mound-dwelling dragon is probably the one Beowulf fights, and there is an Old English gnomic verse which states that barrows full of gold are the proper places for dragons in general: “Draca sceal on hlæwe, frod, frætwum wlanc” (“The dragon should be on the grave-mound, old and wise, proud of the treasure”).<sup>12</sup> Sometimes a man or giant enters a barrow alive and transforms himself into a dragon to guard his gold, but even those dragons that do not inhabit grave mounds *per se* are almost always found dwelling in mountain caverns or on mountainous cliffs high above the sea.<sup>13</sup> Because a dragon is commonly regarded as the most formidable adversary a warrior can encounter, in general only the greatest heroes of Germanic legend become dragon slayers. The rewards are as great as the dangers: in addition to giving up its treasure, a dragon may disclose secret or esoteric knowledge to a

victorious hero, as Fáfnir does in the Eddic poem *Fáfnismál*, and wisdom, as well as the ability to understand the language of birds, can be gained by eating the dragon’s heart. Finally, as has already been seen, the touch of a dragon’s blood makes a person’s skin turn hard as horn.<sup>14</sup>

It is also worth noting that although they are not often linked explicitly to the world of the dead, in both the Scandinavian and German traditions dwarfs are reputed to live under mountains or inside rocks, where they hoard the gold and silver they mine and use their extraordinary skill as smiths to make wonderful swords and other valuable, often magical items. Norse myth credits the dwarfs with making most of the marvelous possessions of the gods, including Odin’s Gungni, Thor’s hammer Mjöllnir, and Freyr’s marvelous ship Skíðblaðnir, which is said to be large enough for all the gods to sail in, but can be folded up like a piece of paper and carried in a pocket. However, the specific nature and provenance of the dwarfs is uncertain. In *Gylfaginning*, Snorri Sturluson describes the *ðökkálfar* (“dark elves”) as if they were dwarfs, hinting that the two may be related; he says that (like dwarfs) the dark elves live *niðri í jörðu* (“down in the earth”).<sup>15</sup> In fact, many dwarf-names — such as “Alberich,” which translates as “elven-power” — incorporate a form of the word “elf” (ON. *álfr*, MHG. *elbe*) as one of their components. Snorri gives his characterization of the dwarfs a more ominous note when he asserts in the same work that they “kviknat í moldunni ok niðri í jörðunni svá sem maðkar í holdi” (“quickened in the soil and down in the earth like maggots in flesh”) — a simile that is literalized when Snorri goes on to say in the next sentence that in reality the dwarfs actually *were* maggots in the flesh of the giant Ymir, from whose body the world was made. They were transformed into dwarfs when the gods gave them human shape and reason, but because of their origin they still prefer to live “í jörðu ok í steinum” (“in the earth and in rocks”). Of particular interest is the fact that Snorri names some dwarfs as having come from a grave mound in Jöruvellir,<sup>17</sup> a detail that links them with other mound-dwellers and by implication once again with the realm of the dead.<sup>18</sup> It is sometimes assumed

<sup>10</sup> Simek 50.

<sup>11</sup> The best study of the *draugar* remains Nora K. Chadwick, “Norse Ghosts: A Study in the *Draugar* and the *Haugbúi*,” *Folk-Lore* 57 (1948): 50–65, 106–127. Other sagas featuring troublesome *draugar* include *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Flóamanna saga*, *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*, *Laxdæla saga*, and *Svarfdæla saga*.

<sup>12</sup> “Maxims II,” in Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942) 26a–27b.

<sup>13</sup> For two examples of Norse grave mound battles that feature dragons rather than *draugar*, see *Játmundar saga ljúfa* and *Gull-Þóris saga*.

<sup>14</sup> For a more extensive account of the *Nibelungenlied* dragon and its analogues, see John L. Flood’s essay in this volume, as well as Joyce Tally Lionarons, *The Medieval Dragon: The Nature of the Beast in Germanic Tradition* (Enfield Lock, Middlesex: Hisarlik, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> Anthony Faulkes, ed., *Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982) 19.

<sup>16</sup> Faulkes 15.

<sup>17</sup> Faulkes 15–16.

<sup>18</sup> Simek (68) says that the concept “dwarf” may have arisen either from the idea of nature spirits or that of “demons of death.”

that because the dwarfs were created from rocks, they can be turned into rocks again: in the Eddic poem *Alvíssmál*, the purportedly “all-wise” dwarf Alvíss turns into stone when he is tricked by Þórr into remaining outside when the sun rises.

Most German sources agree, however, that if one is clever enough to capture a dwarf by lying in wait outside his cavern, the dwarf will bargain for his release by promising his captor items from his own treasure or even the treasure of another. An example occurs in the twelfth-century *Ruotlieb*, in which the hero surprises a dwarf and thus manages to seize him unawares: the dwarf negotiates for his freedom by promising to reveal the whereabouts of a vast treasure. Like the Nibelung hoard with its two princes, this treasure is guarded by two kings, Immunch and Hartunch, who must be fought before the hoard is won. The episode is plainly an analogue of the hoard-winning scene in the *Nibelungenlied*, and although the two poets were most likely simply working from the same tradition in different centuries, it is tempting to speculate that *Ruotlieb* could be a source of the later poem.<sup>19</sup>

The final Otherworld beings associated with Siegfried’s youthful adventures are the giants. As noted above, one Old Norse creation myth describes the earth as having been made from the body of a giant, Ymir, and giants generally play a more important role throughout Norse mythology than do dwarfs or dragons. In the medieval German tradition, however, giants have diminished in both prominence and intelligence. They are considered to be at once dangerous and stupid, not to be matched in size and strength by most men, but relatively easy to outsmart.<sup>20</sup> Certainly neither the giants guarding the Nibelung hoard in the *Nibelungenlied* (*Äventiure* 3), nor the giant Siegfried fights in *Äventiure* 8, are a match in intellect or strength for the hero.

It is a hero’s job, of course, to acquire a treasure by overcoming its supernatural guardian — whether *draugr* or dwarf, giant or dragon — through cunning and martial prowess. The defeat of the monstrous hoard-guardian traditionally represents an almost ritualized initiation into a new stage in the hero’s life, symbolized by his appropriation of the treasure and often of an instrument of power, such as a sword or magical talisman, as well. This kind of fictional initiation sequence can be profitably compared to real-life initiation rituals, such as those studied by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep, who states that although the details may vary according to the society, a typical initiation ritual comprises three distinct parts: (1) temporary

expulsion from ordinary society into a so-called “liminal” or “threshold” state, where (2) the initiand undergoes certain prescribed tests to prove his or her worthiness in order to (3) re-enter the social world at a new, higher level of societal and ontological existence.<sup>21</sup> The tests may include a confrontation with a monstrous adversary like a dragon, and often the initiand is forced to undergo a mock death and symbolic rebirth as a sign that the initiation, in Mircea Eliade’s words, “is equivalent to a basic change in existential condition.”<sup>22</sup> Obviously Siegfried’s solitary visit to a liminal place outside of the world and society of Xanten, his victory over the dragon, his acquisition of sword, *tarnkappe*, and hoard from the denizens of a “hollow hill” that is also a grave mound, and finally his successful return to Xanten, provide a good example of the initiation process transformed into heroic narrative. Siegfried’s youthful adventures in the Otherworld may thus be seen as a rite of passage, corresponding in narrative function to his *Schwertleite* in the historical world, but altering his ontological condition in a deeper and more decisive fashion than his knighting, which is a promotion in social status alone, could do. Siegfried’s experiences serve to set him apart from those characters in the *Nibelungenlied* who have been initiated into knighthood in the courtly world alone, without having undergone the tests of worthiness an Otherworld initiation entails, and whose merits may therefore be only skin-deep. The contrast between the rites of passage in the two worlds provides a clear rationale for Siegfried’s superiority over the Burgundians, a superiority symbolized by his possession of the sword Balmung, the treasure, and the *tarnkappe*. Hagen’s report of Siegfried’s adventurous past should therefore not be dismissed as mere fairy-tale ornamentation or the slightly embarrassing traces of an outmoded tradition in an otherwise historical and political epic; the hero’s Otherworld initiation is clearly more potent and more significant than any *Schwertleite*, no matter how lavish, and its effects carry over into the courtly world with disastrous results.

The substantive acquisitions that provide evidence for Siegfried’s Otherworld initiation — the sword, the *tarnkappe*, the hoard, and the services of the dwarf Alberich as vassal and hoard-guardian — repay closer examination. The idea of a hero’s having a special and sometimes magical sword is close to universal in heroic literature, not only in the Germanic tradition but throughout the corpus of Indo-European myth and legend: notable analogues to Balmung include Beowulf’s sword Nægling in the Old English

<sup>19</sup> For this suggestion as well as for information on *Ruotlieb* as an analogue, I am indebted to an unpublished paper presented by Paul Battles at the 32nd International Congress on Medieval Studies, held in May, 1997 at Kalamazoo, Michigan.

<sup>20</sup> Simek 107.

<sup>21</sup> Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom & Gabrielle L. Caffee (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1909); see also Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969).

<sup>22</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper, 1958) x.

poem, Þiðrekr's sword Nagelring and Viðga's sword Mímung in the early Norwegian *Þiðreks saga af Bern*, and Sigurd's sword Gram in *Völsunga saga*. The *tarnkappe* is less common and therefore more interesting. It appears in connection with dwarfs and dwarf-treasures frequently in the German poetic tradition: an example occurs in the thirteenth-century *Laurin und der kleine Rosengarten*, in which the eponymous hero is a dwarf-king who wears a *tarnkappe* (along with armor dipped in dragon's blood and a magic belt) to fight off intruders into his realm, in this case Dietrich von Bern and his companion Witege.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, certain strophes from the seventh *Áventiure* of the *Nibelungenlied*, normally considered to be later interpolations and thus omitted in modern editions of the poem, state:

von wilden getwergen hân ich gehœret sagen,  
 einz, heizet tarnkappen, von wunderliche art:  
 swerz hât an sime libe, der sol vil gar wol sîn bewart.  
 Vor slegen unt vor stichen; in müge ouch niemen sehens

wenn er sî dar inne. beide hœren unde spehen  
 mag er nâch sînem willen, daz in doch niemen siht;  
 er sî ouch vrre sterker, als uns diu âventiure...<sup>24</sup>

One North Germanic counterpart to the *tarnkappe* would seem to be the *hulidshjálmir* ("concealing helmets") mentioned in a number of Old Norse sagas.<sup>25</sup> These "helmets" are not associated with dwarfs, and sometimes not even with actual helmets, for by the time the sagas were written down in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the term *hulidshjálmir* was apparently used for any magical means of producing invisibility. At one time, however, the word must have denoted some sort of hat or helmet that was used, like its German counterpart the *tarnkappe*, to make its wearer disappear.<sup>26</sup> A second, more specific analogue to Siegfried's *tarnkappe* in the *Nibelungenlied* is the

*agishjálmr* ("helm of terror")<sup>27</sup> which Sigurd wins by killing the dragon Fáfnir in the Old Norse versions of the Siegfried story. Judging from the name alone, this is an actual helmet used to terrify the opponents of its wearer. The precise nature of the power of the *agishjálmr*, however, remains a matter of conjecture, since although Siegfried does not hesitate to wear the *tarnkappe* in his adventures, Sigurd is never explicitly reported to use the *agishjálmr* at all.

Nor does either hero make use of the hoard in any significant way. Siegfried, of course, officially gives it to Kriemhild as her *Morgengabe* (1116), but the treasure apparently remains untouched in its hollow mountain in Nibelungenland until Kriemhild is coerced by Hagen into bringing it to Worms. It is at this point in the narrative, as the hoard is about to make its final passage from the Otherworld into the historical world, that its contents are described for the first time: the hoard of the Nibelungs is made up entirely of gemstones and gold, and is so large that twelve fully loaded wagons have to make three trips a day for four days in order to remove it from the mountain (1122). More astounding than the hoard's size is its ostensible inexhaustibility, for we are told that "unt ob man al die werlde het dá von versolt, / sîn newære niht minner einer marke wert" (1123,2-3). This quality may provide the reason why Schilbung and Nibelung, even with Siegfried's help, are unable to divide the hoard satisfactorily, for a hoard that cannot be diminished in value most likely cannot be divided either. The idea of the hoard's indivisible nature is further strengthened by the poet's final revelation concerning the treasure's contents: unnoticed by any of the characters in the poem, the hoard contains a tiny golden rod ("ein rüetelîn," 1124,1b) that, were it to be found and recognized, would give its owner power over the entire world (1124,2-3). The "rüetelîn" is doubtless the Otherworldly embodiment of the political power that possession of the hoard bestows on its owner in the historical world, and such absolute power can be wielded by only one person at a time. If Siegfried is aware of the "rüetelîn," however, he is entirely uninterested in its use, for his political aspirations throughout the poem are focused solely on gaining the love of Kriemhild, not on power for its own sake. Kriemhild's interest in the hoard is as a reminder of Siegfried, not as a means to gain absolute power, and its loss simply provides an additional reason for revenge against her brothers. Hagen and Gunther are another matter, for they are indeed interested in political power *qua* power — that is why they believe they must steal the hoard from

<sup>23</sup> Karl Müllenhoff, ed., *Laurin und Walberan, Deutsches Heldenbuch*, 5 vols. (1866; rpt. Berlin: Weidmann, 1963) 1: 201-257.

<sup>24</sup> Karl Bartsch, ed., *Das Nibelunge Nôt* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1870) 53n.

<sup>25</sup> Hilda Ellis Davidson, "The Hoard of the Nibelungs," *Modern Language Review* 37 (1942): 477. Davidson cites examples of *hulidshjálmir* occurring in *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar*, *Fóstbræðra saga*, *Porskfirðinga saga*, and *Bósa saga*.

<sup>26</sup> Jacqueline Simpson, "Olaf Tryggvason versus the Powers of Darkness," in Venetia Newell, ed., *The Witch Figure* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973) 169.

<sup>27</sup> Interestingly enough, the *agishjálmr* may ultimately have classical roots: Simek points out that the function of the Greek *aigis*, like the *agishjálmr*, is to terrify, and Greek *aigis* might easily have become attached to Fáfnir's "helm of terror" by a phonetic conflation with Old Norse *ægr*, "terrible" (2).

Kriemhild, to prevent her from using it to gain a political power base in Worms. Nevertheless, without the “rüetelin” the Burgundians are as incapable of utilizing the power of the hoard as Schilbung and Nibelung, and they are finally reduced to sinking it in the Rhine to avoid trouble. Still, Hagen plans to return alone and make use of the hoard — and its power — if he can (1137).

If anyone in the poem is both cognizant of the hoard’s attributes and able to use them, it is most likely the dwarf Alberich, but like Siegfried, Alberich seems to have no interest in ruling the world. His function is to guard the treasure in the Otherworld for its rightful owner, whoever that owner might be. He makes the transition from serving Nibelung and Schilbung to serving Siegfried fairly easily, convinced that the hero’s superior strength entitles him to appropriate the treasure. After Siegfried’s murder, he serves Kriemhild as he had her husband. When she orders the hoard removed to Burgundy, Alberich obeys her wishes, remarking that he “dare not” (“turren ... niht,” 1118,3) withhold the treasure from Kriemhild since as Siegfried’s gift it is legitimately hers. Nonetheless, the dwarf hints that he might not have been so acquiescent about moving the hoard to Worms if he had not lost the *tarnkappe*, his “guoten tarnhût,” to Siegfried and could still take advantage of both invisibility and supernatural strength (1119).<sup>28</sup> Certainly he makes no effort to accompany the hoard and its owner to the historical world; Alberich’s place is in the Otherworld, and once the hoard has been removed he disappears from the poem.

Alberich reappears, however, in other works relevant to the *Nibelungenlied*, most often in connection with the Dietrich story.<sup>29</sup> As “Álfrekr” in *Piðreks saga af Bern* he is characterized as “inn mikli stelari, er allra dverga var hagrastr” (“a great thief and the most skillful of all the dwarves,” ch. 16),<sup>30</sup> but surprisingly he has no connection either to Sigurd or to the Nibelung hoard in the saga, nor does he own a *tarnkappe* or enjoy extraordinary strength. Instead, in a scene analogous to both *Ruotlieb* and the hoard-winning episode in the *Nibelungenlied*, the dwarf is captured by Dietrich (i.e., Piðrekr) and Hildebrand; he promises them the sword Nagelring along

<sup>28</sup> Alberich remarks that if he had the *tarnkappe*, this would never have happened (“[d]och wurdz nimmer ... getân” 1119.1). The *tarnkappe* does not reappear in the poem after Siegfried subdues Brünhild in the famous bedroom scene, and is never mentioned again after strophe 1119.

<sup>29</sup> Once again I am indebted throughout this account of Alberich’s history to Paul Battles’ 1997 presentation at Kalamazoo.

<sup>30</sup> See Guðni Jónsson, ed., *Piðreks saga af Bern*, 2 vols. (Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1954). A modern English translation is available by Edward R. Haymes, *The Saga of Thidrek of Bern* (New York & London: Garland, 1988).

with information about where they can find a treasure in return for his release. As might be expected, to win the treasure the heroes must fight its two guardians in yet another hollow hill, here called a “jarðhús” (“earth-house”). The guardians are Grímr, a man with the strength of twelve, and his even stronger and more formidable troll-wife Hildir. It is a difficult contest; nevertheless, the two heroes eventually prevail, winning the hoard itself and a helm, called “Hildegrímr” after its ill-fated owners. This helm has no special powers like its counterparts the *agishjálmr* and *tarnkappe*, but it is said to be a valuable treasure in itself, and Dietrich is reported to wear in it battle for a long time afterward.

Alberich plays a more extensive role in the thirteenth-century poem *Ortnit*.<sup>31</sup> Here he is a king of the dwarfs and clearly a more supernatural figure than in either the *Nibelungenlied* or *Piðreks saga af Bern*. He has no need of a *tarnkappe*, since he is invisible by nature and has strength far beyond his physical size; moreover, he is preternaturally wise and at times can predict the future. Only Ortnit, who is wearing a magical ring given to him by his mother, is able to see the dwarf-king. At their first meeting the two fight furiously but are later reconciled, as is also true with Siegfried and Alberich in the *Nibelungenlied*. In fact, it turns out that Alberich is Ortnit’s father, and just as the dwarf and his *tarnkappe* help Siegfried during and after Gunther’s wooing of Brünhild, Alberich here helps Ortnit in his own bridal-quest, in part by using his skill as a master smith to forge a marvelous sword and impregnable armor for his son.

The most curious element of Alberich’s role in the *Nibelungenlied*, however, has no obvious parallels in the analogues to Alberich’s story or in other versions of the Siegfried legend: in our poem the dwarf and the hero fight *twice*, once in *Áventiure 3* when Siegfried first wins the hoard, and again in *Áventiure 8* when Siegfried returns to Nibelungenland to fetch a thousand warriors for Gunther. In each episode Siegfried arrives on the scene in the guise of a stranger, literally so in *Áventiure 3* and invisibly with a disguised voice in *Áventiure 8*; in each he fights both a giant or giants and Alberich — almost to the death — before obtaining a reconciliation and an acknowledgment that he is the dwarf’s master and the owner of the hoard. While it has often been recognized that the events of *Áventiure 8* are simply another version of Siegfried’s experiences in *Áventiure 3*,<sup>32</sup> precisely why the poet would choose to double the episode in this way has puzzled many readers of the *Nibelungenlied*. Joachim Bumke suggests that the solution lies

<sup>31</sup> J. W. Thomas, trans. and ed., *Ortnit and Wölfdietrich: Two Medieval Romances* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1986).

<sup>32</sup> Joachim Bumke credits the initial insight to a 1909 article by Karl Droege; see Bumke, “Siegfrieds Fahrt ins Nibelungenland,” *PBB* 80 (1958): 255.



in the fact that the events of *Piðreks saga af Bern*, ch. 168, are more closely related to Siegfried's Otherworld journey in *Áventiure* 8 than his hoard-winning in *Áventiure* 3 seems to be.<sup>33</sup> In *Piðreks saga*, Sigurd arrives at Brünhild's door as a stranger and immediately fights with her door warden, literally breaking down the locked doors of her stronghold, before Brünhild, who apparently does know who he is, intervenes and invites him in. In context, this fight before Brünhild's gate seems just as gratuitous as Siegfried's fight with his own door-wardens. However, if the source of the *Nibelungenlied*, like *Piðreks saga af Bern*, included a truncated version of the traditional fight with a hoard-guardian within its narration of Siegfried's first visit to Brünhild, the *Nibelungenlied* poet may in turn have regarded such a battle as an integral part of the episode, and so have created Siegfried's battle with Alberich and the giant in Nibelungenland directly after his visit to Brünhild on that basis.<sup>34</sup> It may be useful, therefore, to discuss the events of *Áventiure* 8 in combination with Gunther's bridal-quest to win Brünhild.

Brünhild is the only character besides Siegfried to make a transition from the Otherworld to the historical world. Unfortunately, like Siegfried she finds that her Otherworldly characteristics spell disaster in her new environment. Like many inhabitants of the Otherworld, Brünhild is preternaturally strong, and she has therefore devised tests for her potential suitors based on physical strength rather than on the mannered and artificial rituals of *Minnedienst* currently in fashion in the courtly world at Worms. As long as she is secure in her position as queen of her Otherworld island, Brünhild cares little about the real-world social standing or political power of her suitors; even the vassalage deception becomes important only in the historical world of the Burgundians. In her world Brünhild simply demands a husband whose personal physical prowess can match her own "riesensterke" ("giant-strong")<sup>35</sup> abilities. Of course only Siegfried can hope to do so, and Brünhild is even stronger than he is: Siegfried barely overcomes her despite having the help of the *tarnkappe*, which adds the might of twelve men ("wol zwelf manne sterke," 337,3a) to his own already formidable strength. It would seem that in the symbolic realm of the Otherworld, personal strength is — or should be — an external manifestation of inner virtue: the man who is strong in the Otherworld will be superior in the historical world as well. The deceptive strategy employed by Siegfried to make Gunther *appear* strong despite his underlying weaknesses has no legitimate place in Brünhild's world;

it is a practice imported from the historical world of half-truths and political intrigue.

Siegfried knows and understands the rules of Brünhild's realm, and he knows that Gunther has no chance of winning her on his own. Because of his "real-world" desire to obtain Kriemhild, however, Siegfried uses his knowledge against the queen. He advises Gunther to leave at home his warriors and courtly retainers, symbols of the king's purely political strength, for he knows that in Isenstein only personal strength will matter. Instead of trying to impress Brünhild with an army, therefore, Gunther sets out to sea in a small boat, accompanied only by Hagen, Dancwart, Siegfried (who alone knows the way to Brünhild's land), and twelve sets of magnificent clothing (341–344). Apparently, even though Brünhild's court exists in the Otherworld, it is still a court, and the courtly virtue of magnificence, unlike military might, retains its influence.<sup>36</sup>

Most modern readers of the poem are aware of the fact that in the Old Norse analogues, Siegfried and Brünhild have declared their love and vowed to marry each other before Siegfried's memory of her is destroyed by a magical potion and Brünhild is deceived into marrying Gunther. The fact that in the *Nibelungenlied* Brünhild recognizes Siegfried at first sight and greets him by name, plainly assuming that he is her suitor and with no knowledge of who the Burgundians are, would seem to indicate that the *Nibelungenlied* poet — and thus possibly his medieval audience as well — also knew of the love relationship in other versions of the tale and may even have been hinting at its existence here. The poet makes no explicit reference to a prior relationship between the two; there is simply another layer of irony added to the description of Gunther's bridal quest for anyone aware of the tradition. Less critical attention has been given to the fact that in the same analogues Brünhild is a valkyrie, and anyone aware of the prior love relationship would also be aware of this aspect of her character.<sup>37</sup> Once again Germanic tradition provides a tacit correlation between the Otherworld of the *Nibelungenlied* and the world of the dead, for the valkyries (literally "choosers of the slain") are servants of Odin, the Norse god of battle and death, and their function is first to decide which fighters will die in battle and then to escort the fallen warriors to the god's Otherworld paradise, Valhalla. The valkyries are said to choose only the best and strongest warriors for an afterlife in Valhalla, and the fact that Brünhild uses the same criteria in her

<sup>33</sup> Bumke 258. Cf. Helmut de Boor, "Kapitel 168 der Thidrekssaga," in Hermann Schneider, ed., *Edda – Skalden – Saga* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1952) 157–172.

<sup>34</sup> Bumke 261.

<sup>35</sup> Neumann 76.

<sup>36</sup> Cp. Ehrismann 126: "Archaisches Ambiente heißt niemals eo ipso *unhöfisches Ambiente*."

<sup>37</sup> For a discussion of Brünhild's history in Germanic legend and literature, see Theodore M. Andersson, *The Legend of Brynhild* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1980).

choice of a suitor may indicate that the *Nibelungenlied* poet knew of the valkyrie tradition and modified it for his own, very different, uses.

The modification includes a drastic revision in tone, however, for Brünhild's contests with Gunther (and, unbeknownst to her, with Siegfried in the *tarnkappe*) play out as pure farce. The scene looks backward to Siegfried's own earlier tests of worthiness in the Otherworld, which certainly gain in stature by the comparison, as well as forward to his second use of the *tarnkappe* in his almost equally farcical battle with the giant and Alberich in the next *aventure*. Nonetheless, there is a bitter edge to the comedy, and it lies in the unfeeling attitude which the other characters, and most likely the poet himself, have towards Brünhild. All are clearly unsettled by her prodigious strength; the poet's decision to make the bridal tests comedic reflects his unease. The male characters express their dismay openly: upon seeing Brünhild's initial prowess in the tests, Hagen exclaims, "waz hât der künic ze trût! /jâ sol si in der helle sîn des übeln tiuvels brût" (450,3b-4). Siegfried is simply rude when he tells her at the end of the contests, "Sô wol mich dirre mære ... daz iuwer hôhverte ist alsô hie gelegen, /daz iemen lebet, der iuwer meister müge sîn" (474,1-3). Even Gunther will declare that Brünhild is an "übeln tiuvel" when, alone with his bride on his wedding night, he is confronted by her Otherworldly strength (649,2a).

In the events following the wedding night, the insensitivity on the part of both poet and characters turns vicious. The poet amplifies the farcical tone of the bedroom scenes in his depiction of the hapless Gunther hanging from a nail on the wall, but he describes, and with evident satisfaction (cp. 675-76), what is in fact a violent marital rape. McConnell has suggested that Siegfried's attitude toward Brünhild is based in the hero's stated belief in male dominance, pointing out that as he wrestles furiously with Brünhild in Gunther's bed, Siegfried is explicitly said to think that by forcing her to submit he is somehow preventing other women from following the queen's example and therefore advancing the cause of men in general (673). McConnell adds that "it is quite possible that Siegfried considers Brünhild to be a threat to society in her 'Amazon-like' state."<sup>38</sup> But a belief in male dominance is not simply part of Siegfried's characterization; the poet clearly shares the hero's views, and we may assume that at least half of his audience did as well.

Brünhild's Otherworldly strength disappears with her loss of virginity in yet another folktale motif that acquires symbolic importance in the *Nibelungenlied*. Not only must the former queen of an Otherworld realm accommodate her behavior to the rules of a male-dominated, courtly society, but she discovers in addition that if she is to have any influence — or pose

any threats — within that society she must learn to play the games of duplicity and political machination that prevail in the historical world. She therefore competes for precedence with her rival Kriemhild, conceals her motives for persuading Gunther to invite Siegfried and Kriemhild back to Worms, and possibly even conspires with Hagen in Siegfried's murder. Kriemhild at any rate assumes collusion between the two when she hears of Siegfried's death and cries out, "ez hât gerâten Prünhilt, daz ez hât Hagene getân" (1010,4). Once she is forced by her loss of virginity to become an active participant in Burgundian power politics, Brünhild's outward appearance no longer matches her inner reality, and it is this more than anything else that is symbolized by her forfeiture of her Otherworldly strength.

It is therefore fitting that Brünhild's initial defeat in Isenstein is followed in the next *aventure* by a display of Siegfried's strength in the Otherworld in a graphic demonstration of what Gunther never had and what the queen will lose by her marriage. Parallels to the earlier episode include the fact that in each *aventure* Siegfried acts while invisible in the *tarnkappe*, and in each he defeats an opponent whose strength is equivalent to (or even greater than) his own. The element of farce continues into *Adventure 8* as well, since Siegfried's disguise in Nibelungenland seems prompted by high spirits rather than a serious attempt at deception, and the image of Alberich having his beard tugged by an invisible opponent (497) parallels that of Brünhild's defeat: it is simultaneously comic and humiliating. But although Bumke is no doubt correct in suggesting that the scene seems to have been modeled on an analogue to Siegfried's first visit to Brünhild and is best considered as part of the bridal quest, its full function is more complicated. In addition to incorporating parallels with the earlier *aventure*, the *Nibelungenlied* poet structures *Adventure 8* as the counterpart of a later scene as well, namely, Hagen's fight with the ferryman before crossing the Danube into Etzel's land in *Adventure 25*.

Like Siegfried and Brünhild, Hagen, too, has ties to the Otherworld. Those ties are implied in the *Nibelungenlied* by the fact that Hagen not only knows who Siegfried is at first sight (86), but also knows enough about him to tell the Burgundians the story of his youthful adventures in the Otherworld (87-100). By way of contrast, in *Piðreks saga af Bern* Hagen's relationship to the Otherworld is made explicit: there he is the son of an elf who found the Burgundian queen asleep in her garden and fathered a child on her, thus making Hagen half-brother to the Burgundian princes. Still, in both the saga and the poem, Hagen's most significant encounter with the forces of the Otherworld takes place as he is leading the Burgundian forces into Etzel's Hungary, and it is in this episode that the parallels to *Adventure 8* are to be found.

<sup>38</sup> McConnell 30.

In *Áventiure* 8, Siegfried travels alone to Nibelungenland in a small boat to retrieve a thousand of his Nibelung warriors; to do so, he must cross a boundary or “threshold” separating the historical world from the Otherworld. As we have seen, the literal threshold of Siegfried’s stronghold in that world is guarded by a giant doorkeeper and the dwarf Alberich. Both are Siegfried’s servants and would be expected to recognize him, so Siegfried disguises himself as a stranger in order to indulge in a playful, but still quite dangerous and apparently unnecessary battle with them. He then ferries the thousand warriors back to Isenstein to accompany Gunther and Brünhild to Worms. In *Áventiure* 25 Hagen is similarly trying to take a thousand “Nibelung” warriors (as the Burgundians are now called) to Etzel’s land, but he finds himself faced with the physical boundary of the Danube, which functions here as a symbolic threshold between the familiar world of Worms and the more remote and exotic world of Etzel’s realm. Like Siegfried, Hagen battles a recalcitrant and violent threshold guardian in the person of the ferryman, and he also resorts to a disguise, albeit in precisely the opposite manner in which it is used by Siegfried: rather than impersonating a stranger in order to avoid recognition as a returning friend, Hagen impersonates a returning friend in order to avoid recognition as a stranger. The resulting violence is serious rather than slapstick, and the scene ends in Hagen’s murder of the ferryman, which forces him to ferry all one thousand warriors across the river himself in an astounding display of almost Otherworldly strength. It is worth pointing out that in describing the folktale qualities of *Áventiure* 8, Bumke asks wryly if we are really to believe the preposterous idea that all one thousand Nibelung warriors made the trip back to Isenstein in the same boat that Siegfried had arrived in.<sup>39</sup> When Siegfried’s actions are compared to Hagen’s behavior in *Áventiure* 25, however, the absurdity of the idea is lessened by the force of the parallel.

It is in *Áventiure* 25 as well that Hagen encounters the last inhabitants of the Otherworld to appear in the poem, in the form of two beautiful women, the “merwîp,” whom he discovers bathing in a clear spring. These figures do not arise from a clearly discernible or widespread tradition in Germanic legend, and scholars are often uncertain of precisely how to translate the word “merwîp” into English: a quick survey reveals “water sprites,” “water-fairies,” “nixies,” and “mermaids.”<sup>40</sup> Their counterparts in *Piðreks saga af Bern* are designated by the simple Old Norse equivalent to the Middle High German word, *sjókonur* (“sea-women”). Nonetheless, the function of the

<sup>39</sup> Bumke 254.

<sup>40</sup> The translations are from McConnell 32, Hatto 193 and 194, and Edward R. Haymes, *The Nibelungenlied: History and Interpretation* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986) 76 respectively.

*merwîp* in the poem — to prophesy the outcome of the Burgundian expedition — is one that is widely attributed to female figures in general within the Germanic tradition, from Tacitus through the Middle Ages.<sup>41</sup> The prophetic knowledge of the two *merwîp* is both surprising and specific: they know Hagen by name and ancestry, calling him Aldrian’s son (“Aldriânes kint,” 1539,2b), they give him specific directions as to how to find and handle the ferryman (which Hagen only partly follows), and most importantly, they tell him that none of the Burgundians will return from their journey alive, excepting only the chaplain. Hagen immediately tests the prophecy as best he can by attempting to drown the priest. When he nevertheless survives and swims safely back to the Burgundian side of the river, Hagen becomes certain that the *merwîp* are telling the truth, and in a final grand gesture he sinks the ferryboat, thereby destroying the possibility of anyone else turning back to Worms.

Clearly the two episodes are meant in part to provide a comparison of Siegfried’s and Hagen’s dealings with the Otherworld and its inhabitants; such a comparison serves to emphasize the distinction between what Edward R. Haymes has called the “bright” hero Siegfried and the “dark” hero Hagen in both character and behavior.<sup>42</sup> As a “bright” hero, Siegfried typifies the traditional Indo-European conception of heroism: he slays the evil dragon, wins the beautiful princess, lives his life in accordance with societal standards, and dies nobly but tragically at a young age; he can be identified not only with Sigurd and Beowulf, but also with the god Baldr. By way of contrast, “dark” heroes like Hagen work evil as easily as good; Haymes remarks that although the hero’s “participation in the dark side of life makes him a questionable model for behavior ... it does not disqualify him from being both the structural hero of a narrative and an object of awe and admiration.”<sup>43</sup> Thus Hagen, like Siegfried, participates in the archetypal “monomyth” of the hero, first articulated by Joseph Campbell and most often used to interpret stories of “bright” rather than “dark” heroes. McConnell likewise sees Hagen as a heroic counterpart to Siegfried, asserting that in his encounter with the Otherworldly figures of the *merwîp* and the events that follow, Hagen has “undergone a kind of initiation” that may be compared to Siegfried’s earlier experiences in the Otherworld and that serves to designate Hagen as the true hero of the rest of the poem.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> See Jacob Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*, vol. 1 (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1835) under the heading *Weise Frauen*, 328–407. For seeresses in the Norse tradition, see Simek 279.

<sup>42</sup> Haymes, *Nibelungenlied* 80, 87.

<sup>43</sup> Haymes, *Nibelungenlied* 87.

<sup>44</sup> Haymes 74–77; McConnell 37. For Campbell, see *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).

In fact, Hagen's experiences with the *merwip* and the ferryman as threshold guardians, his crossing of the Danube with all his companions, and his final sinking of the boat behind them, would seem to symbolize the Nibelung warriors' passage into the Otherworld as surely as do the trip to Isenstein or Siegfried's voyage to Nibelungenland. The difference, and it may not be as great a difference as it initially appears, is that the earlier crossings are seemingly into a daylight world of magic and marvels, while the passage over the Danube leads only to darkness and death.

It is easy to see *Áventiure* 25 as representing, if not a literal journey into the Otherworld, at least an incursion of Otherworldly motifs into the historical world. Gottfried Weber has described the episode as "von der Dunkelheit und Wildheit übernatürlicher Kräfte durchzogen,"<sup>45</sup> and it is in fact the last truly supernatural episode of the poem. It is less easy to see the events which follow in Etzelburg as transpiring in a world significantly different from that of Worms or Xanten. Perhaps the poem's original audience found the differences easier to perceive: Hatto points out that while much of the geography of the Burgundians' journey would have been "intimately known" to a contemporary audience, as they approach Etzel's Hungary the Burgundians would have seemed to "draw away into a distant past ... in a place grown shadowy and remote."<sup>46</sup> The major transition, however, and one discernible by medieval and modern audiences alike, is in atmosphere. Once both Hagen and the audience realize fully that the annihilation will be absolute, that *no one* will survive the journey, nothing looks the same. Any vestige of ordinary life in the historical world — such as the marriage of Rüdiger's daughter to Giselher in *Áventiure* 27 — becomes acutely ironic, while the progress of events leading to the final destruction takes on an almost mythic air of inevitability. The Burgundians have here entered an Otherworld in which they are not dead, yet are no longer alive in any meaningful way.

Some of this has been suggested before, most notably by Stephen L. Wailes, who states baldly that "in the fall of the Burgundians we are dealing with the Journey to the Other World," and then proceeds to formulate a mythological allegory equating Etzel to "the giant, ogre, or fiend who rules that world" and the Burgundians to "the god who makes the journey."<sup>47</sup> But although the *Nibelungenlied* poet certainly draws on myth in both his plot and his descriptions of the Otherworld, there is no consistent mythological

allegory in the poem. Rather, the mythic elements serve to intensify the darkly sinister atmosphere which infuses the last few *áventiuren*, and to underscore the idea that the events that transpire there take place in a symbolic "realm of death"<sup>48</sup> that will become literal by the final strophes.

Thus, although at first glance Etzel's Hungary may seem to have more in common with the historical world of Burgundy and Xanten than with the Otherworld of Isenstein or Nibelungenland, its poetic representation as a literal kingdom of the dead places it firmly in the realm of the Otherworldly. As has been seen, both Nibelungenland and Isenstein have their own connections to the world of the dead in the motif of the hollow hill and in Brünhild's status as a valkyrie, and certainly the *merwip* on the borders of Etzel's land would not be out of place in either location. Perhaps the relationship between the "bright" Otherworld of Nibelungenland and Isenstein and the "dark" Otherworld of Etzelburg is best seen as analogous to the relationship between the poem's "bright" and "dark" heroes: each is the equivalent and yet mirror image of the other. Each version of the Otherworld provides a symbolic embodiment of the essence of one character's disposition and experiences, and they are thus structurally equivalent despite differences in specific characteristics. Finally, to paraphrase Ehrismann's comment once again, the poem's representations of the Otherworld also serve to provide the *Nibelungenlied* with enough of the "alten Zauber" of myth and *Märchen* to create a symbolic structure on which the poet's courtly epic, traditionally based yet newly conceived, can be built.

<sup>45</sup> Gottfried Weber, *Das Nibelungenlied: Problem und Idee* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1963) 136.

<sup>46</sup> Hatto 399.

<sup>47</sup> Stephen L. Wailes, "The *Nibelungenlied* as Heroic Epic," in Felix J. Oinas, ed., *Heroic Epic and Saga* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978) 138.

<sup>48</sup> Haymes 77.