



A COMPANION TO THE NIBELUNGENLIED

EDITED BY
WINDER MCCONNELL

*A leaf from manuscript B,
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CAMDEN HOUSE

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Winder McConnell

The *Nibelungenlied*: A Psychological Approach

Science, particularly as evinced in the work of the British biologist, Rupert Sheldrake, as well as in the research of the Swiss physician and psychoanalyst, Willy Obrist, has produced yet further evidence of the validity of core ideas postulated almost a century ago by Carl Gustav Jung, foremost among them the concept of the archetypes of the collective unconscious.¹ It seems reasonable to assume that, as a consequence, greater links, if not cohesion, might have arisen between such (apparently) diverse areas as comparative mythology and religion, literature, biology, and psychology. Yet, despite the far-reaching ramifications of such studies, the disciplines, especially the Humanities and Social Sciences and the Natural Sciences, seem further apart today than ever before. Scientists are often enough skeptical of the forays of their humanist colleagues into physics, chemistry, biology, and psychology. Regrettably, with good reason. Rarely do the latter have any formal training in these areas and the modesty incumbent upon anyone approaching such disciplines as a non-initiate is often precluded by a zeal to promote socio-political agendas which ultimately hampers any real effort at understanding where actual points of intersecting among the disciplines can and do occur.² What is touted so often these days as interdisciplinary study is little more than a euphemism for watered-down, baseless curricula fashioned to serve some vague political purpose at the expense of students too young and gullible to recognize the dilettantism and political agendas of their “mentors” and lacking the power to undertake measures to counter it should they recognize the deception. There is certainly a real danger to true interdisciplinary study in such an atmosphere. The latter deserves a better

¹ See, in particular, Rupert Sheldrake, *A New Science of Life. The Hypothesis of Formative Causation* (Los Angeles: Tarcher, 1981); *The Presence of the Past. Morphic Resonance and the Habits of Nature* (New York: Vintage, 1989); Willy Obrist, *Archetypen. Natur- und Kulturwissenschaften bestätigen C. G. Jung* (Olten and Freiburg im Breisgau: Walter, 1990).

² Note Paul R. Gross and Norman Levitt, *Higher Superstition* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1994). I am grateful to my (scientist) colleague, Richard Falk, a humanist in his own right, for first having made me aware of this work and for the opportunity to discuss with him on numerous occasions the potential for true interdisciplinary work between the Sciences and the Humanities.

forum and should be encouraged, albeit with the caveat that literary scholars with secondary (or even tertiary) interests in subjects often far afield of their major area of specialization should take care to defer to the recommendations and emendations of experts in those respective fields.

The application of analytical psychology and psychoanalysis in literary exegesis dates back a century. It is not a new methodology, but it has rarely been a popular one.³ It is impossible to determine precisely why this has been the case, why psychological interpretations of literary works have not enjoyed, for example, the same support as New Criticism or Structuralism. Part of the reason may lie in the danger of reductionism, which, whether the approach be psychological or deconstructionist, invariably culminates in an intellectual cul-de-sac.⁴ There is also the question of whether the application of such criteria is unjustifiably anachronistic. Psychological interpretations of literary works in the Freudian and post-Freudian era must necessarily take into account that the creators of such works were aware of the existence of the subconscious and that the primary text itself may revolve around a plot in which clear distinctions are made between the conscious and subconscious. Such was not the case — or so it would seem — in the Middle Ages.

The differentiation between “outer” and “inner” is relatively new. What is obvious, exposed, in short the *persona*, is, in the year 1200, for all intents and purposes, in conformity with *inner* reality. When Hartmann von Aue’s protagonist in *Der arme Heinrich* is afflicted with leprosy, he can assume that those who observe him in this state are not merely fearful of becoming infected, or simply repulsed by his appearance, but that they also will have concluded that he has offended against God, that the external affliction is

³ Nonetheless, the frequency with which the word “psychology” (or one of its cognates), as well as specific terms gained from that discipline are used in literary interpretations of medieval works is remarkable. As one example I cite the recent German translation of John Evert Härd’s book, *Das Nibelungenlied. Wertung und Wirkung von der Romantik bis zur Gegenwart*, trans. from the Swedish by Christine Palm (Tübingen and Basel: Francke, 1996): “Die archetypische Struktur der Sage von *Tristan und Isolde*...” (22); “Im *Nibelungenlied* ist die Intrige psychologischer Art...” (30); “... die schöne höfische Welt wird zerschlagen, indem die elementaren, destruktiven Triebe des Menschen losgelassen werden, das ist das Grundthema des *Nibelungenlieds*...” (35); “In der Schilderung von Kriemhilds Verhalten während dieser Begegnung [between her and Hagen prior to the fatal hunt] ... liegt eine eigenartige Zweideutigkeit, eine psychologische Unwahrscheinlichkeit...” (43); “... ein psychologisch motiviertes Intrigenspiel” (83); “Es sind die psychologischen Bindungen zwischen den Menschen, die sich überschneidenden Loyalitäten, die nach Dilthey dem Werk seine Spannungsstruktur geben...” (117); “... er ersetzt übernatürliche Erklärungen durch psychologische...” (119). Such examples could be augmented at will.

⁴ See John M. Ellis, *Against Deconstruction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

simultaneously a reflection of internal decay or disorder. Beautiful women of the court and handsome knights mirror the inward purity of individuals and the inherent goodness of the court itself.

If one comes to the *Nibelungenlied* from the perspective of analytical psychology, it is thus wise to approach the work with the conscious realization that the terms one will use to describe its characters, action, motivations, motifs, are derived from a terminology unknown to the western world — in the way it is commonly used today — until the last decades of the nineteenth century.⁵ Anyone who might have suggested to a thirteenth-century courtier that the Burgundians/Nibelungs were given to “repressing,” perhaps even “denying,” their irrevocable fate after they had crossed the Danube on the way to Hungary, that an *animus* had taken hold of Kriemhild who was truly no longer *herself*, would undoubtedly have been met with a vacuous stare. Yet it is quite conceivable that one might have turned to a contemporary as a minstrel-performer held forth on the betrothal of Gotelind and Rüdiger’s daughter to Giselher and queried aloud whether the Burgundians, who had wept over the message of doom imparted to them by Hagen just hours previously, had forgotten in the interim that they have no future to which to look forward. The contemporary might even have offered an explanation: “daz wollen si jâ niht hoeren!” Moreover, the narrator of ms. B of the *Nibelungenlied* clearly attributes the workings of the devil to Kriemhild’s act (see 1394,1), a pre-psychological explanation of the psychological phenomenon of giving in to the shadow. My point is that, while objective psychology — and psychologizing — as we understand them today, were foreign to the Middle Ages, the psychological phenomena themselves were present and may well have occasioned more than just passive acceptance on the part of the more astute observers of the time. This is, of course, to attribute to the poet of the *Nibelungenlied* himself a talent for depicting aspects of the human psyche in a way that could well be considered unparalleled in his time. Such a suggestion is not new; it was expressed, in other words (and, in fairness to the author, perhaps with more caution than I might be apt to exercise), in an article written by Walter Haug over ten years ago and which represents, in my view, one of the most insightful contributions to *Nibelungenlied* scholarship that has appeared in the past half century.⁶ It also provides an excellent starting point for an analysis of

⁵ A noteworthy psychological contribution to the field of Nibelungen reception is to be found in Jean Shinoda Bolen’s *Ring of Power. The Abandoned Child, The Authoritarian Father, and the Disempowered Feminine. A Jungian Understanding of Wagner’s Ring Cycle* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993).

⁶ Walter Haug, “Montage und Individualität im *Nibelungenlied*,” in Fritz Peter Knapp, ed., *Nibelungenlied und Klage. Sage und Geschichte, Struktur und Gattung. Passauer*

probably the most complex figure within the work: Kriemhild, Princess of Burgundy, Queen of the Netherlands and Nibelungenland, and Queen of the Hungarian Empire.⁷

The present essay is intended as a *prolegomenon* to a larger study planned on German heroic epic and the *Nibelungenlied*, in particular, which will examine these works from the perspective of analytical psychology. I am principally concerned here with the motivations of main characters and the dynamics of their relationships. The terminology employed is largely that developed by Carl Gustav Jung, although it is not exclusively confined to the latter. I believe it is also possible to view the work as a whole from such a vantage point, particularly with respect to the obvious contrast it presents with the vast amount of literature otherwise predominant at that time. Finally, there are some intriguing psychological aspects to be noted regarding the manner in which the *Nibelungenlied* has been received in the twentieth century; in fact, one might suggest that certain manifestations of its *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, particularly over the past nine decades, offer considerable insight into the psyche of twentieth-century man (on this point see Werner Hoffmann’s contribution to this volume and pertinent comments in the Introduction).

*

Die Staubwolken der Reiter, Zeichen des freudigen Aufbruchs, Zeichen der Hoffnung, daß ein riesiges Reich sich aus seiner Trauer erheben wird, Zeichen des Glücks, das man sich von der neuen Königin erwartet, sie werden im Vergleich durchsichtig auf das, was diese Königin tatsächlich bringen sollte: den Feuerbrand, der alles vernichten wird.... Was damit geschehen ist, erfaßt man in seiner literaturhistorischen Bedeutung nur völlig, wenn man bedenkt, daß es zuvor in der mittelalterlichen Literatur eine Trennung von Innen und Außen nicht gegeben hat. Das Äußere ist gewissermaßen das Innere.⁸

Walter Haug’s description of the Hunnish welcome prepared for Kriemhild reads, in its first part, almost like a film script, and is, in fact, somewhat reminiscent of the activity of the Hunnish scouts in Fritz Lang’s 1924 production of *Kriemhilds Rache* when they become aware of Kriemhild’s

Nibelungengespräche 1985 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1987) 279–293.

⁷ Although the movement away from an automatic assumption of a correspondence between the outer and the inner is incidental to her argument, Joyce Tally Lionarons has also intimated that such a split has occurred with respect to the figure of Brünhild in the *Nibelungenlied*. Note p. 167 above.

⁸ Haug 277, 281.

approach. The dichotomy between unrestrained optimism on the part of Etzel and his horde and the “reality” that lies behind the motivation for the queen’s removal to Gran and the camp of Etzel is simultaneously unique and devastating. Virtually everything relating to the essence of courtly society that would have meant something to Kriemhild at Worms prior to her marriage to Siegfried and at Xanten prior to her fateful return to Worms, has lost its significance by the time she arrives in the land of the Huns. In his depiction of Kriemhild, the poet of the *Nibelungenlied* has sprung the bounds of medieval expectations; his character is modern, driven by emotions that defy the standard ideal of the time, the pursuit of *mâze*.

I have examined the figure of Kriemhild elsewhere from the viewpoint of animus possession and the significance of the *Klage*-poet’s defense of the queen.⁹ My contention in that earlier study was to suggest that Kriemhild’s isolation and self-isolation within the work, combined with her tendency to repress or deny her shadow while simultaneously turning her back on both motherhood and her obligations as queen, led, in the absence of any real leadership on the part of the men in her life, to an inversion of the *ordo* of things and with Kriemhild completely dominated by the animus. The issue is less one of morality than psychology.¹⁰ Here, too, one can consider the poet of the *Nibelungenlied* to have been unique. The issues raised in the work, along with the motivations of characters, do not tend to be treated solely from the binary perspective of good and bad. To be sure, there is moralizing — consider the manner in which Hagen’s killing of Siegfried is

⁹ Winder McConnell, “Animus Possession in Kriemhild: A Medieval Insanity Plea?” *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology* 11.1–2 (1990): 22–33.

¹⁰ In this respect, I cannot concur with Jerold Frakes, whose 1994 work, *Brides and Doom*, a marxist-feminist approach to the *Nibelungenlied*, *Klage*, and *Kudrun*, completely avoids the possibility of any explanation for Kriemhild’s behavior which is not rooted in the socio-political sphere. I do think that his criticism of the moral(istic) approach that has been taken by scholars (and, perhaps, the poets themselves) towards Kriemhild and other prominent females in the epics of the period is justified — albeit without the ad hominem which lead Frakes into the paradox of moralizing on moralizing — insofar as it points to a rather one-sided limiting of possibilities for interpretation of the figures’ actions. However, where scholars, attempting to view the plots from the perspective of thirteenth-century audiences, have agreed with the poets, narrators, and figures within the epics themselves who have labeled Kriemhild and Gerlind (in *Kudrun*) as *vålandinnen*, they have not been incorrect (although Kriemhild most certainly had her admirers as well as detractors, as the *Klage*, and undoubtedly the scribe of ms. C, have so aptly demonstrated). They may simply have not gone far enough, namely, to have also considered the male protagonists as being just as responsible for the onset of chaos (once again with the obvious exception of the *Klage* poet). See Jerold C. Frakes, *Brides and Doom. Gender, Property, and Power in Medieval German Women’s Epic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994).

recorded by the narrator: “Hagen sîne triuwe vil sêre an Sîfriden brach” (971,4) or “sus grôzer untriuwe solde nimmer man gepflegen” (915,4), as well as the way in which Gunther’s role in the whole business is depicted: “swie harte sô in durste, der helt doch niene tranc, /ê daz der künic getrunke; des sagt er im vil böesen danc” (978,3–4).¹¹ Yet it is also quite clear that such moralizing with respect to the court at Worms is of limited duration, and that, by the time of the arrival of the Burgundians at the court of Etzel in Gran, the narrator could just as easily have been among the Huns eager to catch a glimpse of the man who had slain Siegfried. Any revulsion that may have previously existed over the manner that the hero of the Netherlands met his death has given way to wonder over his victor:

.....
dô wunderte dô zen Hiunen vil manegen küenen man
umbe Hagen von Tronege, wie der wære getân.

Durch daz man sagete mære (des was im genuoc),
daz er von Niderlande Sîfriden sluoc,
sterkest aller recken, den Kriemhilde man.
des wart michel vråge ze hove nâch Hagene getân. (1732,3–4; 1733)

Morality, when it comes to the murder of Siegfried, is relative. By the twenty-eighth *Åventiure*, no one, including the narrator, is holding Hagen morally responsible for Siegfried’s death, other than Kriemhild, of course.¹² It is telling that Kriemhild garners such great praise from the *Klage*-poet for the unrelenting loyalty she demonstrates towards her murdered husband:

swer ditze mære merken kan,
der sagt unschuldic gar ir lîp,
wan daz daz vil edel werde wîp
tæte nâch ir triuwe
ir râche in grôzer riuwe. (154–158)

¹¹ Quotations from the *Nibelungenlied* are based on the edition by Karl Bartsch and Helmut de Boor, 21st revised ed. by Roswitha Wisniewski, *Deutsche Klassiker des Mittelalters* (Wiesbaden: Brockhaus, 1979).

¹² Even the author of the *Klage*, who is otherwise ill-disposed towards Hagen and basically views him as responsible for the catastrophic events in which the *Nibelungenlied* culminates, attributes Siegfried’s death to his arrogance. See *Diu Klage. Mit den Lesarten sämtlicher Handschriften*, ed. Karl Bartsch (1875; rpt. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), vv. 38–39: “unt daz er selbe den tôt/gewan von sîner übermuot.”

Quite clearly, this first commentator on the *Nibelungenlied*, who assumes a position towards Kriemhild that is much closer to what we find in the *C-version than in the manuscripts of the *AB-tradition, chose to focus on *triuwe* as a gender-unbounded concept, in contrast to many of his contemporaries. The latter tended to adhere to the idea of *Männertreue*, most likely harking back to a pre-Christian Germanic ethos, but also combined this with an aversion to any defiance of the courtly ideal of *máze*, and appear to have reflected a deeply-held belief that women and revenge do not mix, at least with respect to the former becoming instruments of the latter.

There is one thing that can hardly be doubted about Kriemhild — her love for Siegfried.¹³ It is not, however, a love in any way comparable to that of, for example, Isolde for Tristan. Neither Siegfried nor Kriemhild is overtaken by the archetype of romantic love, as much as they may appear to pine for each other prior to the marriage. After all, this is a socially acceptable love, legal prior to and certainly *within* marriage, not opposed to the institution, not forbidden, and, for both medieval and modern sentiments, scarcely a romantic love at all. Although a convincing argument could be made that Siegfried and Kriemhild are incompatible partners, particularly with Brünhild in the wings, there is nothing about the union from a sociopolitical standpoint which might be considered inappropriate, other than the circumstances — the deception of Brünhild — which made it possible. Kriemhild's relationship to Siegfried is, nonetheless, not without its problematical side.

Most important, there is Kriemhild's dream, which occupies the last seven strophes of the first *Áventiure*, thus underscoring its pivotal significance for the subsequent unfolding of the plot. No other motif is accorded similar weight in the *Áventiure*. We need not spend an inordinate time on its interpretation, which is delivered in a fairly straightforward, if incomplete, manner by Ute, Kriemhild's mother.¹⁴ The falcon of which she dreams and

¹³ Noteworthy here are Gottfried Weber's comments: "Dass Kriemhildens, der ursprünglichen und ungewandelten, Wesen Liebe ist, daß sich ihre weibliche Art ganz und gar erfüllen wird in dem *undertân*-Sein gegenüber dem Geliebten ... was es überhaupt mit der Kriemhilden-Minne auf sich hat, erzählt der im Seelischen verhaltene und karge Dichter nirgends unmittelbar; das wenige, was er überhaupt sagt, gestattet vorerst kaum einen Einblick in die unbegrenzten Tiefen von Kriemhildens Liebesmöglichkeiten.... Worauf der Dichter hinzielt, ist gleichwohl überaus deutlich: es soll offenkundig werden, daß sich Kriemhild nicht in sich, sondern nur in dem Manne ihrer Liebe erfüllt — in dem grenzenlosen Hingebensein ihrer Seele an Sivrit." See Gottfried Weber, *Das Nibelungenlied. Problem und Idee* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1963) 5.

¹⁴ See the comments by Theodor Reik in his short article, "Kriemhilds Traum," *Zentralblatt für Psychoanalyse. Medizinische Monatsschrift für Seelenkunde* 2 (1912): 416-417: "Der Vogel als Penisymbol wird hier von der kundigen Ute bestätigt.... Es

which she "raises," is a nobleman, who will surely be lost to her (as the falcon is torn apart by two eagles) if God does not protect him. It is, of course, on one level a prediction of things to come with regard to Siegfried and his disastrous relationship to the Burgundian royal family. What is particularly striking about the dream on another level, however, is a) Kriemhild's radical reaction to her mother's interpretation of it and b) the total lack of any further reference to it on her part throughout the rest of the epic. It should also be noted that Kriemhild's first impulse is to protect *herself* from the suffering she now also associates with the "message" of the dream. In apparent contrast to Hagen's dismissal of Ute's dream of the dead birds prior to the departure of the Burgundians for the land of the Huns, Kriemhild takes her dream and her mother's explanation of it very seriously.¹⁵ She believes in its auguring power. Yet, that belief is suspended, or, psychologically speaking, repressed, when Siegfried comes into her life and the possibility looms large for a union between the two of them. It is hard to believe that the dream is simply "forgotten." It served, after all, as the basis for a prolonged period of isolation on Kriemhild's part with respect to the "wooing circuit." Kriemhild's belief in the efficacy of the dream is, perhaps, outmatched by her belief in her husband-to-be's (near) invulnerability. Like Siegfried, she succumbs to *übermüete* which, from a Christian perspective, may be equated with *superbia*, overweening pride, or in terms of analytical psychology — inflation. Kriemhild is by no means the only figure in the *Nibelungenlied* who reads astutely ominous signs provided by various means and who may initially react instinctually — and correctly — to such signs, but who subsequently demonstrates remarkable inconsistency in acting in accordance with this previous knowledge. A similar situation prevails in the second half of the epic with respect to the behavior of the Burgundians

ist wahrscheinlich, dass sich in der reifen Jungfrau die Libido regt und verdrängt wird.... Der ungestillte Trieb schlägt in sadistische Tendenzen um.... [D]as Zerfleischen des Vogels zeigt sadistische Tendenzen und ist zugleich der Wunsch nach der höchsten Lust. Der Angsteffekt ist aus dem Bewusstsein, das die verbotenen Wünsche kontrolliert, leicht zu verstehen.... Und am Schlusse bricht die angeborene und durch ungenügende Sexualbefriedigung verstärkte sadistische Komponente sich elementar Bahn." It might be noted at this point that the editor of the *Zentralblatt für Psychoanalyse* was Sigmund Freud and that one of the individuals listed under "Unter Mitwirkung von" was C. G. Jung.

¹⁵ Hagen appears to be disinclined to pay any attention to the dream that Ute has prior to the Burgundians' departure for the land of the Huns, but his "rejection" is possibly posturing for the benefit of the kings and may not necessarily reflect his true attitude towards what is, after all, one of the most common forms of prophecy in his time. He will certainly take very seriously the next prophecy, that offered by the water sprite prior to crossing the Danube.

following their arrival on the eastern shore of the Danube and the revelations provided to them by Hagen of their inevitable fate.

Kriemhild is not given to complete repression, however, as her anxiety prior to Siegfried's departure to combat the alleged insurrection of Liudeger and Liudegast in the sixteenth *Äventiure* would indicate. This is one of the most complex sections of the *Nibelungenlied* when considered from the perspective of motivation. It seems that there are two views that can be taken of Kriemhild's actions at this point: she is patently naive, or she is remarkably capable of repressing the extent to which she has contributed to besmirching the collective image of Worms and demonstrating, in an almost treacherous manner, her total disregard for its welfare. When she elects to inform Hagen of Siegfried's vulnerable spot, she reverts to the role of the devoted family member, reduces the quarrel between herself and Brünhild to little more than a somewhat nasty familial squabble, and appears to reflect once again the unity between the outer and the inner. It is difficult to conceive of Kriemhild as being naive, but she has already, through the reversal of her initial reaction to the falcon dream, displayed a tendency to reject certain signs. In this particular instance, it would appear that the two dreams she has of Siegfried's demise, no longer in the metaphor of a falcon, but *as Siegfried*, are fatally *misinterpreted* by her. While Kriemhild envisions the (strong) possibility of Siegfried's death, she imagines it at the hands of the invading Saxons and Danes, and does not appear to consider for a moment that her brother Gunther and *oheim* Hagen, the two eagles of her first dream, have more than enough reason to want the hero of Xanten dead.

It might be contended, however, that Kriemhild is, in fact, quite naive, that she fails to recognize the seriousness of her altercation with Brünhild before the minster and its consequences for the Burgundian court, that she could not conceive of the sanctity of hospitality towards guests being defiled, particularly not in the case of her husband, a loyal military ally of Worms. Does she not, after all, approach Hagen as "family"? Quite true, but then why the doubts expressed later in 920ff., on the heels of her two dreams (in the first, Siegfried is hunted down by two wild boars; in the second, he is crushed by the collapse of two mountains), dreamt *after* her conversation with Hagen? A *Vorahnung* of what is brewing clearly has her in the direst straits, and the reader can well imagine what she is actually thinking when the narrator comments: "Do gedâhtes' an diu mære (sine torst' ir niht gesagen),/diu si dâ Hagenen sagete" (920,1-2a), and this is more starkly underscored two stanzas later: "ich fürhte harte sêre etelîchen rât,/ob man der deheinem missedienet hât,/die uns gefüegen kunnen vîentlîchen haz" (922,1-3). There is an interesting sequence of events here, beginning with the so-called "treachery" of the Saxon and Danish kings, Hagen's seeking out Kriemhild and her betrayal of his vulnerable spot, Kriemhild's dreams on that

same night (i.e., *prior* to her hearing about the change in plans), the transformation of the military campaign into a hunt, Siegfried's seeking out Kriemhild to say his good-byes, and finally, Kriemhild's relating to her husband of her two dreams and her fruitless effort to dissuade him from participating in the hunt — stopping short, of course, of actually admitting to him the very sound reasons for her anxiety. Up until the point that Kriemhild herself learns that there is not to be a renewal of the war against the Saxons and the Danes, she could justifiably have identified the two boars and the two mountains with Liudeger and Liudegast. Once she realizes that a hunt has taken the place of the campaign, it is clear that she senses the potential for disaster emanating from much closer to home; her words in stanzas 920 and 922 allude to members of her own family. This is certainly how (a truly naive) Siegfried interprets them: "ine weiz hie niht der liute, die mir iht hazzes tragen./alle dîne mâge sint mir gemeine holt" (923,2-3).

If Kriemhild had initially reacted only out of selfish interests to the first dream, and then, after having met Siegfried, repressed the "message" of that dream, and if she had, in fact, shown herself to be rather naive in her dealings with Hagen, at this juncture there is clearly no doubt as to the basis of her fears and anxiety. But this raises the highly poignant question: why, as a loving and devoted spouse, does she not make it clear to Siegfried prior to his departure that she has betrayed the one secret that can keep him alive and that he is now *very* vulnerable? The text supplies an answer, although few will be particularly satisfied with it: "(sine torst' ir niht gesagen)" (920,1b). Is it truly *fear* that prevents Kriemhild from taking the one step that might have saved Siegfried's life? She had, in fact, sustained a rather severe beating from Siegfried for the fiasco she had helped to perpetrate before the minster. Is it, then, the fear of a second beating that precludes her divulging her betrayal of her husband? This would appear, in fact, to be the case. The narrator's explanation for Kriemhild's reluctance to say anything to Siegfried can be accepted verbatim: she simply did not dare to tell him. It would seem that Kriemhild has broken a sacred trust between herself and her spouse by having imparted his "ultimate" secret to Hagen, and potentially to many others, a secret brought back from the Otherworld to which only she in the courtly world, as far as we know, was privy. The betrayal of Siegfried begins with Kriemhild,¹⁶ who allows fear to conquer love, although her original intention

¹⁶ Unless we wish to contend that Siegfried had already betrayed himself through having helped Gunther to procure Brünhild, instead of recognizing that he was the one destined to defeat her in the trials in Iceland and thus, in keeping with the rules of the game, should have been the one to wed her. The question may certainly be posed: would not Siegfried and Brünhild have constituted a much more suitable pair than Siegfried and Kriemhild? Even were we to ignore the Norse analogues (which may well have been known to the German scribe), a union between Brünhild and Siegfried would

in telling Hagen of Siegfried's weakness was entirely honorable and focused on preserving her spouse's life.¹⁷

In a psychological sense, the second half of the *Nibelungenlied* is of less interest than the first, at least insofar as Kriemhild's motivations are concerned. Her course has been plotted from the moment that Siegfried is killed and it is simply re-confirmed with the theft of the *hort*. The narrator, reader/listener, Hagen, Dietrich, the Burgundian kings, Etzel, and Rüdiger — in this approximate order — eventually realize the true/only reason for Kriemhild's marriage to Etzel. Political marriages in the Middle Ages were a matter of course, and, more often than not, involved the creation of alliances, but Kriemhild's union with the Hunnish ruler has only one purpose and that is to secure a power base from which she may eventually be able to avenge the killing of Siegfried as well as the other outrages she has suffered at the hands of her brothers and Hagen. Before turning our attention to other members of the "cast," however, several points warrant comment.

Kriemhild's designation as a "vålandinne" in the second part of the epic can certainly be justified *from a medieval point of view*. To be sure, injustices have been committed against her, no "champion" has stepped forward to take up her case, she is isolated, but at the same time, she has never comprehended the extent to which her murdered husband, with his "ganz

scarcely have led to the compromising situation in which the hero finds himself in the sixteenth *Aventure*. Brünhild and Siegfried would have complemented each other in a way that could never be possible for Siegfried and Kriemhild.

¹⁷ One occasionally encounters the suggestion that Kriemhild subconsciously wished to "remove" Siegfried, assume his power and possession of his *hort*. Such an interpretation would be predicated upon an *a priori* desire on the part of the queen for absolute power, as well as possible resentment over Siegfried's rejection of the lands to which she was entitled upon marrying and the beating he gave her after her indiscretion before the minster. The text, however, offers no support for any interpretation that Kriemhild *consciously* contemplated such a move. Siegfried may even fit the pattern of the average medieval knight when it comes to wife-beating, but this arouses, at the most, fear within Kriemhild, not fury. Siegfried, whether as a symbol or as a person, is an integral part of Kriemhild's life. On a subconscious level, it might be contended that, in the wake of Siegfried's murder, she may attempt to find some sort of compensation in the *Nibelungenhort* with its *Wünschelrute* (note below), and the power it endows which, as Hagen fully realizes, could prove dangerous for Worms. Her daily lamenting in the land of the Huns would lead one to believe that the love she still held for Siegfried was as sincere as the remorse felt over his death and the fury directed at the perpetrators of the deed, undoubtedly intensified all the more through the ever-present realization of her own part in the affair. Note, however, Hård's brief and intriguing allusion to possible ulterior motives on the part of Kriemhild: "Streng genommen wird Siegfried von ihr verraten, und geschieht das wirklich völlig unabsichtlich und ahnungslos?" (43).

unkontrollierte Naturkraft"¹⁸ constituted a perpetual problem for courtly society as a whole.

It is less Kriemhild's understandable desire for revenge that is striking or alarming than the manner in which this is allowed to consume her as an individual over more than two decades and the extent to which the absolutization of her resolve results in catastrophe for entire nations. Kriemhild's plan could never have been realized, however, without the complicity of various males and the naive or inept leadership of specific rulers who are given more to repression of the obvious, and dangerous than to assuming an active role in preserving their peoples from a cataclysm. What had been characteristic of Kriemhild subsequent to her marriage to Siegfried — an imprudent turning away from her intuition, and then not acting upon it at *the* decisive moment (prior to her husband's final departure) — now holds true for all of the major male players in the work, with the exception of Hagen.

Given the reception of the *Nibelungenlied* in the twentieth century, it may seem almost blasphemous to suggest that, *from a psychological perspective*, Siegfried initially appears to be one of the least interesting characters in the *Nibelungenlied*. He is the archetypal hero: strong, to the point of near invincibility, the "perpetual" friend, or at least aspiring friend (note stanza 155) who manages, however, to create chaos rather than to instill order and stability within society. Siegfried was certainly a hero to the majority of those who heard his praises sung in the Middle Ages. While that is the image that has also tended to prevail through the first half of the twentieth century, it is noteworthy that late medieval depictions of Siegfried — as an irritating apprentice and eventually, in Hans Sachs's *Lied vom Hürnen Seyfrid* (1557), as a poor second to Dietrich in terms of prowess in combat, who even has to seek protection from the latter's wrath in the lap of Crimhilt! — were scarcely as flattering. One should not forget as well the remark made by the anonymous author of the *Klage*, already quoted above: "unt daz er selbe den tût/gewan von sîner übermuot." This thirteenth-century commentator on the *Nibelungenlied* had relatively little to say about the hero of Xanten and astutely attributed his death in large part to his own failing.

Siegfried may have his vassals and fellow-knights, whether they hail from Xanten or the Otherworld of Nibelungenland, but he is, in the final analysis, *confidant* to no one and, with the possible exception of Kriemhild, has no one to be his *confidant(e)*. The hero's solitariness is striking, particularly when we consider the relationship that exists between Hagen and Volker later in the epic, or that between Roland and Oliver in the *Rolandlied*. In marked contrast to the youthful Parzival, who has both male and female

¹⁸ Weber 24.

mentors to help him in a process of maturation and individuation/transformation which eventually culminates in his ascension to the Grail throne, Siegfried neither encounters, nor does he seek out, older, wiser figures of either sex. He is rather a "loner," although he is given to self-deception when it comes to the matter of friendship. There are indications, however, that Siegfried is not entirely in a psychological vacuum when it comes to knowledge regarding his actual relationship to the Burgundians, specifically Gunther. Prior to informing Siegfried of the attack by Liudeger and Liudegast, Gunther declares:

"Jane mag ich allen liuten die swære niht gesagen,
die ich muoz tougenliche in mîme herzen tragen.
man sol stæten vriwenden klagen herzen nôt."
diu Sivrides varwe wart dô bleich unde rôt. (155)

Siegfried's reaction to Gunther's declaration is to blanch and then to blush. It is clearly a sensitive response to the implication that Gunther does not necessarily consider him among the "stæten vriwenden" but rather that he is counted more among "allen liuten." The very fact that Gunther did not see fit to approach Siegfried immediately with his concerns over the impending Danish-Saxon war should be a sign to the hero of Xanten that he does not belong to the "inner circle." There is much meaning in Siegfried's blanching and blushing, an indication of his "inner" knowledge that he is an outsider. This knowledge is, nonetheless, continually repressed by Siegfried and even denied when he lies dying after being struck down by Hagen. For all of his desire to become a good friend to the Burgundians, and to Gunther, in particular, Siegfried's "otherness," and, in particular, his incapacity to recognize and deal with the darker side of his personality, preclude any "normal" male bonding between himself and, as it appears, anyone else.

The dynamics between Siegfried and Hagen are, in some respects, more subtle than those between Hagen and Kriemhild, but they have led, in at least one instance, to a remarkable bit of scholarly speculation. Prior to examining the latter, however, let us consider the following. Upon arriving at Worms, Siegfried demonstrates no concern whatsoever for the honor of the Burgundians and must certainly offend Hagen (whom he addresses directly), in particular, with his overt declaration of intended conquest. Hagen nonetheless attempts to derive whatever assistance possible from Siegfried in his efforts to enhance the status of Worms, whether that is putting the thought into Gunther's head that he should inform Siegfried about the Danish-Saxon crisis (the clear intention being to engage his help in the forthcoming battle), or "conscripting" him for the wooing mission to Island to procure Brünhild (whereby Hagen fully realizes that Gunther, by himself, is not up to the task). It is his manipulation, after the mission has

been successfully completed, that sees Siegfried sent on ahead to Worms to announce, messenger-style, the arrival of the victorious party from Island. Hagen may not have been able to, or even interested in, establishing close, personal ties to Siegfried, but he is fully aware of how valuable the hero could be for Worms if Kriemhild is held out as the ultimate prize. In sum, the relationship, at least from Hagen's standpoint, is one of pragmatism (in contrast, for example, to the affinity developed between Hagen and Volker in the second half of the epic). Even if, as in the case of the wooing of Brünhild, the goal is ill-advised, Hagen's intentions are consistently aimed at the enhancement of Burgundian power and prestige. If the latter is compromised, he will do whatever is necessary to rectify the situation. Hagen's motivation for killing Siegfried is undoubtedly multifaceted in nature, but the major reason is certainly the damage done to Worms, its royal family, their reputation and honor, through the indiscretions of the hero of Xanten and his spouse. It is thus possible to concur to some degree with D. G. Mowatt and Hugh Sacker when they suggest that the murder came about as "Sifrid's punishment for not caring about Worms."¹⁹ Less easy to accept, however, is the Freudian interpretation they accord to the hunt which provides the backdrop for the murder and to the symbolism accorded the act itself: "Is perhaps the whole hunt scene a homosexual hunt, with Hagen and Sifrid the two wild boars of Kriemhilde's dream (921,2), and fatal penetration from the rear Sifrid's punishment for not caring about Worms?"²⁰

The matter of Siegfried's sexuality is by no means without interest. He is undoubtedly aware of the attention he receives from the opposite sex in general (note 131,1-3 where the women are always delighted to see Siegfried among the sporting knights, or 135,3-4, in which his looks cause "manec frouwe" to adore him), and, despite his initial qualms about wooing Kriemhild, he is from all indications a successful sexual partner. When sex is alluded to in conjunction with Siegfried, scholars are most likely to concentrate on the bedroom scene in which Siegfried "tames" Brünhild for a hapless Gunther. Mowatt and Sacker maintain that "he is essentially responsible for her loss of maidenhood," but that "he left her to Gunther to deflower."²¹ Siegfried is no Tristan, however, as the reservations he expresses in stanza 136 regarding the possibility of even seeing Kriemhild indicate. The Burgundian princess is Siegfried's *anima*, just as he, in many ways, represents her *animus*. As the epitome of courtly existence, Kriemhild in essence becomes the focus of Siegfried's effort to reintegrate himself into society,

¹⁹ D. G. Mowatt and Hugh Sacker, *The Nibelungenlied. An Interpretative Commentary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967) 92.

²⁰ Mowatt/Sacker 92.

²¹ Mowatt/Sacker 71.

undertaken subconsciously after his youthful adventures in the otherworldly sphere. Paradoxically, he will adapt less easily to the court than Kriemhild does to his more aggressive sphere. Even the vocabulary used to describe the contemplated sex act (in the case of both Siegfried and Gunther) is not devoid of some bellicose vocabulary: “Die herren kômen beide, dâ si solden ligen./do gedâht’ ir ietslîcher mit minnen an gesigen/den minneclîchen vrouwen” (628,1–3a). The perspective provided by the narrator is solely that of Siegfried’s satisfaction, however: “Sîfrides kurzewîle diu wart vil groezlîche guot” (628,4) and we learn nothing of how Kriemhild fared, although there is no reason to doubt that the pleasure enjoyed was mutual. The desirability of Kriemhild as a lover is not lost on others. The obvious attraction that she and Siegfried have for each other once Kriemhild has appeared physically before him, the image painted of their coming together, prompts many an observing knight to contemplate the pleasures of “being” together with Kriemhild, of making love to her (296,1–3). Siegfried has a sexual persona, and his superiority also in this arena is not to be underestimated when it comes to understanding the relationship between himself and Gunther and hence, through association, to Hagen. It is a persona, however, which is decidedly heterosexual and, from every indication, monogamist: “er nâme fûr si eine niht tûsent anderiu wîp” (629,4; see also 656,2b–3).

There are, of course, obvious sexual overtones to Siegfried’s “taming” of Brünhild for Gunther and one can certainly concur with Mowatt and Sacker that Siegfried bears responsibility for the Icelandic queen’s loss of her virginity. Siegfried seems to have anticipated that his help would be needed, as we read in 648,1–2: “Im [= Gunther] unt Sîfride ungelîch stuont der muot./wol wesse, waz im wære, der edel ritter guot.” Psychologically, this must be an almost unbearable situation for the Burgundian king. Politically, it could become disastrous, should the antics of the preceding night become widely known. Gunther’s sexually inferior status when compared to Siegfried is painfully “rubbed in” through a remark by the latter which may seem to be relatively harmless on the surface: “ich wæne uns ungelîche hînat sî gewesen” (652,2). Gunther is fully aware of Siegfried’s sexual prowess and the potential, after the latter’s offer of assistance to subdue Brünhild, for a violation of his royal prerogative, hence his rather pathetic statement: “Âne daz du iht triutest” (655,1a). Once assured that, for Siegfried, there is no other woman but Kriemhild, Gunther is quite relieved, although terribly anxious for the day to pass. When it does, however, the poet provides his audience with some excellent insight into the mental state of the Burgundian monarch: “daz was dem künige Gunther beidiu lieb unde liet” (665,4). Gunther realizes that there is no other way to “win” Brünhild, but it is a torturous fact that his wife must be “tamed” by another man and there is certainly more than a little ambiguity in his thought: “Den künic ez dûhte

lange, ê er si betwanc” (675,1). Gunther remains throughout fully cognizant of the fact that Siegfried held true to his oath not to “violate” Brünhild sexually.²² He is, however, a medieval sovereign who cannot completely repress the symbolic significance of the later public display of his spouse’s ring and belt by his sister after she has declared (lied?) to all and sundry, and more with a sense of pride than of shame, that it was her husband, Siegfried, who first bedded Brünhild.

Previous scholarship has occasionally seen the *Nibelungenhort* — as well as the sword Balmung — as symbolic of Siegfried, hence the added significance of Kriemhild’s demand that the hoard be returned to her when she confronts Hagen in the final scenes of the epic and her decapitation of the latter using Siegfried’s sword. If this is a correct interpretation, then it is worth noting that the one item in the treasure that is singled out as having particular significance is the magic wand, the *Wünschelrute*: “Der wunsch der lac darunder, von golde ein rüetelîn./der daz het erkunnet, der möhte meister sîn/wol in aller werlde über ietslîchen man” (1124,1–3). While this can certainly be taken verbatim as the equivalent of the wizard’s magic wand,

²² Scholars have always assumed that Brünhild was a virgin until bedded by Gunther following the wrestling match with Siegfried. The assumption makes perfectly good sense, as one would otherwise expect an earlier “deflowering” to have occurred (in Isenstein) only had a worthy suitor appeared before Siegfried/Gunther, in which case Brünhild would have already been married. Provided, then, that we may assume that Brünhild remained chaste while a sovereign in Island (i.e., that she was not given to using men for her own sexual gratification), Gunther would have had physical proof on the second wedding night of his wife’s “purity” (and thus his “friend’s” integrity). He would objectively *know* that Siegfried had not overstepped his bounds, at least in the sexual arena. That knowledge, however, will not necessarily compensate for the psychological realization (and frustration) that, were it not for Siegfried, he would conceivably never have been able to consummate his marriage to Brünhild. Unlike Gunther, Brünhild can never enjoy complete assurance that it was not, in fact, Siegfried who “deflowered” her, following a brief interlude subsequent to the taming episode, and the *timing* of his removal of her ring and belt, namely, *prior* to intercourse, could provide her (as it must later those in attendance during the quarrel before the minster) with symbolic evidence that it could only have been Siegfried, in the guise of Gunther, who bedded her. Siegfried, in his arrogance, may have deprived Brünhild of both objects as though they were “war booty,” but for Brünhild (and everyone else, including Kriemhild) they are sexual trophies. In this sense, the *Nibelungenlied* differs radically from the *Völsunga saga*, in the thirty-second chapter of which Brynhild urges the death of Sigurd and his son in full cognizance of the fact that the hero had kept his vows and not violated her (having placed his sword between them in bed). From Brünhild’s perspective, the realization that Siegfried was with her at all on her second wedding night, with all of the ramifications it holds for prior events in Island, can only have shattered forever any illusions she may have entertained of a correspondence between inner and outer reality.

used principally to preclude any diminishing of the treasure, it is intriguing to note that the term *wünschelruote* or *wünschelstap* was also used in the Middle Ages as a euphemism for the male member.²³ The *hort* represents vitality, including sexual vitality,²⁴ and it is thus possible to view Siegfried himself as the epitome of such vitality, a man who has not only the potential to become “meister” over all men, but also all women, in the world.

We must be cautious, however, about extending this imagery too far. Suffice it to say that Siegfried outdoes Gunther not only in battle — note their respective roles in the Saxon-Danish war, and also the struggles against Brünhild — but also in the bedroom, irrespective of the fact that both produce sons. It should be underscored once again that Siegfried is not Tristan, he is no Don Juan, although there are certainly aspects of the archetypal *puer aeternus* about him, in the sense that he “remains too long in adolescent psychology.”²⁵ At no time is there any indication that Siegfried himself understands the delicate psychological position in which Gunther must find himself through the very presence of the hero of Xanten and Nibelungenland. Siegfried is simply in every way but one (the ability to form a deep and reliable relationship to his peers) “the better man,” and, because it is impossible for him to become any one else’s true friend (irrespective of how he may regard himself in the eyes of others), his success in the sexual sphere will inevitably impede a closer relationship to the Burgundian king.

Siegfried is desired by women (possibly including Brünhild), loved by Kriemhild, and himself indicates unequivocally on a number of cases that the princess of Worms is the only woman in his life. At no time is there a hint of homosexuality in his behavior or demeanor. While Mowatt and Sacker have any number of valuable points to make in their commentary, this is one that leads nowhere. What has been said of Siegfried applies as well to Hagen. There is no homosexuality in the *Nibelungenlied*, either symbolically, or otherwise. There is sexual tension between Siegfried and Gunther, Kriemhild

²³ Note Konrad von Megenberg, *Das Buch der Natur. Die erste Naturgeschichte in deutscher Sprache*, ed. Franz Pfeiffer (1861; rpt. Hildesheim: Olms, 1962) 38 “Von den Zaichen ob ain fraw swanger sei oder niht”: “daz ander zaichen ist, daz diu wünschelruot oben trucken ist an dem haupt und daz si die muoter vast seugt,” and 399 “Von dem weizen Senif”: “aber daz wilde [Kraut] pringt daz harmwazzer und erweckt die unkäusch, wan es sterkt den wünschelstab und daz würkt allermaist des krautes sām.”

²⁴ C. G. Jung, in a reference to Kluge’s *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, has suggested that the original Indo-European root of the word *hort*, **kuth*, is “possibly related to *κεύθω* and *κύσθος*, ‘cavity, female genitals’” (*Symbols of Transformation*, 2nd ed., Bollingen Series XX [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976] 364).

²⁵ Marie-Louise von Franz, *Puer Aeternus. A Psychological Study of the Adult Struggle with the Paradise of Childhood*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Sigo, 1981) 1.

and Brünhild, possibly also between Siegfried and Brünhild, and there is sexual (although not necessarily psychological) compatibility between Siegfried and Kriemhild. Sex is used by Kriemhild to sway Etzel, as is fatherhood, it may be used by the Hunnish queen to entice Blöedel to commit treacherous acts against the Burgundians (by offering him the widow of the highly acclaimed hero Nuodung [see also *Alpharts Tod*, 78–79]), but it is, at best, one of several motivating factors within the dynamics of relationships between the various main characters in the *Nibelungenlied*, and it is never anything other than heterosexual in nature.²⁶

A number of years ago, Theodore M. Andersson posed the complex and provocative question, “Why does Siegfried die?”²⁷ He concluded that there was no good reason provided in the *Nibelungenlied*; the Old Norse versions of the tale, on the other hand, offered convincing motivation for the act. Yet we do have the statement made by the *Klage*-poet that the hero of Xanten was killed as a consequence of his *übermuot*. Siegfried’s murder — and it will always remain that, regardless of whether one finds it justified or condemnable — can, however, be explained psychologically from the text itself, without recourse to analogues (although this is by no means intended to dispute the possibility that the latter were known to the *Nibelungenlied*-poet and that he, too, like some modern interpreters, saw the potential for an ambiguous interpretation of Brünhild’s tears at the sight of Kriemhild sitting next to Siegfried). One might even go so far as to say that the killing was inevitable, given the static nature of an adult child²⁸ who remains stubbornly oblivious to the serious (negative) ramifications of both his words and deeds on the society around him. Siegfried is not simply Burgundy’s “problem.” He poses a threat to the stability of the rest of the “epic” world, specifically because of his incapacity to adhere to the norms of the latter, his spontaneity, and his apparent ignoring of the “rules” according to which that world functions. Even in his last moments, Siegfried never demonstrates the capacity to confront his shadow. When he proclaims to Gunther and Hagen: “ich was iu ie getriuwe” (989,3a), he is technically quite correct. He had, from his perspective, and perhaps even from the audience’s, always been loyal

²⁶ Note, in this regard, the article by C. Stephen Jaeger, “Mark and Tristan: The Love of Medieval Kings and their Courts,” in Winder McConnell, ed., *in hōhem prise. A Festschrift in Honor of Ernst S. Dick*, GAG 480 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1989) 183–197.

²⁷ Theodore M. Andersson, “Why does Siegfried die?,” in Stephen J. Kaplowitt, ed. *Germanic Studies in Honor of Otto Springer* (Pittsburgh: K & S Enterprises, 1978) 29–39.

²⁸ See my article, “Inflation and the Gifted Child: The Case of Siegfried,” *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology* 9 (1988; nos. 1/2): 127–140.

towards the Burgundians, because he had never *intentionally* or, more accurately, *consciously*, undertaken anything to their disadvantage. Siegfried can look back on his participation in the Danish–Saxon war, his indispensable role in procuring Brünhild, the “service” performed for Gunther in “taming” her, as acts performed on behalf of Gunther and the Burgundians and yet none of these are events that can be designated so simply. Prior to leaving on the Danish-Saxon campaign, Siegfried encourages Gunther “... sît hie heime ... belîbet bî den frouwen” (174,1a; 3a). Siegfried’s assurances to Gunther that he will protect “beidiu êre unde guot” (174,4b) are sincere, and there is no reason to believe that he *intends* a slight against the monarch with his recommendation that he remain home with the women. One might contend that it is fitting for Gunther to let his liegemen and allies deal with this problem and remain removed from the actual battlefield, but Gunther is not Arthur, sending out knights on *âventiuren*. The specific reference to “staying home with the women” is remarkable. Liudegast is king of Denmark and an active participant in the campaign against Burgundy. It is inconceivable that Etzel would remain “at home with the women” once his hordes have begun to march. Nor do we find Hagen in *Kudrun*, written within three or four decades after the *Nibelungenlied*, or King Hetel, or his adversary King Ludwig, entrusting either their offensive or defensive wars to vassals while they enjoy the relative security of remaining “at home with the women.” Yet it is a recommendation to which Gunther accedes and not a word of his reaction is recorded in the text. The reader/listener is left to decide for himself what Gunther must be feeling in this moment. It is not indicated whether or not Siegfried’s statement is made before several of the king’s liegemen, but even if said to him privately, it casts a rather hapless Gunther into an even more unenviable psychological position as he is forced to realize who is, at this point, the *de facto* power in Burgundy.

When Siegfried accompanies Gunther, together with Hagen and Dancwart, to Island to woo Brünhild — although he originally advised Gunther against it, while Hagen urged the mission with Siegfried’s assistance — he is most certainly providing an invaluable service (albeit with the direst consequences) to Worms and its sovereign. Yet, here again, the situation is psychologically volatile. From the outset, it is clear to all and sundry that the entire mission could not be seriously contemplated without the help of the “initiate” Siegfried, and this becomes patently obvious when the Burgundians eventually confront the “devilish” Brünhild. Moreover Siegfried, who has wished so much to demonstrate his “friendship” towards Gunther and the others (note 156), allows himself a thoroughly unnecessary remark which can hardly fail to offend the king and his men: “Jane lob’ ichz niht sô verre durch die liebe dîn/sô durch dîne swester” (388,1–2a). Once again, there is no response from Gunther and what could he have possibly replied? In short,

any potential for real friendship or comradeship is precluded by the unnerving proclivity of Siegfried to say precisely the wrong thing at the wrong time. Let us recall again Siegfried’s query of Gunther following the wedding night, one that is made in *full awareness* of what has undoubtedly happened (648,2). The terrible dichotomy is time and time again apparent: Gunther and the Burgundians need Siegfried, he is more than willing to help, but that help is invariably provided in ways as to remind them consistently of the extent to which they are, individually and collectively, inferior to him. In this respect, he provides a striking contrast to a figure such as Beowulf, on whom Hrothgar and the Danes depend, but who never creates the impression that he is a threat to the latter, a hero who is sensitive to the Danish king’s position, and also willing to learn from the latter’s wisdom and experience, and who leaves for his own homeland before the suspicion of any usurpation of Danish power could be contemplated. In the case of Siegfried, however, there is the ever-present, gloomy realization that Gunther and his men are not up to accomplishing any of these goals themselves and that, from the moment that Siegfried arrived at Worms, they have become “obliged” to him and aware that they are entirely at his mercy.

Why, in fact, does Siegfried die, if one is not prepared to accept the perfectly good explanation to be derived from the text, namely, that one cannot let rest his responsibility for the public humiliation of the Burgundian court? One might cite Jung’s explanation as provided in his *Symbols of Transformation* — here referring to Wagner’s opera but it can just as easily be applied to the situation in the *Nibelungenlied*: “The subsequent fate of Siegfried is the fate of every archetypal hero: the spear of the one-eyed Hagen, the Dark One, strikes his vulnerable spot.”²⁹ The poet is thus following an established pattern (not just tradition passed on from the oral-formulaic forebears of the epic or its immediate written source) that transcends epic aesthetics and expectations and which finds its origins in mythology. Another explanation might be proposed, one that may be feasible from the perspective of medieval thinking (or psychology). In contradistinction to the expectation of conformity prevalent at the time, Siegfried’s archetypal features are not confined to heroic acts which are intended to benefit society, but also include a remarkable measure of *individuality* that confronts and defies the interests of the collective. Furthermore, it is into this realm of individual achievement and self-assertion that Kriemhild is inextricably drawn when she weds Siegfried and which causes her to move further and further away from the clan and the interests and welfare of her family. Quite in keeping with this emergence of the individual is the overweening pride, the *übermuot* which exacerbates Siegfried’s independent, *spontaneous*

²⁹ Jung, *Symbols of Transformation* 389.

tendency towards unreflected action.³⁰ The reasons for Siegfried's death may well be seen as multifaceted, but the inflationary, unpredictable nature of this transgressor against the prevailing *ordo* of the world constitutes, at the very least, a major subconscious impetus to his removal. His transgressions have in large part to do with the affinity he displays to the Otherworld and the power he has acquired through his successes in that realm. We are reminded here of a *Spruch* by Nietzsche: "Wer mit Ungeheuern kämpft, mag zusehen, daß er nicht dabei zum Ungeheuer wird. Und wenn du lange in einen Abgrund blickst, blickt der Abgrund auch in dich hinein."³¹ Siegfried defeats the dragon, but acquires in the process some of what it symbolizes, particularly the capacity for unleashing chaos. If the Otherworld is viewed as a metaphor for the unconscious, it should be recalled that the latter is also the repository for some things best left "below the surface." Siegfried's inability to discern between what should be allowed to emerge from the depths, what might benefit him and society as a whole, and what should justifiably — and wisely — be repressed, can be regarded as a major factor in the unfolding of his own personal tragedy.

Siegfried's nemesis, Hagen, is a highly complex figure who may, however, on the surface at least, create the impression of being relatively one-dimensional in terms of his motivation. He, as well as his clan, appear to have one purpose in life, namely, to serve the Burgundian royal household. All of Hagen's actions take Worms and the welfare of Burgundy as represented by its kings as their point of departure. He will later be designated by the narrator as "ein helflicher trôst" (1526,2b) and also by Dietrich as the "trôst der Nibelunge" (1726,4a), an allusion that should be understood in both a physical and spiritual sense. It is worth noting from the outset that Hagen is not accorded overtly *personal* ambitions by the poet. For all intents and purposes, any hopes, dreams, wishes, that he may have are identical to what he would consider to be the best course of action for Burgundy, which is not to suggest, however, that Hagen does not jealously guard his own particular position within the hierarchy of the court, one that he has clearly assumed in accordance with a venerable tradition. He is the quintessential "company man," who sees his purpose in enhancing and upholding the stature of Worms. Hagen subscribes to, and upholds, the traditional code of honor and loyalty, albeit defined within the context of the clan. As such, he is the

avowed enemy of anyone or anything which might compromise the physical or "metaphysical" welfare of the Burgundians.

Hagen enjoys a unique position at the Burgundian court among other things because of his wide knowledge of the world outside its immediate confines: "Dem sint kunt diu rîche und ouch diu vrenden lant" (82,1). As his later encounter with the water sprites on the way to Etzel's camp illustrates, this knowledge extends to the Otherworld, not surprising given the connection Hagen has in Norse analogues to the world of lower mythology, his father having been an elf. He knows of Siegfried, and correctly surmises that the magnificent "recke" who appears in Worms in *Äventiure* 3 is none other than the legendary hero. For all of his "otherness," however, and his somewhat solitary nature — we have no reason to believe that Hagen enjoys any sort of "personal" life outside his relationship to the royal household; a wife and family are never mentioned in connection with him. Hagen is well integrated into Burgundian society and is fully aware and, for the most part, respectful of, the rules that govern the often delicate relationship to peers and superiors. Siegfried's arrival in Worms is not the occasion for unreserved rejoicing. Hagen recommends that he be accorded the appropriate reception, but the motivation behind his advice to Gunther in this respect may well betray more than understandable caution and prudence, namely, fear:

"Wir suln den herren enpfâhen deste baz,
daz wir iht verdienen des jungen recken haz.
sîn lîp der ist sô küene, man sol in holden hân.
er hât mit sîner krefte sô menegiu wunder getân."
(101)

From the outset, that fear precludes any real possibility that Siegfried and Hagen might eventually develop a warriors' friendship. There is anxiety in Hagen's voice when he continues: "er stêt in der gebære, mich dunket, wizze Krist,/ez ensîn niht kleiniu mære, dar umb' er her geriten ist" (103,3-4). In four brief stanzas, Siegfried essentially justifies the anxiety that Hagen has hinted at, as he moves from recognition of the great "recken" associated with Worms, to its kings, his own status within society, and his intention to earn a name for himself by seizing Burgundian vassals and property. This confrontation, initiated by the intended "guest," sets the essential tone for the relationship which will evolve between Siegfried and the Burgundians. Although Hagen (along with Gernot) is reported as having countered Siegfried's claims in 114,4, it is not until stanza 121 that his words are actually recorded:

³⁰ Inflationary tendencies are, of course, by no means limited to the individual, as is demonstrated by the later allusion to the collective *übermuot* (1865,4a) of the Burgundians by declining to inform Etzel of the true state of affairs.

³¹ Ivo Frenzel, ed., *Friedrich Nietzsche. Werke in zwei Bänden*, based on the three-volume Hanser edition by Karl Schlechta (Munich: Hanser, 1967) 2: 70.

Dô sprach der starke Hagene: “uns mac wol wesen leit,
 allen dīnen degenen, daz er ie gereit
 durch strīten her ze Rīne; er soltez haben lān.
 im heten mine herren sōlher leide niht getān.”

The reader notes that Hagen’s words do not constitute a threat against Siegfried, that they are not indicative of an angry, indignant outburst, but are rather more a reflection of the anxiety he had earlier demonstrated when commenting on Siegfried’s stature and reputation. Gunther had been somewhat dismayed over the relative silence demonstrated by his liegeman in the face of Siegfried’s challenge (119,3: “daz der sō lange dagete, daz was dem kūnege leit”). Why had, in fact, Hagen not stepped forward? Why is it left to Ortwin, his nephew, to take up the gauntlet? This is not lost on Siegfried, who provokingly remarks: “War umbe bītet Hagene und ouch Ortwīn,/daz er niht gāhet strīten mit den friwenden sīn” (125,1–2). Gernot apparently makes it clear to Hagen and Ortwin that they are not to respond to Siegfried’s obvious provocation and it is he who extends, despite the latter’s arrogance, a warm welcome to the hero. One wonders, however, precisely how Hagen would or could have responded, had Gernot not intervened. He is fully aware of Siegfried’s near-invulnerability, and a clash of arms at this juncture could well leave not only himself and his nephew slain, but also the entire Burgundian royal family decimated. Consider Hagen’s position; it has already been pointed out that Gunther is somewhat disappointed with his lack of action, he is openly challenged by Siegfried, but dare he move against him, even if not restrained by Gernot? Inasmuch as Hagen’s *raison d’être* centers around his ability to protect and enhance the Burgundian monarchy, he cannot undertake a thing at this moment without the possibility that the devastating consequences alluded to above will become fact. That means, however, that he must suffer the indignity of leaving Siegfried’s challenge unanswered, at least for now.

From the outset, Hagen is cast into an adversarial relationship with Siegfried that is not of his making, and forced to endure an outrage that cannot help but compromise both his individual sense of honor as well as the collective image of the court. Yet Siegfried possesses a remarkable talent for dissipating — on the surface — the understandable resentment he has undoubtedly evoked among the Burgundians present at this arrival scene, for the narrator comments in 129,4: “in sach vil lützel iemen, der im wære gehaz.” To what extent we may take the litotes “vil lützel” to apply to everyone is, however, debatable. Hagen may slip temporarily into the background as Siegfried whiles away his time for a year at the Burgundian court hoping to catch a glimpse of Kriemhild, but this does not mean that he will have necessarily forgotten (or trivialized) the significance of Siegfried’s initial appearance at Worms. Given the circumstances that prevail subsequent

to Kriemhild’s move to the land of the Huns, it is most likely that her brothers, at this point, adapt to Siegfried’s presence at court to such an extent that they are able to repress the unpleasantness of the initial encounter. Hagen will not forget; when he asks Gunther, following the announcement of the approaching war with the Saxons and the Danes, “wan muget irz Sívride sagen” (151,4b), it is completely in accord with the role of the competent royal advisor. On another level, however, it is just as feasible to see Hagen’s “advice” as calculated to place Siegfried, at least on the surface, into the role of someone serving Worms, in compensation for the manner in which the Burgundians have been relegated into second-power status by his overbearing, if youthful, “naturalness.” Stanza 331 (Hagen’s suggestion that Siegfried be engaged for the wooing mission to Iceland) and 532 (Hagen’s urging of Gunther to have Siegfried take the message to Worms that they are returning with Brünhild) provide further evidence of a manipulative, perhaps compensatory, effort by Hagen to have Siegfried not only serve Worms but also be controlled by what he, Hagen, has recommended. Once again, we are dealing with different levels of motivation and purpose.

Hagen has not actively contemplated the death of Siegfried from the moment it became clear that he would always remain a potential threat to Burgundian power and prestige. It appears that as long as he can be contained or controlled, as in the above instances, Hagen, something of a medieval *Realpolitiker*, is content to let matters stand. The quarrel of the queens before the minster, however, precludes a continuation of such a policy. Containment is no longer an option. Nothing, up to that point, had approximated the damage done to Burgundian image, including Siegfried’s arrogant behavior upon his arrival. The public suggestion that Gunther had been cuckolded by the upstart from Xanten is not something that can be repressed or for which some sort of compensation can be found. Yet, it provides — at Brünhild’s urging — only the immediate impetus for the murder.

Highly revealing is Hagen’s statement to the despairing Burgundian kings after the deed has been done:

Dô sprach der grimme Hagene: “Jane weiz ich, waz ir kleit.
 ez hât nu allez ende unser sorge unt unser leit.
 wir vinden ir vil wênic, die getürren uns bestān.
 wol mich, deich sīner hêrschaft hân ze râte getān.” (993)

Several things can be established from this statement: 1) Hagen feels no remorse about having killed Siegfried and is somewhat chagrined over the fact that the kings do; 2) he appears to believe, paradoxically, that all of the worries and cares of the Burgundians are at an end — precisely what these are will need further elucidation; 3) the act of killing Siegfried brings with it

enhanced political and military stature for the Burgundians for no one will dare challenge them now; 4) Hagen takes a considerable degree of personal satisfaction for having been the one to have put an end to Siegfried's *hêrschaft*. Precisely what Hagen means by "unser sorge unt unser leid" is not explained in any detail, although the obvious immediate reference would be to the sense of helplessness perceived by the Burgundians in the face of the dishonor done their court by Kriemhild's indiscretion in front of the minster. It is quite possible, likely, in fact, that the significance of the comment is much more far-reaching. There is a sense of relief that is conveyed by 993,2 and underscored by the presence of "allez." From Hagen's perspective, the Burgundians have long suffered under Siegfried's *hêrschaft*, his overbearing demeanor, unpredictability, his thoughtlessness, recklessness, his *übermuot*. But Hagen uses the first person plural in his comment and the reader/listener can be sure that while his murder, in Hagen's view, ought to remove the collective anxiety created by his very presence, Hagen himself is relieved to be rid of the man who, on numerous occasions, has cast him into the shadows and relegated him (and his king, in fact, if not in theory) to secondary status. It is thus quite understandable that Hagen immediately follows this comment with an assertion of new-found (or restored?) Burgundian (military/political) power. Particularly revealing is the emphasis he places on the fact that it was *he* who has put an end to the hero's *hêrschaft*, a term which has a range of meaning extending from "dominion, control, power" to "pride, arrogance."³² It is one of the few instances in the *Nibelungenlied* when we are afforded some insight into Hagen's innermost feelings.

While the argument can be made that Hagen's killing of Siegfried was ultimately a necessity for society as a whole, the immediate consequence of his death is a sense of re-established *individual* and *collective* power, but this is viewed almost exclusively from Hagen's vantage point. His words in stanza 993 are, of course, remarkably ironic: the real troubles of the Burgundians are only about to begin. While it is questionable whether a true reconciliation with Kriemhild could ever have been effected without some action being taken against Hagen, the unchecked inflationary stance of the latter following Siegfried's death, together with the fact that no one of stature steps forward to champion her cause, contributes directly to the queen's increased isolation from her family (irrespective of her decision to remain in Worms rather than journey back to Xanten to raise her son) and distance from courtly norms.

³² See Matthias Lexer, *Mittelhochdeutsches Handwörterbuch*, 3 vols. (1872; rpt. Stuttgart: Hirzel, 1974) 1: cols. 1261–1262. Hagen's remark in 993,4 is reminiscent of the biting comment made by Siegfried to Brünhild in 474,1–3 following his victory over her in Island.

Hagen makes it quite clear from the outset that he is unconcerned about Kriemhild's reaction: "ez ahtet mich vil ringe, swaz si weinens getuot" (1001,4), but he goes further and takes deliberate steps to intensify her suffering. The narrator states succinctly the motivation for Hagen's provocation of Siegfried's widow: "Von grôzer übermüete muget ir hoeren sagen,/und von eislicher räche" (1003,1–2a). Kriemhild is targeted by Hagen not only for the manner in which she compromised Burgundian honor in her confrontation with Brünhild. Hagen has clearly not forgotten the (as he must view it, reckless and provocative) way in which, in total disregard for a long-standing and virtually sacrosanct tradition, Kriemhild expressed her wish that he, along with Ortwin and various other knights from Worms, return with her to Siegfried's homeland (note 697–699). Once again, we have a "transgression" on two levels, the individual and the collective. From the moment she had become Siegfried's spouse, Kriemhild had turned her back on the interests of Worms and demonstrated abject callousness towards Hagen's pivotal role as chief counselor to the Burgundians. Where wisdom is called for, Hagen now allows a psychological need for revenge to prevail. Nor is the act done openly, but rather: "Er hiez in tougenlîchen legen an die tür" (1004,1), although one wonders why he bothers, for it is certainly clear to Kriemhild who has been behind the act: "ez hât gerâten Prünhilt, daz ez hât Hagene getân" (1010,4).

It is, of course, the Hagen-Kriemhild dichotomy/antagonism which has particularly fascinated generations of scholars. From the moment of Siegfried's murder, the epic appears to revolve around the two of them, even if they themselves are frequently relegated to the background. From a psychological point of view, it can be asserted that Hagen remains relatively consistent, static, throughout the plot; we at no time can discern a change in personality or in motivation, irrespective of the lack of wisdom we may ascribe to some of his actions or advice given the Burgundians. He is, as ever, committed to the physical and spiritual welfare of Worms. On occasion, he may also demonstrate an (understandable) degree of self-interest, as in his initial, negative reaction to the invitation from Etzel and Kriemhild to the Burgundians to visit the Hunnish court, but there can never be any doubt that his top priority remains his resolve to serve Worms, even to the point of insuring that they die with honor.

In this highly personal feud, Kriemhild may also be seen as adhering consistently to her principles (regardless of whether or not they fly in the face of the accepted norms of a basically warrior-oriented society), certainly as much as is the case with Hagen. If the latter is concerned with preservation (of Burgundian power, prestige, but above all, honor), Kriemhild's focus is on restoration of those things of which she has been deprived: honor, power, the *hort* (which has frequently been seen as symbolic of Siegfried himself). In

both instances, the respective goals are to be achieved at any price. Hagen leads the entire Burgundian warrior class along with his kings into a foretold death, and he certainly knows that this is their fate once the chaplain has survived his attempt to drown him. Kriemhild is just as prepared to sacrifice any and all, including her son Ortlieb, to the realization of her aim. If we adhere to ms. B in our interpretation of the work, it seems that the poet/narrator's sentiments towards the conclusion of the tale lie squarely with Hagen and the Burgundians, even if he includes references to their "übermuot" in refusing to let Etzel know the true state of affairs. Yet his voice is not the only one that must be noted in this regard. The scribe of ms. C was most certainly at pains to avoid any "demonization" of Kriemhild such as we experience in B, while the author of the *Nibelungenklage* went so far as to insist that Kriemhild's place in heaven is assured, given the loyalty she has demonstrated towards Siegfried: "sît si durch triuwe tût gelac,/in gotes hulden manegen tac/sol si ze himele noch geleben."³³ Opinions on Kriemhild's behavior were undoubtedly quite diverse in the early thirteenth century, with some contemporaries basing their judgment on the queen's association with the devil (note 1394,1–2: "Ich wæne der übel vâlant Kriemhilde daz geriet,/daz sie sich mit friuntschefte von Gunthere schiet"), and, from their perspective, her own "transformation" into a "vâlandinne" (as proclaimed by both Dietrich [1748,4a] and Hagen [2371,4a]), in complete conformity with a traditional patriarchal stance towards the appropriate role of the female in feudal society. Others, however (and they were most likely males), laid the blame for the cataclysm squarely at Hagen's door (and to a lesser degree at Gunther's) and, while not repressing the extent to which Kriemhild was clearly ready to achieve her aim, demonstrated sympathy with the situation in which she found herself, condemned the injustices done her — the murder of Siegfried and the theft of the *hort* — and were even prepared to express admiration for her absolute adherence to the principle of loyalty.

There is a noteworthy difference between Hagen and Kriemhild with respect to their psychological states as manifested in the second half of the *Nibelungenlied* and it is here that we return to the thesis propounded by Walter Haug. Whereas Hagen is decidedly overt in his actions from the time that he steals the *hort* on, Kriemhild's are patently covert. Her machinations, as Haug as pointed out, do not simply constitute the often laudable trait of *list*, but rather serve to underscore a basic transformation of her personality. While the medieval narrator has ascribed the latter in pre-psychological terms to the workings of the devil, the post-Freudian, Jungian literary critic might suggest that Kriemhild has succumbed to the *animus* or the *shadow*. As

³³ Karl Bartsch, ed., *Die Klage mit den Lesarten sämtlicher Handschriften* (1875; rpt. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964) vv. 571–573.

autonomous archetypes, both have, in fact, something in common with the earlier concept of Satan. Kriemhild's re-ascent to a position of power as the spouse of Etzel does not function as a compensatory balance for the inner turmoil and fury she has nurtured since the murder of Siegfried and which she is not always successful in concealing, as Dietrich's comments to the Burgundians upon their arrival in the land of the Huns would indicate: "Kriemhilt noch sêre weinet den helt von Nibelunge lant" (1724,4); "ich hoere alle morgen weinen unde klagen/mit jâmerlichen sinnen daz Etzelen wîp" (1730,2–3).³⁴ Rather, it serves solely to allow the shadow greater control over her psyche. Thus, while Kriemhild may still symbolize a new beginning for Etzel and the Huns, in reality her nurturing, mothering, "feminine" side has been completely subsumed beneath the aggressive aims of the *animus/shadow*. Nowhere is this more in evidence than in her apparently complete lack of grief over Hagen's decapitation of her son Ortlieb (the second offspring on whom she has turned her back), whose head lands in her lap (1961,3). External and internal features no longer correspond, whereas with Hagen they could not be in greater accord as the epic moves inexorably towards the final debacle.

The scenes of confrontation between Hagen and Kriemhild following the arrival of the Burgundians at Gran are masterpieces of dramatic technique. While Kriemhild may greet (only) Giselher with a kiss, the welcome is done "mit valschem muote" (1737,2b). There is nothing "false," however, about Hagen's retort to Kriemhild's query regarding the status of the *hort*: "Jâ bringe ich iu den tiuvel" (1744,1a) which is followed up by a specific reference to his sword, none other than Siegfried's Balmung: "daz swert an mîner hende des enbringe ich iu niht" (1744,4). Kriemhild's request that all weapons be handed over to her is also rejected outright — by Hagen, not by Gunther or any of the other kings. They have yet to speak. What is most intriguing about this scene is one comment by the narrator that would indicate Kriemhild's conscious awareness that her plans for revenge are not

³⁴ The pattern-like quality of this lamenting underscored by Dietrich's reference to "alle morgen" makes it virtually inconceivable to believe that Etzel is not aware of his wife's state of mind. One has the impression, however, that Etzel is given to repressing the obvious, whether it is the state of Kriemhild's psyche, the significance of Volker's slaying of the garish Hun, the appearance of the Burgundians at his court in full armor, or even the biting comment by Hagen concerning Ortlieb's (lack of a) future. He is not alone in this respect. The Burgundians themselves, with the notable exception of Hagen, fail to read — or simply deny — any of the signs of their impending doom, demonstrate remarkable lack of intuition with regard to the motivations of their sister, and, even when informed by Hagen that they will not return from the land of the Huns, appear to repress this information as they continue on to Bechelaren and Gran. How else can one explain their obvious joy over the betrothal of Rüdiger's daughter to Giselher?

within the parameters of acceptable behavior towards guests. When Dietrich publicly refers to her as a “vålandinne” (1749,4a), she feels such shame that, speechless, she has no recourse but to retreat: “Des schamte sich vil sêre daz Etzelen wîp” (1749,1). Kriemhild still retains awareness of what is right and what is no longer within the framework of accepted, courtly behavior, but the sparring between herself and Hagen creates its own dynamic which will eventually occasion the deaths of tens of thousands. The poet proceeds quite rapidly to the next encounter, the scene before Kriemhild’s palace, to which only Hagen and Volker advance (“Noch liezen si die herren ûf dem hove stân,” 1760,1) and where they sit down on a bench in full view of Kriemhild’s window. This is deliberate provocation on Hagen’s part, which is further intensified by his refusal to stand up in her presence, electing instead to remain seated with Siegfried’s sword placed across his lap. The narrator himself suggests that this was done precisely by Hagen to cause her distress: “... weinen si began/ich wæne, ez hete dar umbe der küene Hagene getân,” 1784,3b–4). While this may be attributed to “übermüete” (note 1783,1a), it can simultaneously be regarded as testimony to Hagen’s “inner” sovereignty, for we should not forget that he *knows* full well that neither he nor the others will ever leave here alive. He openly admits that he killed Siegfried and associates this directly with Kriemhild’s insulting of Brünhild (1790, 3–4). All of this transpires before some assembled Huns, who quickly recognize that it is suicidal to attack Hagen and Volker and whose withdrawal causes Kriemhild even greater grief (1799,2).

What we witness here is Hagen in relative control, not only of the Burgundians, whom he has served as *de facto* leader on the journey to the land of the Huns, but also, if temporarily, of the situation in Gran, Kriemhild’s “home ground,” so to speak. It is not correct to suggest that Hagen no longer has anything to lose. His honor and his sense of (inner) sovereignty are to him paramount and in the current situation — he realizes he has absolutely no control over its (external, physical) outcome — both can only be maintained by refusing to concede to Kriemhild on a single point. Once again, power is at the heart of it all, albeit for Hagen now internalized, as the Burgundians do not have a chance of emerging victorious in a conflict against the Huns. In this respect, one might well maintain that he ultimately proves victorious over Kriemhild at the conclusion of the epic, yet the reaction of Etzel to his death would indicate that externally, at least, from the perspective of the male survivors of the catastrophe, his demise was less than “honorable”:

“Wâfen”, sprach der fürste, “wie ist nu tût gelegen
von eines wîbes handen der aller beste degen,
der ie kom ze sturme oder ie schilt getruoc!
swie vîent ich im wære, ez ist mir leide genuoc.” (2374)

Walter Haug has declared that the *Nibelungenlied* is one of the most “modern” works of its time. It transcends contemporary expectations, dissolves the assumed uniformity between inner and outer (particularly in the person of Kriemhild, but also with regard to the epic as a whole), depicts a world in which forces that fester below the surface are decisive and it is the latter which ultimately determine man’s fate. In this respect, the dreams of the *Nibelungenlied* should be accorded the highest significance, not for the transformative influence they have on individuals — too often their meaning(s) are repressed by the recipients of the dream-material — but for the manner in which they herald a rather black future involving the demise of both individuals and societies. Understood and acted upon, the dream can effect a positive transformation on various levels. Repressed or ignored, it may remain simply the harbinger of catastrophe.

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The transformative power of the dream, in this instance, a dream based on the Nibelungen theme, can be demonstrated for the father of analytical psychology himself, Carl Gustav Jung. On December 18, 1913, less than a year prior to the outbreak of World War I, Jung had a dream, subsequently recorded, in which, together with the assistance of a “brown-skinned man, a savage,” he killed the approaching hero, Siegfried.³⁵ Jung, convinced that the latter must die, shoots Siegfried with a rifle as the latter rushes down the side of a mountain in a chariot that has been fashioned from the bones of the dead. Given Siegfried’s standing (at the time) as a relatively unproblematic hero in the German-speaking regions of Europe, Jung’s killing of him understandably appalled him in his dream and caused him concern over the possibility of discovery. This was alleviated somewhat by a heavy downpour which Jung believed would eradicate any traces of the “crime” he had committed. His guilt, however, was not purged. Jung provided his own interpretation of the dream, which is worth noting:

When I awoke from the dream, I turned it over in my mind, but was unable to understand it. I tried therefore to fall asleep again, but a voice within me said: “You *must* understand the dream, and must do so at once!” The inner urgency mounted until the terrible moment came when the voice said, “If you do not understand the dream, you must shoot yourself!” In the drawer of my night table lay a loaded revolver, and I became frightened. Then I began pondering once again, and suddenly the meaning of the dream dawned on me. “Why, that is the problem that is being played out in the

³⁵ Carl Gustav Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, recorded and edited by Aniela Jaffé, rev. ed., trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Vintage Books, 1965) 180.

world.” Siegfried, I thought, represents what the Germans want to achieve, heroically to impose their will, have their own way.... I had wanted to do the same. But now that was no longer possible. The dream showed that the attitude embodied by Siegfried, the hero, no longer suited me. Therefore it had to be killed.³⁶

Jung’s interpretation of his Siegfried dream as recorded in this biography requires, however, some augmentation. The year 1913 was one of crisis for Jung. It was the year in which he broke with Freud, gave up his professorship at the University of Zurich, and toyed with the idea of suicide. David Rosen provides some of the “missing pieces”:

[O]n December 18, 1913, Jung went through a suicidal crisis and underwent what I would call “egocide.” ... Jung dreamed that he teamed up with a dark-skinned savage and they shot and killed Siegfried.... Jung tells that he was frightened because in the drawer of his night table lay a loaded revolver. Fortunately for him, and us, Jung committed egocide, not suicide.... Jung and his “primitive shadow” psychically murdered this negative side of Jung’s ego-image and identity. Of course, Siegfried also sounds like Sigmund, which affirms that this is a killing of the heretofore dominant Freudian ego-image or Jung’s *false self*.³⁷

The interpretations offered by both Rosen and Stevens are convincing, but Jung’s dream is also significant in another way. Siegfried had to be killed, yet the killing evoked a sense of revulsion in the killer. In the *Nibelungenlied* there can be little doubt that, apart from the relief, perhaps even enthusiasm shown by Hagen after committing the murder, there is, to be sure, little joy among anyone else over what has transpired (note, in particular, 991–992). Yet there is the unstated “understanding” on the part of the Burgundian royal family (and perhaps, in the wake of the killing, by figures such as Dietrich and Rüdiger) that it had to be done. Jung could no longer accept

³⁶ Jung 180.

³⁷ David Rosen, *The Tao of Jung. The Way of Integrity* (Arkana: Penguin, 1997) 65–66. See also 4–5. Note as well Anthony Stevens, *Private Myths. Dreams and Dreaming* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995) 124: “... Jung omits to say that it also represented what Freud wanted to achieve — heroically to impose *his* will, have *his* own way. And now *that* was no longer possible. In this dream, Jung is finally sacrificing Freud as his heroic role model and replacing him by a willingness to undertake his own descent into the underworld.... Siegfried was thus a complex figure in which were condensed (1) the heroic mentor, Freud; (2) the young sun-god, the aged sun-god’s ‘Son and Heir’ and ‘Crown Prince’; and (3) a transcendent symbol capable of reconciling the differences between the two men. His death meant that Jung had finally put all that behind him and committed himself to his *own* process, the discovery of his own psychological truth.”

Freud’s dogma, particularly with respect to the sexual complex, and his rejection of the idea of the collective unconscious. Worms, and the rest of the courtly world, would likewise have been hard pressed to tolerate further the unpredictability and (albeit naive) arrogance of Siegfried.

*

The contemporary literary scholar is hardly in a position to approach the *Nibelungenlied* and its major protagonists from a black-white viewpoint. Kriemhild will continue to have her detractors, but they will also concede that, even if transformed into a she-devil, she is not entirely to blame for the metamorphosis. Her defenders can hardly ignore the manner in which absolute adherence to her goal of revenge allows events to hurtle out of control. Siegfried will scarcely be seen at the turn of the third millennium as the apotheosis of a sun-god, a reflection of Baldr, or simply a decent, if naive, hero who makes some fatal errors of judgment. He has partaken of the Otherworld and the dragon’s blood, and his inability to re-integrate himself fully into the mores and expectations of courtly society augurs ill for his own future as well as that of everyone else, particularly if his unpredictability and spontaneity are not kept in check.³⁸ He carries the seeds of chaos within him. He can be malicious, as when he unnecessarily chides Brünhild for having lost in Island, consciously or subconsciously demonstrating at the same time the pride he takes in having been the one to defeat her at her own game. His lack of foresight and his arrogance in retiring from Gunther’s bedchamber with his “booty” prove the catalyst for his ultimate demise. Hagen will most assuredly avoid nowadays the unequivocal condemnation he suffered at the hands of the poet of the *Klage*. In the earlier part of this century he served in Germany either as a symbol of treachery — after World War I — while he was later depicted, during World War II, as the quintessence of bravery, loyalty, and honor. Gunther may continue to experience a “bad press” as a weak king in the medieval tradition, but he will also have his advocates who can point to his laudable (if fruitless) efforts to maintain stability in a highly precarious and finely-balanced world and who, when combat became inevitable, certainly gave an excellent account of himself from the perspective of the warrior ethics prevalent at the time. Much the same thing could be said of Etzel, as it could of Rüdiger, Dietrich, Gernot, and Giselher. In short,

³⁸ Something Gunther may well recognize and hence his hesitation to accede to Brünhild’s request that her sister-in-law and her husband be invited to Worms, to which Gunther can offer only the lame reservation that Kriemhild and Siegfried live far away! Intriguingly, Siegfried offers the same excuse to Kriemhild, who is eager to take advantage of the invitation. Both men appear to “know” intuitively that it is best if these particular constellations are kept apart!

they are all — whether prominently profiled or of a more secondary nature — figures which defy a black-white categorization.

If one were to select a key term from the vocabulary of analytical psychology which pertains to characters, actions, motifs, and even the major theme of the *Nibelungenlied*, then this could certainly be repression, on the part of Siegfried with respect to his “otherness,” which so often results in arrogant, reckless behavior; on the part of Kriemhild, who refuses to recognize the true significance of her public quarrel with Brünhild before the minster and later “buries” the fact that without her (albeit inadvertent) assistance, Siegfried would hardly have met his death. It also applies to the reception of dreams in the *Nibelungenlied*. Kriemhild “forgets” her initial dream and acts against what she realized (in 17,4) to be in her own best interests; Siegfried pays no attention whatsoever to the two dreams Kriemhild has had on the night before the hunt. The Burgundians, including (initially) Hagen, repress Ute’s dream in which all the birds of the land were dead. Having crossed the Danube, the vast majority of the Burgundian force appears to put behind it rather quickly the confirmation from Hagen that they will not return alive from the land of the Huns; other than Hagen and Volker, none of them show any visible reaction to the information passed on by Dietrich upon their arrival that Kriemhild continues to mourn for her murdered Siegfried. Etzel never appears to acknowledge the unrelenting grief expressed by Kriemhild for her first husband.³⁹ Both Etzel and Kriemhild — although the former is visibly shaken — remain inactive following Hagen’s prophecy that their son Ortlieb does not appear long for this world (1918, 3–4). These are only some of the more poignant instances of repression within the work. But it is *not* apparent in the narrator/author of the epic, an individual who never falls into the trap of assuming a correlation between the “inner” and the “outer,” but who is rather constantly aware, and reminds his audience of the fact, that “Sein” and “Schein” are not in accord with one another.

But what of the epic *Nibelungenlied* as a whole? In his own right the poet was — in thirteenth-century terms — a highly astute *Menschenkenner*, whose characters may well have mirrored actual historical personalities, but who certainly, in several instances, transcended the image of typical, fictionalized kings, queens, margraves, and vassals to become individualized personalities designed to impart the entire range of human emotions. Yet the *Nibelungenlied* does not give up conclusively any of its secrets with regard to authorial intentionality. It is left to the reader to decide. Certainly it may be contended

that the “message” of 2378,4: “als ie diu liebe leide z’aller jungeste gît” (which harks back to Kriemhild’s words in 17,3: “wie liebe mit leide ze jungest lônem kan,” albeit in this earlier reference pertaining specifically to the relationship of women to men) constitutes the major thrust of the epic, a philosophical (and psychological) countering of the cyclical structures of courtly romances with their happy endings and emphasis on continuity. Perhaps it was intended as a lesson for rulers, in specific or in general, that the reins of power must be grasped tightly, that kings must be kings in fact as well as in name. The antagonistic relationship between the feminine and the masculine is amply attested to throughout the work, whether in the wooing of Brünhild in Island (note Siegfried’s biting remark to Brünhild in 474,1a, 3: “Sô wol mich dirre mære ... daz iemen lebet, der iuwer meister müge sîn”), the unacceptable idea that occurs to Siegfried during his wrestling match with Brünhild, that, should he lose, all women (“elliu wîp”) would become arrogant (“tragen gelpfen muot”) towards their spouses (673), or in the drastic reaction of both Etzel and Hildebrand (as well, we may assume, as Dietrich and any other warriors of stature who have not been killed in the preceding slaughter) to the death of a defenseless Hagen by the hand of a woman (2373ff.). Yet it does not culminate in any programmatic declaration of the “proper” place of the sexes within society. As we have witnessed from both the manuscript tradition as well as the appended *Klage*, Kriemhild was most assuredly not without her sympathizers in the thirteenth century.

Finally, we may also have in this anonymous author a cynic, even a nihilist, who was highly influenced by the tragic lays of the past and who (in contrast to the authors of the romances of the period) felt no need to temper the “message” of irrevocable fate through a vision of a better world to come. Even if we can believe that his audience of eight hundred years ago was intended to recognize the “model” comportment and virtuous bearing of those facing their doom — something which more modern audiences have, in fact, also done throughout the past two hundred years — this poet ultimately concentrated squarely on one particular archetype: the “shadow” side of man and his proclivity to destruction.

³⁹ This was not lost, however, on Fritz Lang, whose portrayal of Etzel in his film, *Kriemhilds Rache*, was that of a ruler fully aware of the inability of his spouse to put the past behind her and to turn to the future.