

U.B.C. LIBRARY

CAT. NO. LE3B7. 1932 A8. H2 N5

ACC. NO. 79676

THE NIBELUNGENSAGA IN NINETEENTH CENTURY DRAMA

by

Letitia Anne Hay

A Thesis submitted for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department

of

MODERN LANGUAGES

*Accepted -*

*for H. Ashton*

The University of British Columbia

April, 1932.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                  |      |
|------------------|------|
| CHAPTER I        | PAGE |
| INTRODUCTION     | I    |
| CHAPTER II       |      |
| FRIEDRICH HEBBEL | 18   |
| CHAPTER III      |      |
| RICHARD WAGNER   | 54   |
| CHAPTER IV       |      |
| HENRIK IBSEN     | 80   |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY     | 94   |

# THE NIBELUNGENSAGA IN NINETEENTH CENTURY DRAMA

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In all Teutonic literature the greatest monuments of the middle ages are those poetic and prose works which deal with the lives of the Niblungs and Völsungs. The sagas themselves, however, which form the basis of these mediaeval works, extend back into the misty past of the Germanic peoples and, consequently, the mythological element in them is important. Gods and demi-gods, dwarfs and giants, play their parts as well as human beings. The earliest of the Norse versions of these monuments, the poetic Edda, dates from about 900 A.D., and it is rich in the portrayal of primitive Germanic life, when, according to early beliefs, the gods themselves came into direct personal contact with the dwellers on the earth. A great number of the lays in the Edda are German in origin, and the legends seem to have travelled back and forth from Germany to Scandinavia. With the coming of Christianity into Germany, however, the attitude there towards the old beliefs changed, and eventually the mythological elements practically disappeared from the more modern versions of the old sagas. But this change did not affect the northern versions as early, for the Völsungasaga, which was composed about the twelfth century, is untouched by the softening elements of Christianity.

These mediaeval monuments are made up of three distinct elements - actual history, legendary heroic deeds, and

pure myth. The historical element is the result of the migration period, when the Germanic tribes were moving westward and southward. Wars were the natural consequence of this movement, and the ensuing victories and defeats were soon mingled with mythological tales. A second natural outcome of the wars of the migrations was the emergence of great heroes, whose valiant deeds were celebrated in story and song by a worshipping people. With the passage of years history, myth, and legend were intermingled in the minds of this primitive people, who had no knowledge of time or history. Historical heroes were endowed with divine powers; historical events were embellished with mythological elements; heroes, separated by centuries, in the minds of the people became contemporaries. In the Nibelungenlied, for example, the annihilation of the Burgundians under King Gunther by the Huns is actual history, and the name Giselher has been found in the Burgundian law code. Dietrich von Bern, too, is an historical figure, but while the saga makes him a contemporary of Etzel, in reality he lived a century later. In the gay, attractive character of Siegfried, with his striking beauty, and his great powers, is found the personification of the old sun-god Baldr, of Norse mythology, who embodies all that is pure and beautiful, strong and happy.

The greatest purely German work of art, which has been inherited from mediaeval literature, is, without doubt, the Nibelungenlied, an epic masterpiece by an unknown author. As far as can be ascertained it was written about the end of the twelfth century, but whether it was compiled by various authors or whether one man was entirely responsible for the

whole epic, is a matter of conjecture. The story, which tells of events of the fifth century, approximately, is historical in many respects, but with an undercurrent left of that mythological element, which is so much more dominant in the northern sagas. Christianity was thoroughly established in Germany by the time of the Nibelungenlied, and probably for that reason, many of those elements contrary to Christian teachings were suppressed.

Not only did the religious beliefs of the period affect the story, but the social customs also exerted a great influence, the culture of the author's age being attributed to the much more barbarous period in which the action of the Nibelungenlied belongs. Time has acted upon the old legends and fused the mediaeval chivalry, together with its customs and trappings, with the barbaric background of the original story, and the storyteller, without any historic sense, is naively unaware of his anachronisms. Feudalistic loyalty plays a very large part in the poem, the whole outcome in the second part depending upon Hagen's loyalty to Gunther and his brothers, and upon their loyalty to their comrades-in-arms. Gunther could have saved the lives of his men and of his family if he had been disloyal to Hagen and had delivered him up to Kriemhild's revenge. Hagen could have saved his own life by remaining at home in Worms, but loyalty to his liege lord bade him accompany him on a perilous journey. Siegfried's murder hinges upon Brünhild's insistence that, as a vassal, he should come and pay homage to his lord.

Rüdger, Attila's vassal, is an exact prototype of a product of chivalry, and the demands that such a culture made upon a knight, are found in the very dramatic and powerful scene, where Rüdger is forced to choose between his loyalty to his King and his loyalty to his guests. One tie is as sacred as the other and Rüdger is in a terrible dilemma, - whichever oath he breaks he feels himself completely disgraced. Feudalism and chivalry were at their zenith in the Middle Ages, and as the Nibelungenlied serves as a mirror for the life of the time, they have, naturally, prominent places in the poem.

The Nibelungenlied is in thirty-nine cantos, and is divided into two distinct parts. The first part contains the story of Siegfried's exploits, of his wooing of Brunhild for Gunther and of Kriemhild for himself, and finishes with his death at the hands of Hagen. The second part of the poem contains the story of Kriemhild's plotting for revenge against Hagen for the murder of her husband, and shows the dreadful slaughter she brings about.

Siegfried, the hero of the first part, is almost divine in his greatness, in his extraordinary strength and manly beauty, and in his invulnerability. But he is more than the legendary dragon-slayer, he has the qualities of the ideal mediaeval hero as well, fearlessness and strength, and also faithfulness and gentleness. Although he is killed in the early part of the poem, in the sixteenth canto, yet he is never forgotten; it is from her passionate loyalty to his memory, that Kriemhild turns into an avenging fury. In the first

part of the epic, the picture given of Kriemhild, King Gunther's fair sister, is a charming one. She is lovely, sweet, very maidenly, and one is impressed above all with her gentleness, which makes the change in her character in the second part all the more effective. These two characters have come under the softening influences of mediaeval culture; they are more civilized than the primitive characters of Gunther and Hagen.

Hagen, Gunther's foremost liegeman, stands out in strong contrast to Siegfried, darkness contrasted with light. He is gloomy, grim and sinister, whereas Siegfried is gay, light-hearted and lovable. Hagen plays a very important role in the Nibelungenlied. Before Siegfried comes he is Gunther's chief advisor, and his prime source of information. It is he who knows all about Siegfried and his prowess. It is he who advises Siegfried's death, partly out of loyalty to his Queen, Brünhild, but also because he is envious of the all-conquering hero, who, in his invulnerability, is always victorious. Hagen is far-seeing and intelligent. He can see the real intention behind Kriemhild's invitation to Etzelburg, and he knows what is in store for the Burgundians if they go. But once Gunther has decided upon the journey, he is too proud to stay at home, too proud to avoid the consequences of his own misdeeds, but also too loyal to Gunther to let him go without him, when there is danger. Hagen's loyalty to his King is greatly stressed, especially throughout the second part, and he is so disdainfully scornful of Kriemhild's underhand means of revenge, so daringly courageous, that one cannot help admiring the impregnable

bravery and loyalty of the now middle-aged man.

Brunhild, in character, is very close to Hagen. She, too, is uncivilized, arrogant, untamed, a primitive woman. As Hagen bears grievances against Siegfried, because he is invulnerable and invincible, so does she nurse resentment against Kriemhild during twelve long years, because she feels that her husband's sister has degraded herself by marrying a vassal. Brunhild, however, lacks the greatness which serves so well to redeem Hagen's character. Once she is vanquished, and descends from the proud heights of her invincibility, she becomes a petulant, spoiled woman, entirely lacking in depth of character. She plays her part of an injured Queen, thus giving Hagen an excuse to plot for Siegfried's death, and then, no longer necessary to the story, she automatically drops out of it.

Gunther is not outstanding for any especial qualities, he is, in fact, the weak character of the story; necessarily so because Hagen is the important adversary of Siegfried and later of Kriemhild, and any strengthening of Gunther's character would detract from that of his chief vassal. He is rather less primitive than Hagen, inclined to be credulous, and is a poor judge of character. He refuses to see the change in Kriemhild, and cannot understand how she could be treacherous towards him. The characters of Gerenot and Giselher, especially the latter, have been somewhat more influenced by chivalry; they are not as pagan and as cruel as Hagen and Gunther, both refusing to have anything to do with Siegfried's murder. But their chivalrous resentment is not strong enough to outweigh their sense



of duty to their King, and both remain loyal to Gunther to the death. Rüdiger is a fine characterization of the mediaeval chivalry, an example of a perfect knight - hospitable, kindly, loyal, yet withall a courageous and fearless warrior. Chivalry is seen at it's highest point in the figure of Rüdiger.

Etzel and Dietrich von Bern, the only two knights who are left after the dreadful slaughter, are both historical characters. They lived in different centuries, but with the passage of time and the lack of written records, these two great figures were brought together in heroic songs. The character given to the King of the Huns is not very admirable. He is kind and generous to Kriemhild, and is deeply grateful to her for his son. He has no thought of the Queen's revengeful plans, and endeavours to prevent any disagreement with his guests, until he himself is drawn irrevocably into the fray by the murder of his son by Hagen. The brave and mighty figure of the historical Etzel is scarcely to be recognized in the Etzel of the Nibelungenlied. He can be imagined suing for favours from Kriemhild, almost a weakling. When the slaughter breaks out in the dining-hall, Etzel is only too anxious to leave the scene of battle under the protection of Dietrich, and while he becomes eventually as anxious to kill off the Burgundians as his Queen, he himself makes no attempt to take any part in the conflict. One would expect a different characterization of the great conqueror, yet it is easy to realize that he is made a weakling for the same reason that Gunther is, because the plot demands it.

Dietrich of Bern is the personification of the true Christian knight. His religious qualities are not stressed, it is only known that he is a Christian at the court of the heathen Etzel. But how different is his Christianity from that of the Burgundians! Dietrich is moderate and thoughtful preferring to avoid bloodshed: a good friend and advisor to Etzel, but also sympathetic with the Burgundians, and anxious to prevent the latter from entering into Kriemhild's net. Yet when his wrath is aroused by the slaughter of his men, he is justly unhesitating in his attack, a dauntless hero. His nature is more deeply under the influence of Christianity; the religion of the Burgundians is only a thin veneer, covering primitive paganism. Dietrich is more tempered and humble, incapable of the extremes of violent hate and vengeance, revealed in most of the other characters.

A study of the old epic impresses one with the excellent powers of characterization possessed by its unknown author. His favorite method of delineation is contrast; he sets the light over against the dark, Siegfried against Hagen; the Kriemhild of the first part, sweet and womanly, against the passionate and warrior-like Brunhild; the tolerant and self-controlled Dietrich against the passion-crazed Queen of the Huns. The characters are real, vital people, and while in certain aspects all the knights are of one conventionalized pattern, loyal and unflinchingly courageous, yet each one is an individual, with individual characteristics;- Siegfried Gunther, Hagen, Rüdiger, Dietrich - each one is a distinct personality.

The psychology, too, is surprisingly good, especially in the character of Kriemhild. A cursory glance at Siegfried's wife gives one the impression that the tremendous change in her character is somewhat unconvincing but on looking more closely one sees that it is not at all exaggerated, but is on the other hand exceedingly well-drawn. She was passionately in love with Siegfried, and he has been foully murdered for a cause in which she naturally could see no justice. She was therefore, as a matter of course, enraged against Hagen. Then, brooding over her loss, as she did, her hatred was easily turned into an almost maniacal lust for revenge at all costs. She felt that loyalty to Siegfried demanded this from her, so she sacrificed herself to Etzel, because she hoped that through him she might have her chance. All the long years, from the time of Siegfried's death to the visit of the Burgundians to Etzelburg, that desire for revenge was continually growing, until it was the sole thought of her half-crazed mind, and drove her to the slaughter of all her kinsmen for the sake of revenge on one man.

Although the general tone of the first part of the poem is a happy one, it is not without a presentiment of disaster, for in the very first stanzas, in the discussion of Kriemhild's dream, are lines of evil foreboding. After the death of Siegfried the tone of the poem changes definitely; from the twenty-third canto it is very gloomy, and from the thirty-second it turns into a terrible portrayal of wholesale slaughter. The first part of the epic, in its gayer and lighter mood, is very delightful reading. The author is not without

a certain quaint sense of humor, the following stanza describing the scene in the church:

"Da gieng sie zu dem Münster und mit ihr viel der Fraun.  
Da war in solcher Zierde die Königin zu schaun,  
Dass da hoher Wünsche mancher ward verloren;  
Sie war zur Augenweide viel der Recken auserkoren."<sup>1</sup>

Then in the beginning of the Seventh Canto, where Gunther arrives at Isenland, the author charmingly mentions some of the eternally feminine characteristics:

"Da hiess die Königstochter von den Fenstern gehn  
Die minniglichen Maide: sie sollten da nicht stehn  
Zum Anblick für die Fremden; sie folgten unverwandt.  
Was da die Frauen thaten, das ist uns wohl bekannt.  
  
Sie zierten sich entgegen den unkunden Herrn,  
Wie es immer thaten schöne Frauen gern.  
Dann an die engen Fenstern traten sie heran,  
Wo sie die Helden sahen: das ward aus Neugier gethan;"<sup>2</sup>

Some of the descriptions of maidenly beauty, especially Kriemhild's, are extremely poetical:

"Da kam die Minnigliche, wie das Morgenroth  
Tritt aus trüben Wolken."<sup>3</sup>

"Wie der lichte Vollmond vor den Sternen schwebt,  
Des Schein so hell und lauter sich aus den Wolken hebt,  
So glänzte sie in Wahrheit vor den andern Frauen gut:

Das mochte wohl erhöhen den zieren Helden den Muth."<sup>4</sup>

---

1. Simrock, Das Nibelungenlied, 97.

2. Ibid, 129.

3. Ibid, 91.

4. Ibid, 93.

## II

That which is most notably lacking in the Nibelungenlied is nature description, a quality which is much more stressed in the second great epic of this period, the Gudrunlied.

The stanzaic structure which is used in the Nibelungenlied is an unusual one for epic poetry, and it is not always advantageous, because each thought is limited to four lines, and the steady flow of the action is hindered. It is also the cause of a great deal of unnecessary padding when an action or a description is completed with the third line. The fourth line in the following stanza is an example of the frequent padding. It has no direct connection with the preceding three.

"Die Jagd war zu Ende, doch nicht so ganz und gar.

Zu der Feuerstelle brachte der Jäger Schar

Haute mancher Thiere und des Wilds genug.

Heil! was des zur Küche des Königs Ingesinde trug!"I

But this, however, is a minor matter, which does not spoil the greatness of the poem.

Considering its mixed origin, the epic possesses an extraordinary unity. Kriemhild is the figure around whom the story centres, and event follows event, each one contributing another step towards the inevitable catastrophe, the destruction of the Burgundians. The narrative moves at times steadily forward, each canto bringing new developments to the plot, at other times it pauses while the author, fascinated with the beauty of his characters and their garments, spends long parts of cantos on descriptions of the lovely materials, the precious jewels, and the rich hunting and fighting apparel I. Simrock, Das Nibelungenlied, 305.

which adorn the beautiful ladies and the knightly warriors. The descriptions of these scenes are usually vivid and picturesque, though occasionally overdone.

The mediaeval poet had no rich or varied vocabulary upon which to draw, and so repetition is frequent but far from being tedious, it gives rather the impression of a child-like naïveté. Certain words always rhyme - if "wîp" appears, "lîp" follows it unfailingly. Certain epithets are always applied to the characters - Kriemhild is always "die schöne Königin" or "das edle Weib", Hagen is always "der grimme Hagen", the king and his vassals are always "ritterlich". Whatever they become, the author continues to describe them in such terms, a characteristic which tends at times to degenerate into almost an empty convention but which at the same time invests the characters with a lasting dignity.

But, while many points in the Nibelungenlied are open to criticism, it is nevertheless unsurpassed in mediaeval literature because of its vividness, its colour, its ruggedness - partly hidden by the trappings of chivalry - and above all its national interest. Carlyle, in his essay on the Nibelungenlied, concludes with the following paragraph: " A creation from the old ages , still bright and balmy, if we visit it; and opening into the first History of Europe, of Mankind. Thus all is not oblivion; but on the edge of the abyss that separates the Old World from the New, there hangs a fair Rainbow-land; which also, in curious repetitions of itself (twice over, say the critics), as it were in a secondary or even in a ternary reflex, sheds some feeble twilight far

into the deeps of the primeval Time."<sup>1</sup>

As has been stated, the northern version of the Nibelungenlied, the essence of which is to be found in the Völsunga-saga, is much more primitive in tone. In all probability the story and songs of the Nibelungen and of Siegfried and the other heroes travelled north into Scandinavia; there they underwent certain changes, but retained the more primitive and mythological form, with the result that the Völsungasaga, which was written down about the same time as the Nibelungenlied, contains much more of what are supposed to be the original characteristics of the legend. There are, of course, many similarities between the two stories, but the differences are also both numerous and interesting. Firstly, the names are different yet close enough to show relationship. Siegfried is Sigurd, Kriemhild is Gudrun, Gunther is Gunnar, Frau Ute is Grimhild, Etzel is Atli. The Scandinavian Hagen is Hogni, a brother of King Gunnar's and his rôle is somewhat different. Secondly, there are also differences in events. The Völsunga-saga starts with the origin of the race of the Volsungs, descendants of Wotan, of which Sigurd is the last and greatest hero. It gives in detail the story of Sigurd's birth and upbringing, which details are omitted in the Nibelungenlied. Sigurd discovers Brunhild before going to the court of Gunnar, where he is given a drink of forgetfulness by Gudrun. The two Queens quarrel while bathing, not as Kriemhild and Brunhild do, at the entrance to the cathedral. Sigurd is killed while asleep in bed by Guttorm, one of the King's brothers, I. Carlyle, Critical Essays and Miscellanies, II, 273.

whereas Siegfried is killed by Hagen while on a hunt. Brunhild dies with Sigurd in the Völsungasaga, but there is no need for this in the Nibelungenlied, because no mention is made of the previous acquaintance of the two superhuman beings. The stories also end in different ways. Kriemhild, plotting revenge against Hagen for Siegfried's death, invites her brothers to Etzelburg for that purpose, but she accomplishes it only at the cost of murdering all her kin. In the Völsungasaga, however, Atli invites the Nibelungs to his castle in order to obtain the Rhinegold from them, and as a punishment for the murder of her brothers by her husband, Gudrun kills Atli. The story then goes on to tell of the adventures which befell her after her husband's death, and finishes with the wiping out of those who were akin to the race that slew Sigurd.

Some mythical elements which are found in the Völsungasaga have also been retained in the Nibelungenlied, but many have been discarded. Gone is the wall of fire which surrounds Brunhild in her magic sleep, and she is no longer known as a fallen Valkyrie, although her superhuman prowess in the field of battle and her warlike qualities show traces of her semi-divine origin. Siegfried retains his invulnerability in both legends, but the Helm of Awe in the Völsungasaga becomes, in the Nibelungenlied, a magic hood, and it plays a much larger part, because it is indispensable to Siegfried in assisting Gunther to win Brunhild. The golden treasure with its accompanying curse, is on the other hand, of relatively slight



importance in the Nibelungenlied. The invincible sword remains in both versions, with merely a change in name. Odin, or Wotan, appears several times in the Völsungasaga, but he is forgotten in the Nibelungenlied, and with him goes also Sigurd's famous horse Grani, which is of the same race as the horses of the gods, and which Odin himself chose for the young hero.

The Nibelungenlied, as has been said, is written in verse, and the mediaeval author has used his small vocabulary abundantly. Many verses are often needed to explain a small incident. The Völsungasaga, however, is in prose, and its author was as sparing of words as the author of the German epic was prolific. This prose version is divided into very short chapters, forty-three in all. The first twelve deal with the adventures of the five generations of Volsungs that preceded Sigurd's birth, the next eighteen deal with Sigurd's heroic life, and the final chapters tell of Gudrun's marriage to Atli (Etzel) and the downfall of the race. The Nibelungenlied is concerned with one generation, the Völsungasaga treats of the race of the Volsungs from the birth of the first son of Odin (Wotan) to the death of the children of Gudrun. Though the prose of the Völsungasaga is very concise, yet there is no lack of detail. It is much more primitive in tone than the Nibelungenlied, for in the latter, mediaeval etiquette has suppressed the small intimate details of life, and left a polished surface. The pithy prose of the Scandinavian saga cannot compare with the naïve poetic beauty of the Nibelungenlied, but it has a charm of its own in its ruggedness.

With the decay of chivalry in the fourteenth century, the fabric of mediaeval chivalric poetry rapidly disintegrated, even the best of it was forgotten, and it was not until the nineteenth century that the Nibelungenlied began to receive due recognition. With the birth of Romanticism in German literature came also the full rebirth of mediaeval poetry. The old epics were published and widely read, and many varied versions were constructed from the Nibelungenlied, most of them, however, taking one single character, such as Kriemhild, Brunhild, or Siegfried as the central figure, and constructing the poem or play around them. The breadth of the canvas in the mediaeval poem made it difficult to encompass it within the limits of a drama or an epic of ordinary length. Late in the century with the publication of Hebbel's trilogy, "Die Nibelungen" in 1862, and of Wagner's tetralogy, "Der Ring des Nibelungen" in 1853, (produced as a whole in 1876), came the climax in the reconstruction of the old Nibelungensaga. Hebbel's task was to dramatize the old Nibelungenlied, in order to bring it before the German public. He followed the old epic, for whose author he had a profound admiration, very closely, with only a few changes, the reasons for which are easily understood. The more primitive story, however, with its gods and myths, held much more attraction for Wagner the Romanticist, with the result that his great music-drama is taken mainly from the Völsungasaga. Both these works are gigantic in conception, and a great deal of interest is added to them because they are intensely subjective, both Hebbel and Wagner having introduced their own philosophy and theories

into their dramas. And the fact that they are so different, that each of the modern authors could interpret the old tale from his own standpoint, is further proof of the great human and artistic values inherent in the legend.

## CHAPTER II

### FRIEDRICH HEBBEL

Friedrich Hebbel first came into contact with the Nibelungenlied during his stay in Hamburg in 1835, but it was not until twenty years later that he started work on his own treatment of the old epic poem. To all outward appearances his idea was simple enough; in his own words, "der Zweck dieses Trauerspiels war, den dramatischen Schatz des Nibelungenlied's für die reale Bühne flüssig zu machen."<sup>I</sup> But on a closer examination of the old epic, Hebbel had set himself an enormous task. It was impossible for him to write a dramatic treatment of the Nibelungenlied without giving the characters the deep motivation which is the most important part of his dramatic theory. The mediaeval writer attempted only to tell a story, he did not feel that he had to understand all the underlying causes and reasons or to make them clear to the readers. There was so much action in the Nibelungenlied, that Hebbel had a difficult task to motivate the characters psychologically, so that their actions might be understood by modern readers and in order to draw the action into reasonable dramatic limits.

In a letter to Hermann Marggraf, April 5, 1862, Hebbel outlines the purpose of his work on the Nibelungenlied; "Mein Zweck war, den dramatischen Gehalt des Nibelungenliedes für die Bühne zu heben, nicht aber den poetisch-mythischen

---

I. Bartels, II3.

des alt-nordischen Sagenkreises, flüssig zu machen, dem unser Epos angehört, und das ist mir, wie die in Weimar angestellte Probe beweist und mein ehemaliger Gegner Scholl in seiner grossen Recension bestätigt, vollkommen gelungen. Ich machte mich daher ganz abhängig von dem Gedicht, bis auf dem Grad dass ich sogar den Löwen des Odenwaldes stehen liess, und griff nur bei den "Verzahnungen" deren Gervinus schon gedenkt, nothgedrungen in Edda und Völsunga hinüber. Ich bin demnach nur das Sprachrohr des alten Dichters, und will auch, auf jede Selbständigkeit mit Vergnügen Verzicht leistend, durchaus nichts anderes seyn."<sup>1</sup> And in another place he says: "Der Mysticismus des Hintergrunds soll höchstens daran erinnern dass in dem Gedicht nicht die Secunden-Uhr, die das Dasein der Mücken und Ameisen abmisst, sondern nur die Stunden-Uhr schlägt."<sup>2</sup>

Hebbel was the greatest philosophizing poet of his century, the founder of the modern psychological drama. The dramatic theories which he sought to expound in his plays were new and epochmaking. The two main theories which affect "Die Nibelungen" concern the proper period to choose for the placing of a tragedy, and his conception of tragic guilt. He chose for his tragedies always an age of transition, a turning-point in world history, where two civilizations or philosophies clashed. Human progress was evolved from this conflict, because only that could endure which was in harmony with the Divine Idea. The main figures in a tragedy should be people who were tragically affected by such a conflict

---

1. Briefe, VII, 163.

2. Tgb. IV, 5933.

or advancement in civilization, those people who were definitely marked as being incapable of progressing with the rest of the world, who, therefore, naturally fell, as representatives of an age that was past; or on the other hand, those who were too far in advance of their fellowmen. So Hebbel saw in the Nibelungenlied not only an opportunity of making clear to the German nation one of their greatest monuments, but also an excellent vehicle for some of his dramatic theories. Here he found an ideal conflict between the old order and the new, a conflict between Heathenism and Christianity. The old world with its passionate loves and hates, whose exaggerated sense of loyalty only serves to lead its inhabitants to crime and murder, conflicts with the more advanced civilization of the Christian era, with its qualities of temperance, humility, and gentleness, and as a natural result, the old must give way before the new.

Hebbel's second great dramatic theory, that of tragic guilt, is equally important for the understanding of his treatment of the Nibelungenlied. Hebbel sees in <sup>this connection</sup> ~~nature~~ an important fact in the relation <sup>between</sup> ~~of~~ the individual and the universal. Any man who tries to set himself, as an individual, above the level of the universal, is preparing the path for his own undoing, because once a man is out of tune with the harmony of the world, he places himself beyond the understanding of that world, and can therefore no longer exist in it. The actions of this outstanding personality may arise from noble or ignoble motives, but that affects in no way the inevitable result. Siegfried, however innocently, places himself above

his fellowmen by his extraordinary powers, and so comes into conflict with the world. Brunhild, destined for immortality and a place above all human beings by the gods, falls a sacrifice to the civilization of more ordinary mortals.

Hebbel saw in "der grimme Hagen" of the Nibelungenlied, an excellent representative of the era of Heathenism. He is an out-and-out Heathen, a member of an old barbarous age, without the thin veneer of Christianity hiding his true nature, as is the case with Kriemhild. Hebbel takes great pains all through the play to emphasize the lack of Christian feelings in Hagen's nature, and he motivates his actions as a result of his character. When the curtain rises, Hagen is the first to speak, and the note struck is his lack of reverence for Christ and his impatience with the restrictions placed upon his pleasure with the introduction of the new religion.

Hagen

"Nun, keine Jagd?

Gunther

Es ist ja Heiliger Tag!

Hagen

Dass den Kaplan der Satan selber hole,  
Von dem er schwatzt."

And as Gunther tries to calm him,

"Was gibt's denn heut'? Geboren ist er längst!

Das war - lasst sehen! - Ja, ja, zur Zeit der Flocken!

Sein Fest verdarb uns eine Bärenhatz."<sup>1</sup>

Hebbel makes Hagen's primitive, forceful characteristics very  
I. Hebbel, Werke, IV, II.

prominent, in order that he may be contrasted sharply with the representatives of the new era, the Chaplain in the second part and Dietrich von Bern in the third. This aspect of Hagen is very little stressed in the old epic, but Hebbel depicts him as a thorough-going pagan. Hagen is shown not only as a heathen, but also as a barbarian, as is shown in his words to Volker;

"Ja, du bezögst auch dann noch Dir die Geige  
Gern mit des Feindes Darm und strichest sie  
Mit einem seiner Knochen."<sup>I</sup>

Hebbel stresses Hagen's insistence upon Siegfried's secrecy with regard to his part in the winning of Brunhild, probably because he knew that Siegfried, naïve and ingenuous as he was, might likely disclose it and thereby give him, Hagen, a good reason for killing him. We see from the beginning his hatred and jealousy of the young hero. His primitive, vengeful nature rejoices in the death of Siegfried, and he goes to the barbarous extreme of having the dead body laid outside Kriemhild's door. He utterly lacks consideration for others, with the exception of his King.

At the bottom of all these pagan characteristics of Hagen, so well-developed by Hebbel, lies the feeling of absolute loyalty to his liegelord. This quality in him could be admirable were it not that it is so all-absorbing that any amount of treachery and crime can be committed when it is to the advantage of the King. Although Hagen has become Siegfried's Blutsverwandter, he coldbloodedly betrays him. This exagger-

I. Hebbel, Werke, IV, 12.



ated loyalty to one man, to the exclusion of human feelings for all others, which Hebbel makes so vivid, marks Hagen definitely as a member of an age that has outlived it's day, and which therefore must be destroyed.

The Nibelungenlied characterized Hagen almost entirely by the one conventional adjective "grimme", which conveyed in the one word all Hagen's proud, relentless, unbridled nature, his passionate hates and jealousies. Hebbel's method of characterization is more subtle. We get a glimpse of his nature through the words of Frau Ute as Hagen goes to throw the stone, after Siegfried has successfully outdistanced Gunther, Giselher and Gernot, always by one foot;

"Dem schwärzt's im Herzen,

So fröhlich er auch thut!"<sup>1</sup>

And after Siegfried has outdistanced him, she says of Siegfried;

"Dafür

Wischt er sich auch einmal die Stirn,

Gott Lob! Sonst käm' der Tronjer um vor Wuth!"<sup>2</sup>

Hebbel intensifies Hagen's personality by giving him more strength of character. It is Hagen who always takes the initiative, it is he who plans and forces Siegfried to carry out the second conquest of Brunhild; it is he who obtains the secret of Siegfried's invulnerability from Kriemhild, lying in the most cold-blooded, casual manner; it is he who voluntarily takes the entire responsibility for Siegfried's death, as he tells Gunther after it is all over:

---

1. Hebbel, Werke, IV, 28.

2. Ibid. 29.

"Du mein König,

Hast nichts befohlen, dess erinn're Dich,

Ich hatte ganz allein."<sup>1</sup>

This innovation of Hebbel's makes Hagen all the more outstanding. In the Nibelungenlied he is a powerful vassal, who stands in high favour with Gunther, in Hebbel he is advisor-in-chief to the King, he is the source of all information, the one who reads and understands all the characters in the drama. When the clash comes between Brunhild and Siegfried, it is Hagen alone who can understand her attitude:

"Sie liegt in seinem Bann, und dieser Hass

Hat seinen Grund in Liebe!-----

Doch ist's nicht Liebe, wie sie Mann und Weib

Zusammenknüpft.---- Ein Zauber ist's,

Durch den sich ihr Geschlecht erhalten will,

Und der die letzte Riesin ohne Lust,

Wie ohne Wahl, zum letzten Riesen treibt."<sup>2</sup>

Hagen can see that the hand of fate of the old gods has marked those two super-beings for each other, that it was fore-ordained that they should be united by unbreakable bonds, and that only death can solve the problem that has now arisen because they are so closely bound together.

It is Hagen who reads the plans in Kriemhild's mind. He knows all too well what she intends to do, while Gunther trusts blindly in her loyalty to her kindred. He warns Gunther but in vain:

"Und wenn sie uns so hasst, so muss sie brennen,

Es darzuthun, denn selbst die Liebe ist

---

1. Hebbel, werke, IV, 155.

2 Ibid, 134-135.

So gierig nicht nach Kuss und nach Umarmung,  
 Wie grimm'ger Hass nach Mord und Blut und Tod,  
 Und wenn der Liebe langes Fasten schadet,  
 So wird der Hass nur immer hungriger."<sup>1</sup>

It is Hagen's piercing eye that reads the character of Etzel  
 at a glance.

"Ich dachte an den Leuen,  
 Der Eisenketten, wie man sagt, zerreist  
 Und Weiberhaare schonte.-----

Nimmer wird's mit Etzel's Willen  
 Geschehen, dass man uns die Treue bricht,  
 Denn er ist stolz auf seine Redlichkeit,  
 Er freut sich, dass er endlich schwören kann,  
 Und füttert sein Gewissen um so besser,  
 Als er's so viele Jahre hungern liess."<sup>2</sup>

These additions and deeper motivations in Hagen's character are perfectly justified by Hebbel's dramatic theories. If he wished to picture the conflict between the eras, then Hagen's character had to be so treated, that he personified the type of one side of the conflict. Hebbel's changes are few, but necessary and effective, and in perfect harmony with the general impression of Hagen's character that is obtained from reading the Nibelungenlied.

The other important character, who with Hagen represents the old world of paganism is Brunhild, depicted by Hebbel as leading a strange, unearthly sort of existence in her lonely northern castle. The old epic lays no particular stress on  
 1. Hebbel, Werke, IV, 184.  
 2. Ibid, 263.

the superhuman origin of Brunhild other than her unusual strength and prowess - while still a virgin. Hebbel does not exactly follow the Edda version, which represents her as a fallen Valkyrie, condemned to mate with a mortal as a punishment for her disobedience to Wotan, on the contrary he rather enshrouds her origin in mystery, showing her as only half-conscious of a great and strange royal destiny, planned for her by the Fates. She knows of a future struggle but means to fight for the power which she can only enjoy through freedom. Her tragedy is that she must surrender that freedom, not to the destined hero but to the weak substitute who wins her by a trick. Hebbel, to make this loss more bitter, shows Brunhild in a trance-like vision just before she is to fight with Gunther, the infinite beauty and power of the kingdom that will be hers, can she but overcome any mortal man who claims her as his bride. The pagan element in Brunhild Hebbel reinforces by the invention of Frigga, her maid, an out-and-out heathen, who has received the child from Wotan himself, hence understands more clearly than Brunhild the possibilities of her destiny. Frigga alone knows the meaning of this trance and since Brunhild's adversary is not Siegfried, the Balmungschwinger, she foresees victory as a natural outcome. For this reason they are all the more surprised at Gunther's apparent conquest of Brunhild. According to Frigga the Balmungschwinger was the only one to fear, but once Brunhild is conquered, Frigga sees that the cause of the old gods is lost and hopes only that Brunhild may live happily as an ordinary woman. The Queen's proud nature, however, naturally

rebels at the conquest, she refuses to have anything more to do with Gunther, and Hagen relates that during the voyage she picked him up by the nape of the neck and held him over the water. Hebbel cleverly motivates her feelings towards Gunther, first by her natural independence, secondly by her loneliness for her own country. She questions Kriemhild on her arrival about the sky, it is so light and the latter tells her that sometimes there are storms, when day is turned into night.

"Käme das

Nur heute noch! Mir war's wie Heimathsgruss."<sup>1</sup>,  
replies Brunhild. The third motivation is her annoyance at Gunther's evasive answers to her questions about Siegfried's right to marry Kriemhild. Hebbel has here changed things somewhat from the old epic. There, no humiliating scene takes place on shipboard, but on the wedding night; through desire to preserve her virginity and because of the story of Siegfried and Kriemhild, Brunhild ties Gunther up on the wall. The reference to her loneliness, the scene with the violets, her plea to the Burgundians to treat her as an undeveloped child and to have patience with her:

"Ich bitte Euch alle, nehmt mich für ein Kind,

Ich werde schneller wachsen wie ein and'res,

Doch bin ich jetzt nicht mehr."<sup>2</sup>,

all these very human traits are additions made by Hebbel.

These scenes show us Brunhild as she would really try to be.

She questions Frigga as to the meaning of her trance, before

she fought with Gunther and the nurse lies for the sake of

---

1. Hebbel, Werke, IV, 71.

2. Ibid, 74.

Brunhild's own happiness, and tells her she had seen this very land and was happy.

"Wenn ich entzückt

Gewesen bin, als ich dies Land erblickt,

So muss ich's wieder werden,"<sup>1</sup>

Brunhild says from the fulness of her heart. Gunther's suspicious act, however, in giving his royal sister to a vassal, arouses her ire, with the same result as in the old epic. But Siegfried's interventions in the marital affairs of Gunther and his bride, save the situation, and Brunhild, completely subdued now with the loss of her virginity, reveres and honours Gunther above all other men. This is, of course, only natural. Not only is she in the ordinary way zealous for her husband's honour, but now that she, who had deemed herself invincible, has been conquered, she can find satisfaction only in Gunther's prowess, - he must win glory for them both. Hebbel emphasizes this faith and pride in Gunther on the morning after the wedding night. Discussing her dislike of Kriemhild's union with Siegfried, she says,

"Ich kann's nicht seh'n,

Dass Deine edle Schwester sich erniedrigt.

Gunther.

Sie thut, wie Du.

Brunhild.

Nein, nein, Du bist ein Mann!"<sup>2</sup>

He also stresses the marked change in Brunhild after the second conquest. Gunther calls her his noble wife and she

---

1. Hebbel, Werke, IV, 74.

2. Ibid, 96.

answers,

"Ich hör' mich gern so nennen, und es kommt  
 Mir jetzt so seltsam vor, dass ich das Ross  
 Getummelt und den Speer geworfen habe,  
 Als sah' ich Dich den Bratenwender dreh'n!  
 Ich mag die Waffen nicht mehr seh'n, auch ist  
 Mein eigener Schild mir jetzt zu schwer, ich wollte  
 Ihn auf die Seite stellen, und ich musste  
 Die Magd um Beistand rufen! Ja, ich mögte  
 Jetzt lieber lauschen, wie die Spinnen weben,  
 Und wie die Vögel ihre Nester bau'n,  
 Als dich begleiten!"<sup>1</sup>

With complete submission to Gunther, the Amazon has become a tender, loving wife, and as a consequence, a helpless one.

This terrible aspect of her new life manifests itself to her, when first she calls for revenge.

"Und rächen werd' ich mich!  
 Verschmählt! Weib, Weib, wenn Du in seinen Armen  
 Auch eine Nacht gelacht hast über mich,  
 So sollst Du viele Jahre dafür weinen,  
 Ich will - - Was red' ich! Ich bin schwach wie sie.

( stürzt Frigga an die Brust )<sup>2</sup>

It is Hagen who opens the way for her revenge, Hagen, who seizes the opportunity to get rid of Siegfried, under the mask of loyalty to his sovereign and his Queen. This chance for revenge works Brunhild up into a mad frenzy, on which note the third act closes.

---

1. Hebbel, Werke, IV, 96.

2. Ibid. 109.

"Brunhild.

"Frigga, mein Leben oder auch das seine!

Frigga

Das seine, Kind!

Brunhild

Ich ward nicht bloss verschmäht,

Ich ward verschenkt, ich ward wohl gar verhandelt!

Frigga

Verhandelt, Kind!

Brunhild

Ihm selbst zum Weib zu schlecht,

War ich der Pfenning, der ihm eins verschaffte!

Frigga

Der Pfenning, Kind!

Brunhild

Das ist noch mehr, als Mord,

Und dafür will ich Rache! Rache! Rache!"I

This last scene is entirely Hebbel's invention and is dramatically a marvelous improvement upon the old epic. In fact the whole treatment of the quarrel scene is excellent. He shows us the depths of Brunhild's soul and the terrible sense of degradation she experiences. Brunhild, is, like Siegfried, set apart from the common lot, and so according to Hebbel's theory she is a tragic figure, although, unlike Siegfried she has not risen above the multitude by her own actions, but has been placed there by the old gods. According to Hebbel's theory, however, the causes of superiority

I. Hebbel, Werke, IV, 113.



are immaterial, it is the fact itself that foreshadows disaster. Had Brunhild been an ordinary mortal, she might have seen less tragedy in the deception, but that she, who stood so high, who might have had such a wonderful destiny, was tricked in such a despicable manner was absolutely unforgivable. Kriemhild questions her from her own ordinary feminine point of view;

"Du liebst ja meinen Bruder,

Kannst Du das Mittel schelten, das Dich ihm

Zu eigen machte?"I

to which Brunhild gives answer with a paralyzed "O!" dramatically expressing her reaction to Kriemhild's point of view, which is utterly incomprehensible to her.

According to Hebbel's ideas, with Siegfried's destruction, Brunhild destroys her own soul. As Hagen clearly sees, "Dieser Hass hat ihren Grund in Liebe." Brunhild herself realizes this and refuses to have any intercourse with Gunther, spending her time cowering near Siegfried's tomb, a living body with a dead soul. This later conception of Brunhild is entirely Hebbel's. In the Nibelungenlied she drops entirely out of the picture, but Hebbel keeps her before us to the end, although she does not appear personally, to emphasize further the fall of heathenism. The report of the messengers, Werbel and Swemmel, of Brunhild's presence in Siegfried's tomb also serves to heighten, through jealousy, the revengeful desires of Kriemhild. Moreover, as Hebbel realized, the lack of any mention of Brunhild in the second part of the Nibelungenlied

I. Hebbel, Werke, IV, III.

was a lapse on the part of the mediaeval author which needed to be rectified.

It required no less subtle motivation on Hebbel's part to enable modern audiences to understand the psychology of Kriemhild. His first move in that direction was to lessen the extremity of the change in her character. His Kriemhild is first portrayed as a young woman of a certain amount of decision and character, rather than the sweet, modest, shy maiden of the Nibelungenlied. Hebbel shows her as being quick of temper. She does not hide her anger when she sees a strange knight in the court whose arrival had not been announced to her.

"Seit wann ist's Brauch

An unser'm Hof, dass wir's nicht mehr erfahren,

Wenn fremde Gäste eingezogen sind?

Wird diese stolze Burg zu Worms am Rhein

Der Schäferhütte gleich, in der sich Jeder

Bei Nacht und Tag verkriechen kann, der will?"<sup>1</sup>

"Warum so hitzig?" asks Ute. As in the mediaeval epic Hebbel gives Kriemhild a distaste for men and marriage, but the new Kriemhild is much more decided in her sentiments.

"Ich hörte stets, dass Liebe kurze Lust

Und lange Leid zu bringen pflegt, ich seh's

Ja auch an Dir und werde nimmer lieben,

O nimmer, nimmer!"<sup>2</sup>

Hebbel cleverly shows the instant effect the sight of Siegfried has upon this proud beauty. As she is about to swear an oath regarding the state of her heart, she breaks off

1. Hebbel, Werke, IV, 23.

2. Ibid, 21-22.

when she sees him, but on being called to task by Ute, her reaction is very natural and characteristic:

"Was kümmern mich die Gäste meines Bruders,

Wenn ich nur weiss wie ich sie meiden kann."<sup>1</sup>

It is through such little characteristically human details that Hebbel makes Kriemhild more vivid, showing her as a proud, haughty princess, quick to anger and scorning love. But with equal skill Hebbel shows the softening influence of love. She becomes calmer, more gentle, a little sad. When Ute councils her not to reject Siegfried's wooing, she answers:

"Er wirbt wohl nicht, so brauch ich's nicht zu tun."<sup>1</sup>

While Siegfried is away at Isenland she becomes quite gentle and shy, and is very worried when Giselher, teasing her, threatens to disclose some secret to Siegfried.

Hebbel's excellent characterization of Kriemhild in her quarrel with Brunhild, is an example of his insight into feminine nature. He shows Kriemhild, trying to be friendly, but she cannot get away from the knowledge of Brunhild's betrayal, and is inclined to act patronizingly towards her. The old epic fails to explain how Kriemhild knows the secret of Brunhild's subjugation, but Hebbel explains very vividly how Siegfried is forced to tell the secret of the ravished girdle. Brunhild believes her husband to be the greatest knight in the world but Kriemhild knows it is Siegfried alone who can claim that distinction. By reason of their own proud haughty natures they are brought to a quarrel. Kriemhild

---

I. Hebbel, Werke, IV, 25.

remains slightly pitying and calmly superior until Brunhild sees fit to scorn her boasting about Siegfried's abilities.

Brunhild

"Du prahlst, Kriemhild, und ich verachte Dich!"<sup>1</sup>

Kriemhild then loses all restraint and in her fury at such treatment from the arrogant Brunhild, reveals the fatal secret-

"Das Kebsweib meines Gatten mich verachten!"<sup>2</sup>

Then, having gone so far, she cannot contain her fury and shows the girdle, which reveals the awful truth to the deceived queen. Kriemhild is, of course, immediately sorry for Brunhild's sake, but she feels that she was perfectly justified. She tries to placate Brunhild but in her proffered sympathy she only makes the other's shame the deeper. Kriemhild, never having felt the superiority which Brunhild formerly possessed, does not for a moment realize exactly what such a revelation would mean to her, and therefore she has no foreboding of the awful calamity which will result from it. The knowledge that such a thing could never have happened to her anyway, because Siegfried could have conquered anyone, makes it impossible for her to imagine and to comprehend Brunhild's point of view. However, she rues her hastiness, even although she does not quite realize the consequences.

"Ich weiss, wie schwer ich sie gekränkt, und werde

Mir's nie vergeben, ja, ich mögte eher,

Dass ich's erlitten hätte, als gethan."<sup>3</sup>

Although Kriemhild is cleverer than her naïve husband still she is no match for the scheming clever mind of Hagen

---

1. Hebbel, Werke, IV, 106.

2. Ibid. 106.

3. Ibid. 124.

and quite simply she believes in him and confesses the secret of Siegfried's invulnerable point, just as she does in the Nibelungenlied. Hebbel shows that her love for Siegfried and her worry about his safety make her blind to the far worse dangers by which he is surrounded.

So Siegfried's death is ultimately caused by the fact that Kriemhild has no comprehension of the nature of Brunhild, and although Hebbel has Kriemhild recognize her indiscretion at once and regret it bitterly, she can see in his death only a treacherous murder without any reason. That, and the knowledge that by cunning Hagen had obtained from her the means of murdering her husband, Hebbel uses to account for the change in Kriemhild's character, which, as has already been stated, is not so extreme a change as in the Nibelungenlied.

One thing after another increases her rage. The barbarous, revengeful way in which Hagen has the dead body laid at her door, and which calls forth an anguished cry from her proud heart:

"Du hörtest ja,

Die Käm'm'rer stolpern über ihn. Die Käm'm'rer!

Sonst wichen alle Kön'ge aus."<sup>1</sup> ,

could not fail to arouse her thirst for vengeance. Added to this, Hagen's theft of Siegfried's sword and Gunther's refusal to grant Kriemhild retribution, combine to drive the broken-hearted Queen almost mad with rage and grief.

"Halt ein! Du wirst Dein ganzes Haus verderben"<sup>2</sup> cries

Ute in an attempt to bring her to her senses. "Es mag

---

1. Hebbel, Werke, IV, 159.

2. Ibid. 172.

gescheh'n! Denn hier ist's überzahlt!"<sup>1</sup> she answers, giving an intimation of what she may be capable of doing.

The opening of the third part introduces to us a Kriemhild who has grown more bitter and more revengeful towards Hagen, who has, however consented to an outward reconciliation with Gunther. Her grief has not abated in all the years, and she is still in mourning. The presentation of Etzel's suit to her by her brother only serves to show her an attempt on his part to mock her, and it is only when Giseler, to emphasize Gunther's concern for her happiness, mentions that Hagen had advised against the match, and that Gunther had refused to listen to him, that Kriemhild begins to have any interest in the proposal. "Er fürchtet sich," she says about Hagen. Gere- not then explains what Hagen fears, - that Kriemhild would attack the Burgundians. "Er weiss was er verdient,"<sup>2</sup> she replies and the idea begins to formulate in her brain that no sacrifice would be too great for her rightful revenge on Hagen. Before she goes any further, however, she calls once more for justice from the King against Hagen. On this being refused, she upbraids Gunther, but to no avail, then announces: "Der Markgraf Rüdiger ist mir willkommen,"<sup>3</sup> and we know that she has made her decision. Her hand has a price, however, as she tells Rüdiger. "Herr Etzel wird mir keinen Dienst versagen?"<sup>4</sup> she asks and binds the knight by an oath for Etzel and himself.

---

Hebbel's scene is infinitely superior to that of the

1. Hebbel, Werke, IV, 172.

2. Ibid, 196.

3. Ibid, 202.

4. Ibid, 204.

Nibelungenlied, it is much more subtle, much more in keeping with Kriemhild's character. In the old epic Kriemhild cannot be persuaded to consider the proposal until Rüdiger offers of his own accord to requite her wrongs and even then she hesitates because of his paganism, until Rüdiger declares he has been converted. How much more powerful is Hebbel's scene! He shows us the psychological workings of Kriemhild's mind, her suspicions aroused by Hagen's objections, her final appeal to her brother, and when that fails, her calm statement of the price of her hand to Rüdiger. The old Rüdiger had to suggest possibilities of vengeance to Kriemhild, but Hebbel makes Kriemhild see these clearly herself. Hebbel's Kriemhild is at the beginning of the last part much as she is at the end, and everything she does has a purpose, - to take her revenge upon Hagen. For that reason she makes Gunther promise on his royal word to visit her. There is very little civilization left in Kriemhild's character now and with perfectly formed plans in her head, she proceeds to arrange for the destruction of her race, if necessary, for revenge. Having borne Etzel a son she can manage him very easily, for in return for his heir, he has promised to grant her every wish.

Hebbel makes a very important interpolation in the fourth act, Scene III, of "Kriemhild's Rache", which does a great deal to explain Kriemhild's character. As in the Nibelungenlied she appears before Hagen as he and Volker are keeping watch. During their intercourse, Gunther appears, and to him Kriemhild makes her old plea.

"Ich rufe Klage über Hagen Tronje

Und ford're zum letzten Mal Gericht."<sup>1</sup>

When this request is refused, she turns to Giselher and Gere-not, and asks them to give Hagen into her hands. They, however, remain loyal to Hagen. Kriemhild, furious now, upbraids her brothers for their disregard of their honour, and demands that they clear themselves of the stigma which still rests from Siegfried's death. Whereupon Hagen points out that it is not their fault alone,- she also was greatly to blame for Siegfried's death and tells her how in her anger she betrayed the secret she had wrung from Siegfried, and thus provided Hagen with the spur that had sent her husband to his death. She, too, should atone for her share in the crime. And Kriemhild answers:

"Und büss ich nicht? Was könnte Dir gescheh'n,  
Das auch nur halb an meine Qualen reichte?  
Sieh diese Krone an und frage Dich!  
Sie mahnt an ein Vermählungsfest, wie kein's  
Auf dieser Erde noch gefeiert ward,  
An Schauderküsse, zwischen Tod und Leben  
Gewechselt in der fürchterlichsten Nacht,  
Und an ein Kind, das ich nicht lieben kann!"<sup>2</sup>

In this speech of Kriemhild's Hebbel allows us to see deep into her heart, and we realize now clearly how sacred her vengeance is to her. These points clear up and improve her character. In the Nibelungenlied, there is no such explanation as is found here - there it is the injured wife who takes her revenge as a matter of course. Hebbel, however, shows that to Kriemhild revenge is absolutely necessary; she regards it as the high-

1. Hebbel, Werke, IV, 278.  
2. Ibid, 281-82.



est duty in life; without the knowledge that she has paid the traitors back in like kind, she cannot have rest or peace. Nothing else could have justified the supreme self-sacrifice of marrying a second time. Her life with Etzel has been one long torture, lightened only by thoughts of the ultimate results from her voluntary sacrifice. To the Christian, a mind such as hers is incomprehensible, but Hebbel tries to depict her motives in the best possible light. In general, he follows the old epic fairly closely, - only by a few subtle touches making more clear Kriemhild's attitude. By significant differences he makes her less treacherous than she seems in the Nibelungenlied. The time elapsing before the visit is much shorter and the visit itself more a matter of social etiquette. It is also made clear that she wants the treasure only as a reward for her avengers. She is an exponent of the old religion, although outwardly a Christian; these primitive qualities of hatred, revengefulness and relentlessness mark her as belonging to the old order. If she does not forgive as a Christian, at least she remains true to her own code of loyalty. With this note of eternal loyalty to Siegfried uppermost, she delivers her ultimatum to the Burgundians:

"Doch meine Hochzeitsfreuden kommen jetzt,  
 Wie ich gelitten habe, will ich schwelgen,  
 Ich schenke Nichts, die Kosten sind bezahlt.  
 Und müsst' ich hundert Brüder nieder hauen,  
 Um mir den Weg zu Deinem Haupt zu bahnen,  
 So würd' ich's thun, damit die Welt erfahre,

Dass ich die Treue nur um Treue brach."<sup>1</sup>

Hebbel then depicts Kriemhild in a scene with Etzel, in which she demands that he make retribution for her wrongs. Once more she is thwarted, for Etzel refuses to break the sacred ties of hospitality, even for Kriemhild. She begins to lose faith in her power over Etzel, and decides that some deed must be committed to arouse his wrath. Hebbel uses this as a motivation to justify Kriemhild's sacrifice of her son. In the monologue following this scene she heaps scorn upon Etzel's offer to fight the Burgundians in battle:

"Krieg! Was soll mir der Krieg! Den hätt ich längst  
Entzunden können! Doch, das wäre Lohn,  
Anstatt der Strafe. Für die Schlächtere  
Im dunklen Wald der off'ne Heldenkampf?

- - - - -  
Nein, Etzel, Mord um Mord! Der Drache sitzt  
Im Loch, und wenn Du Dich nicht regen willst,  
Als bis er Dich gestochen hat, wie mich,  
So soll er's thun! - Ja wohl, so soll er's thun."<sup>2</sup>

From the moment of Siegfried's death, Hebbel is careful to show how each action on the part of her brothers or Hagen serves to add to Kriemhild's fury; how every time her demands for retribution are refused, she becomes more and more determined to strike through her brothers to Hagen. Jealousy, too, Hebbel shows as a marked characteristic. She confesses that she was jealous of even the blows Brunhild had received from

Siegfried, and the information that Gunther's queen had shut  
1. Hebbel, Werke, IV, 282.

2. Ibid, 297.

herself up near Siegfried's tomb adds fuel to the flame of her anger. As has been said, Hebbel has not tried to change the character of Kriemhild, but rather to help us to understand it. Her bloodthirsty lust for vengeance he explains most clearly, perhaps, through her own words to Dietrich towards the end of the tragedy:

"Was ich bin, das wurde ich durch die,  
 Die Ihr der Strafe gern entziehen mögtet,  
 Und wenn ich Blut vergiesse, bis die Erde  
 Ertrinkt, und einen Berg von Leichen thürme,  
 Bis man sie auf dem Mond begraben kann,  
 So häuf' ich ihre Schuld, die meine nicht.  
 - - - - - Bin ich  
 Verrätherisch und falsch? Sie lehrten mich,  
 Wie man den Helden in die Falle lockt.  
 Und bin ich für des Mitleid's Stimme taub?  
 Sie waren's, als sogar der Stein zerschmolz.  
 Ich bin in Allem nur ihr Widerschein,  
 Und wer den Teufel hasst, der spuckt den Spiegel  
 Nicht an, den er befleckt mit seiner Larve,  
 Er schlägt ihn selbst und jagt ihn aus die Welt."<sup>I</sup>

In the character of Siegfried, Hebbel found a perfect representative for his theories of tragic guilt. In his innocence and naïveté Siegfried makes use of unsought opportunities which raise him above the level of the knights of chivalry. He thus sets himself beyond the pale of their laws, and in so doing, according to Hebbel's theories, he transgresses the

I. Hebbel, werke, IV, 316-7.

laws of universality, and is therefore doomed to destruction. By his voluntary actions he places himself out of natural human contact with his fellowmen. A tragic death is the obvious end of such a life. In Siegfried's case it has also to be death by dishonourable means, because it is only through cunning and deceit that he can be killed.

Hebbel shows very carefully, through the eyes of Hagen and Dankwart, what position Siegfried holds in the eyes of his fellowmen.

"Nun, was Herr Siegfried wagt, dass wag' ich auch.

Nur gegen ihn erheb' ich nicht die Klinge:

Das wär ja auch, wie gegen Erz und Stein.

Glaubt's oder zweifelt, wie es Euch gefällt:

Ich hätt mich nicht in Schlangenblut gebadet,

Darf denn noch fechten, wer nicht fallen kann?"<sup>I</sup>

The last two lines of this quotation are particularly interesting, because here Hebbel shows, through Hagen, how much Siegfried's invulnerability has affected his reputation. They can admit that he is great and noble, but they can never really esteem him, because there is always the feeling that he had to use supernatural means to become what he is. A knight like Hagen, who has gained his reputation as a great warrior through sheer courage and hard work, will naturally regard with scorn the position of him who used unnatural means to obtain his proud supremacy. Dankwart, Hagen's brother, quite frankly voices the opinion of all the Burgundians, that they would gain nothing by fighting with Siegfried and accuses him of being so brave

I. Hebbel, Werke, IV, 14.

only because of his invulnerability.

"Du bist gewiss auf Kampfen so versessen,  
Seit Du des Lindwurms Schuppen-Panzer trägst?  
Nicht Jedernamm betrog den Tod, wie Du,  
Er findet eine off'ne Thür bei uns."<sup>1</sup>

Added to these powers, and because of them, Siegfried is try-  
ingly arrogant. Instead of accepting these gifts with ordin-  
ary humility, as a true Christian should do, Siegfried is  
child-like in his joy and parades his prowess before the  
world, with all the arrogance and audacity of a youthful demi-  
god. Gunther, who is exceedingly weak, takes no exception to  
Siegfried's manners, and tries instead to placate him. Hagen,  
on the other hand, is insulted by Siegfried's overweening  
pride, and in Part III he explains his reactions to Kriemhild:

"Ich liebte Siegfried nicht, das ist gewiss,  
Er hätt' mich auch wohl nicht geliebt, wenn ich  
Erschienen wäre in den Niederlanden,  
Wie er in Worms bei uns, mit einer Hand,  
Die alle uns're Ehren spielend pflückte,  
Und einem Blick, der sprach: Ich mag sie nicht!"<sup>2</sup>

Hebbel has tried to give a subtler presentation of  
Siegfried's ingenuous arrogance. In the epic he wants to  
fight just from sheer love of fighting, but Hebbel's Siegfried  
has a theory - a very naïve sort of philosophy - that he must  
prove his right to rule and possess. But he is really too  
spontaneous and unreflecting to act consistently from such

---

1. Hebbel, Werke, IV, 19.

2. Ibid, 281.

principles, and is soon content with the ordinary friendly combats. In order to emphasize the fact that Siegfried's sole tragic guilt lies in his outstanding individuality, Hebbel has changed incidents which would otherwise make him guilty in the eyes of the world. In the old epic, although it is not made clear, one assumes that Siegfried confessed to Kriemhild, entirely of his own volition, his part in the subduing of Brunhild, and he gives to his wife the ring which he took from Gunther's Queen. Hebbel discards the ring, the ordinarily accepted pledge of love, and in its place he uses a girdle, rather a token of victory, which Siegfried unconsciously drops upon the floor in his own room. Here Kriemhild finds it, thinks it a present from Siegfried and wears it. When she thanks him for it he is surprised, and finally remembers whence it came. His anxious plea to her to hide it naturally arouses her curiosity, for which his naïvete and natural simplicity are no match. Hebbel has made the scene very natural, resulting entirely from the two characters. There has been, however, much discussion over the starting point of the story, the "zerknülltes Gürtel", which Siegfried takes from Brunhild in the heat of the moment. However, under the circumstances, his conquest of Brunhild the second time being in the nature of a rather revolting duty, and the thought of his bridal night awaiting him, it is quite possible that Siegfried would pay no attention to it in his distraction.

Hebbel also removes from Siegfried a great deal of the guilt in connection with the second conquest. In the Nibelungen-

lied it is Siegfried who suggests the ruse and who overrules Gunther's objections and makes the plans. Hebbel, however, makes Hagen the originator of the idea and it is he who has to overcome Siegfried's scruples. He practically forces Siegfried into the plot on the grounds of loyalty to Gunther. Siegfried who had heedlessly taken the first step, seemed caught in a web of duplicity; the second one was irrevocable, however distasteful to himself. While this change ennobles Siegfried's character, it also serves to show Hagen as the most positive character in the Burgundian court. But Hebbel makes it very clear that Siegfried and Brunhild were originally meant for each other. Even after the birds had sung of them together, when he sees Brunhild, she arouses no love in him. There is a suggestion, perhaps, that he does incur guilt here, but it is in the insistence upon following the bent of his own nature.

All these changes serve to absolve Siegfried from ordinary tragic guilt, and stress the fact that it is only because he has made of himself a superman that he comes into conflict with universal law.

The next figure of importance in Hebbel's "Nibelungen" is Dietrich von Bern. Though he appears only in the last part, he plays nonetheless a very important role. In Hebbel's scheme he is the representative of the Christian spirit, the very opposite of Hagen, Brunhild and Kriemhild. Hebbel has greatly deepened his character in order to show him as the sole survivor in the clash between the pagan Huns and the half-and-half Christians, the Nibelungs, because he alone has the true Christianity, the real religion of Jesus Christ. In the

Nibelungenlied Dietrich's part is merely that of a great hero, who is able to conquer even Hagen. His religion plays little part in the struggle. Hebbel, however, saw in him the embodiment of the new idea, and so from the time Dietrich first appears in the second act of Part III, the keynote of his character is his Christianity. His first act is a Christian one,-- he comes from Etzel's castle to Bechlarn in order to warn Gunther and Hagen against the evil plans of Kriemhild. He warns them in the old epic, too, but does not take the significant step of going to meet them to do so. All through the last part Dietrich tries to use his influence for good, but even he cannot have any effect upon the barbarous passions of Kriemhild, the Huns and the Nibelungs. He begs Gunther to return home with his men in peace, but he has no influence against the haughty pride of the Burgundians, which Hebbel regards as a characteristic of their heathen natures. His attempt to frustrate Kriemhild's plans also fail, against the cleverness and passion of her revenge-crazed mind. Etzel, he also tries to help, but in vain, the King feels too grateful to Kriemhild for his heir to go against her plans.

"Ja, ja, Kriemhild, ich schlage meine Schwäher  
Nicht höher an, wie Deine Brüder Du,  
Und wenn sie nur noch Mörder sind für Dich,  
Wie sollten sie für mich was Bess'eres sein!"<sup>I</sup>

Hebbel never allows Dietrich to make use of his influence in dictatorial manner. He is humble, frank, always able to see the other point of view. He warns Gunther but tells him

I. Hebbel, Werke, IV, 286.



frankly that that is all he can do.

"Seid auf der Hut, Ihr stolzen Nibelungen,

Und wähnt nicht, dass ein Jeder, der die Zunge

Jetzt für Euch braucht, den Arm auch brauchen darf."<sup>1</sup>

When he points out to Etzel the reasons for Kriemhild's invitation to her brother, and the King of the Huns answers that as she is a Christian, is it not her creed to forgive her enemies, Dietrich answers with perfect understanding.

"So sollt' es sein,

Doch ist nicht jeder stark genug dazu."<sup>2</sup>

A few lines later he defends the haughty, defiant actions of Gunther and his men, when Etzel asks why they did not know enough to stay at home.

"Herr, sie hatten

Kriemhild ihr Wort gegeben, und sie mussten

Es endlich lösen, denn wen gar Nichts bindet,

Den bindet das nur um so sehr, auch war

Ihr Sinn zu stolz, um die Gefahr zu meiden

Und Rath zu achten. Du bist auch gewöhnt,

Dem Tod zu trotzen, doch Du brauchst noch Grund,

Die nicht! - - -

So ist der Teufel, der das Blut regiert,

Auch noch in ihnen mächtig, und sie folgen

Ihm freudig, wenn es einmal kocht und dampft."<sup>3</sup>

Although he does not approve of their tactics, still he understands and sympathizes. When Hildebrand begs him to enter the

1. Hebbel, Werke, IV, 236.

2. Ibid, 284.

3. Ibid, 285-6.

fray and prevent more bloodshed, he answers:

"Wenn ich auch wollte, wie vermögt' ich's wohl?

Hier hat sich Schuld in Schuld zu fest verbissen,

Als dass man zu Einem sagen könnte:

Tritt Du zurück! Sie stehen gleich im Recht.

Wenn sich die Rache nicht von selbst erbricht

Und sich vom letzten Brocken schaudernd wendet,

So stopft ihr Keiner mehr den grausen Schlund."<sup>1</sup>

Hebbel portrays through Dietrich the day when Christianity will reign supreme. The Vogt von Bern knows that something is going to happen. The other kings who are forced to serve Etzel, cannot understand why the great Dietrich should humble himself to serve another King of his own free will.

"Ich habe Gründe, und der Tag ist nah',

Wo Ihr sie kennen lernt."<sup>2</sup>

There is a feeling here that Dietrich has undergone a severe experience, and that as a true Christian he is testing himself by serving another King. This feeling is accentuated by his understanding of the Pilgrim's motives in Part III, Act IV, Scene XXI. To Hagen such actions are incomprehensible, to Dietrich they are the signs of a noble man.

The note Hebbel stresses in Dietrich's character is always humility. The Vogt von Bern is outstanding if only because of this attitude, because it is so contrary to the attitudes of the proud and haughty Nibelungs. His Christianity is the source of this characteristic, even as it is for the humility of the

Chaplain of the Nibelungs. He, too, has learned the true spirit  
1. Hebbel, Werke, IV, 315.

2. Ibid, 221.

of the religion of Jesus Christ. Etzel speaks of the three free men in the world, Siegfried, Dietrich, and himself, but he errs in his estimation of the Vogt von Bern, for the latter has progressed beyond the development of Siegfried and of Etzel into the Kingdom of Christianity, where individual will gives way to the universal. With the greatest humility Dietrich accepts in the end the kingdom from the exhausted Etzel, "Im Namen dessen, der am Kreuz erblich!"

Hebbel had such a task in the deepening and psychological motivation of these main characters that the others have necessarily suffered from lack of complete characterization. He has, however, been kinder to Etzel than was the old epic. In the Nibelungenlied he is a weak, spineless, almost cowardly character. Here he has been slightly deepened. He, too, has come under the softening influence of Christianity which motivates the change in his character from that of an outright barbarian to a somewhat civilized monarch. He has promised to fulfill Kriemhild's desires but refuses to murder a guest in his house, although he assures her that he will pursue them and do battle with them when they have left the safety of his castle. But the tempering influence on Etzel, Hebbel shows as only superficial, because when he himself is drawn irrevocably into the fray, he is as barbarous as Kriemhild.

While Hebbel strengthened slightly the character of the King of the Huns, he weakened the character of the Burgundian King very markedly. The reason for this lay in the necessity of making Hagen an outstanding personality, and that could not be accomplished without the others suffering in comparison.

So Gunther is weak and spineless, incapable of any farsightedness and quite without any qualities of judging character.

Gerenot, Gunther's brother, is merely a shadow, Giselher a trifle more distinct, because Hebbel shows him as Kriemhild's favorite, for whom she still has some human feelings. The scene of Giselher's betrothal with Rüdiger's daughter has been charmingly treated by Hebbel, not with any special changes but with the addition of little touches which make the episode more natural. We see, for example, the impression made upon young Gudrun by the sinister figure of Hagen - "Den Blassen mit den hohlen Todten-Augen."<sup>I</sup> Volker, the musician, is an excellent counterfoil to the fierce Hagen, a minstrel as well as a noble warrior. It is into his mouth, when in a sort of poetic trance that Hebbel puts the sole mention of a curse on the Nibelungen treasure. This is one feature of the old story which Hebbel does not stress at all. Frau Ute, like Gerenot, is a very shadowy figure; while in the portrayal of Rüdiger, the conventional knight, Hebbel has followed the old epic closely.

This analysis of the characters in Hebbel's trilogy has served to show how the story of the Nibelungs has materially benefited from Hebbel's work upon it. The people portrayed, while they will ever remain in a sense remote from us, because they belong to a shadowy period, have become much more real and comprehensible to the modern reader. Hebbel had probed down deep into the hearts of his characters to show their actions as the natural and inevitable result of their natures.

---

When Hebbel first came to the Nibelungenlied, he found  
I. Hebbel, Werke, IV, 224.

that practically all the mythological elements had been banished from it, the result of which was that in many places there were curious gaps in the story. The episode of Siegfried's former acquaintance with Brunhild has disappeared, yet he knows how to get to her castle, and they recognize each other. To avoid this inconsistency, Hebbel reintroduces echoes from the old myths. Brunhild and Siegfried do not meet, but he sees her and she is told by Frigga about the noble hero.

In the old epic Brunhild is an amazon-like queen, endowed with extraordinary strength, but this was not suitable to Hebbel's purpose of accentuating the conflict between the pagan and the Christian world, so he took over from the northern version the story of Brunhild's origin and made her the daughter of Wotan. For the same reason, that is, better psychological motivation, he inserted the trance scene in the play, in which Brunhild sees in a vision the destiny which might be hers.

Volker, too, has a trance, while he and Hagen are keeping watch before the sleeping-quarters of Gunther and his men, in which he sees the curse of the Nibelung treasure. This scene, which has no bearing on the rest of the trilogy, has been put in apparently by Hebbel because it is an essential part of the Nibelung legend and seems to need mention. Dietrich's story of his meeting with the water nymphs, Hebbel has put in as a warning of the final clash between paganism and Christianity.

In the letter to Hermann Marggraf, already quoted,

Hebbel explained that he had depended entirely upon the Nibelungenlied, even to the extent of leaving in the story of the lion in the Odenwald, and only went over to the Edda or the Völsungasaga where it was absolutely necessary. And to another friend, Adolph Stern, he writes: "Der Unbefangene wird jedoch hoffentlich finden, dass ich trotz des von diesem unzertrennlichen mythischen Hintergrundes eine in allen ihren Motiven rein menschliche Tragödie aufzubauen suchte."<sup>1</sup>

Aside from those variations in characterization already discussed, Hebbel made a few minor changes in the story, some of them seemingly without cause, which are worthy of note. To Rüdeger's daughter, whose name is not mentioned in the Nibelungenlied, he has given the somewhat ambiguous name of Gudrun, this being the name of Kriemhild in the northern sagas. He has changed the name of Etzel's and Kriemhild's son from Ortlieb to Ortnit, without any apparent reason. In the old epic, Kriemhild rewards Siegfried for bringing the good news about Gunther by giving him twelve bracelets, which he immediately hands over to her ladies-in-waiting. In Hebbel, however, she gives him a scarf which she had embroidered herself, and which Siegfried regards as a treasured possession. In Hebbel, Siegfried himself tells the story of his heroic exploits, whereas in the Nibelungenlied Hagen relates them to Gunther and his men. The marked shortening of time was, of course, necessary from the point of view of Hebbel's purpose, - to make the old epic suitable for the modern stage.

---

That was Hebbel's idea throughout the whole play, to  
I. Briefe, VII, 69.

make it suitable for the modern stage and to make it comprehensible from the standpoint of modern psychology. He started out as he finished, with this purpose in mind, and the best conclusion to this commentary from the point of view of his success, is to quote contemporary criticism on the result of his work. The Grossherzog of Weimar said to Hebbel on the occasion of the performance of "Die Nibelungen" at the Weimar Theatre, "Ich halte Ihre Nibelungen für das Höchste was seit Schiller und Goethe in Deutschland gemacht ist, ich bin als Deutscher Fürst stolz darauf, dass solch ein Werk zu meiner Zeit entstehen konnte und freue mich vom ganzen Herzen, dass ich es zuerst hören durfte!"<sup>1</sup>

Hebbel's letters at this period are filled with references to the high esteem in which his work was held. "Die Nibelungen stellt man über alles, was ich je Dramatisches lieferte", he says at one time.<sup>2</sup> While this opinion has changed now, and some of his earlier works are considered superior to his last completed dramatic effort, still in "Die Nibelungen" Hebbel as "Dolmetsch eines Höheren", has undoubtedly given to the old Nibelungenlied a new psychological interpretation which has done a great deal to bring the mediaeval story within the scope of the experience of modern theatre-goers.

1. Briefe, VIII, 18.

2. Ibid, VI, 218.

## CHAPTER III

### RICHARD WAGNER

In striking contrast with Hebbel's historical conception of the old Nibelungensaga is Richard Wagner's tetralogy, "Der Ring des Nibelungen," the drama of which he finished in 1852, in the same decade that marked the completion of Hebbel's trilogy. Hebbel constructed his play from the Nibelungenlied with the express purpose of giving the old legend a rebirth in the literature of the German nation; Wagner, as a romanticist and a musician, was interested in the mythical aspect of the old legends from the point of view of suitability for opera, and so he turned his attention to the more primitive version, the Völsungasaga.

To Wagner, the myth was particularly the possession of the whole people, striking down deep into the very roots of national thinking. One of his most strongly-held ideas was that art should have a very vital contact with the life of the common folk, - as he lets one of his finest characters, Hans Sachs, say, - "Dass Volk und Kunst gleich blüt's und wachs'"; - and so he regards the old national myths as the very finest possible subjects for artistic treatment, - for reinterpretation from the modern point of view.

Wagner was the pioneer of the nineteenth century in modern music-drama. His great theory was the unification of all the arts, music, drama, architecture, painting, and all things connected with the stage-technique, to form a single great dramatic expression. Up until Wagner the operatic stage



had been ruled by the Italian opera, in which long arias were all-predominant and the score and the orchestra were of minor importance. Wagner, however, first wrote his own drama, then composed his music in intimate union with each thought in the score. The union of poetry and music is also found among the early Romanticists. E.T.A. Hoffmann, in his essay "Der Dichter und der Compomist", points out "that Romantic opera is the only true opera, because the music must necessarily have its origin directly in the poetry, and that, because of these conditions, musical drama must originate as the work of a gifted and really romantic poet."<sup>1</sup>

Wagner employs the music to make clear the past, present and future of the drama by using "Leitmotiven", whereby each main idea and person is associated with a certain melody. One of the best and most effective uses of this system is noticed in the motif of Alberich's curse upon the gold. Whenever the disastrous results of this curse are shown upon the stage, the curse motif occurs in the orchestra with great dramatic effect. For example, when Fafner has slain Fasolt in order to be the sole possessor of the gold, all the gods are horrified into a "langes feierliches Schwiegen", and in this awful stillness, the music of Alberich's curse swells up in the orchestra. Through the music the curse becomes a living, vital force in the tragedy. Or again, in "Die Walküre" and in "Siegfried" Wotan's impotency against established law and order is stressed by the recurrence of the "Vertragstreue" motif in the orchestra. Once he has made a pact he cannot

---

I. Witkowski, 123.

break it. Newman, in his book on Wagner comments as follows upon the use of the motif system: "It is by such uses as this of the leading-motive that Wagner has made his drama a living thing, that can stand unashamed among the finest artistic products of all the ages."<sup>1</sup>

With the aid of his music Wagner was able to restore the mythical world as no ordinary dramatist could have done. In it he was able to express moods and thoughts, to reveal what cannot be expressed in words and to raise the whole situation to a more exalted plane. Without the music his heroes and gods would have been as ordinary men, his dragon and his singing bird would have been ludicrous, and the drama would have lost its symbolic and allegoric meaning. With the music "Der Ring des Nibelungen" rises to the loftiest heights of tragedy.

During the period in which he worked at the Ring, Wagner was going through an intense change in his life and in his philosophy. It was just after the disastrous revolution of 1849 in Dresden, in which the poet had ardently taken a part. He had hoped by this revolution to improve the status of art in Germany, for he regarded it as deplorably degenerated. The true ideal he found in the ancient civilization of Greece, which was "the product of the collective energy of a whole age."<sup>2</sup> Individualized in their daily struggles with existence and development, the Grecian peoples were yet united in the most intimate harmony when they entered the realms of the arts. Contrasted with this oneness of soul, Wagner saw

1. Newman, 248.

2. Francke, 553.

the modern world as a mass of atoms, separated by modern industrialism, where each individual toiled for material existence, a world in which literature had lost its true aesthetic beauty, and was used sensationally as a vehicle for money-making. So Wagner turned his hopes towards the future, when some other revolution would reorganize the world and bring it to organic unity. "He sees in the climax of social disintegration the beginning of a new social order."<sup>1</sup> A new state will result, "in which men will have freed themselves from the last superstition, the superstition that a man can be a tool for an aim lying outside of himself. Having at last recognized himself the only aim of his existence, having discovered that this aim can be reached only through collective work, man's social creed will consist in a practical affirmation of the doctrine of Jesus; 'Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.' And this heavenly father will be none other than the collective wisdom of humanity which appropriates nature and its fulness for the benefit of all."<sup>2</sup>

It is to this period of development in Wagner's philosophy that the figure of Wotan above all is due. The king of the gods turns to materialism and lust for power, and in so doing brings ruin upon the world of the gods. Convinced of his crime, however, he acquiesces in the downfall of his order,

<sup>1</sup>. Francke, 551.

<sup>2</sup>. Ibid, 552.

that a new one, untainted by sin, may arise out of the ruins.

The first part of Wagner's tetralogy to be finished was oddly enough, "Götterdämmerung", which he completed while he was still in Dresden in 1848. This was before the ideas of the Revolution were fermenting in him, before he saw the desperate necessity for social disintegration as the precedent to the founding of a new order. Then known as "Siegfried's Tod", the tragedy was merely another rendering of the Brünnhilde-Siegfried episode in the Nibelungensaga. But when the spark of the revolutionary ideas burst into short-lived flame, and Wagner was forced as a result to flee to Switzerland, he turned again to his Nibelungen drama with new and entirely original ideas clamoring to be expressed. "Siegfried's Tod" was Wagner's conventionally romantic version of a well-known story. The other dramas, however, are original creations of his own genius. So, working back from "Siegfried's Tod", Wagner built up his tetralogy. It started as a romantic opera, but ended as an allegorical, philosophical music-drama. It is this irregularity in composition which accounts for the apparent incongruity between the last part and the three that precede it. Thus, Wagner's drama is an allegory, the dramatization of his philosophic ideas with regard to the betterment of the social order. He saw the world of his day absorbed in materialism, obsessed by greed for wealth and power. The gold which the Rhine maidens guard, innocent of its possible power and prizing it solely for its beauty and splendor, is the symbol of the baleful power of riches. But only one who foreswears

love can wield this power, and Wagner is pointing out that the lust for wealth is driving beauty and love out of the world - they cannot exist where greed reigns.

As Alberich plunges the Rhine into darkness with his theft of the gold, the scene changes to the heights of the gods, where Wotan is found chafing under the irksome chains which bind him. He had purchased his wife, Fricka, with one of his eyes, and with her, the power of becoming the lawgiver of the universe. But he who heads the state cannot be free, he must act in accordance with the laws he has set up, and so Wotan's passionate nature is curbed by force. He has ordered the giants to build Walhalla, a new home for the gods, and, while promising them the goddess of youth and beauty, Freia, in payment, he is relying upon the cunning of Loge to get him out of his predicament. To gratify his desires he is forced to turn to the cunning brain that does not shrink from evil. Thus Wotan is drawn into the net of materialism. With infinite cunning Loge tells him the story of the rape of the gold, and Wotan, while still undecided, consents to go with Loge to the land of the dwarfs. Here he sees the terrible conditions which the power of gold can bring about. Men are turned into slaves, toiling for another's gain. Nowhere is there any light, all beauty and love has been banished from Nibelheim with the advent of the ring which Alberich has forged from the gold. On viewing this underworld, Wotan's desires seem to him highly moral, to remove this menace from the poor creatures of the netherworld, and to save the intellectual, law-giving world of the gods from

the impending destruction which Alberich intends to bring upon it. So with lofty purposes he consents to Loge's tricks as a means to the end. He is, however, not entirely unselfish, since he intends to keep the ring for himself, and thus safeguard his kingdom from ruin. And he clings to it, even although the giants are prepared to take away Freia, until he is told to give it up by Erda, the "Ur-Mutter" of all living things, who rises from the bowels of the earth to advise him in his critical emergency. When preparing to cross the rainbow to the new home of the gods, Wotan realizes that all this splendor must perish, that the race of the gods is doomed to destruction. They, the lawgivers, have become tainted with guilt, by trying to evade the laws for their own gain, and Wotan determines to seek further counsel from Erda. The curtain falls upon the prologue with the wailing of the Rhine maidens for their lost gold.

In this prologue Wagner has expressed his idea of the existing social conditions - "The dwarfs, giants and gods are dramatizations of the three main orders of men: the instructive, predatory, lustful, greedy people; the patient, toiling, stupid, respectful, money-worshipping people; and the intellectual, moral, talented people, who devise and administer states and churches."<sup>I</sup> The greed for power overtakes the dwarfs, who are desirous of ruling the world for themselves, who do not realize that other things are necessary for the progress of the world besides gold. These are the modern capitalists, the men who are driving the intellectual element from the social order, and who are putting empty wealth in

---

I. Shaw, 32.

its stead. With their lack of appreciation for beauty, naturally they can see no reason why the cult of art and literature should be maintained. The giants are the misers, those who do not wish to gain from their money, but merely to hoard what they have got, the people who toil all their lives to save money, only to die without ever having been able to use it. The gods are those "capable of thought, whose aims extend far beyond the satisfaction of their bodily appetites and personal affections, since they perceive that it is only by the establishment of a social order founded on common bonds of moral faith that the world can rise from mere savagery."<sup>I</sup>

So these three worlds are at war, and if power in the shape of the ring is once more obtained by Alberich, then he will not hesitate to bring about the destruction of Walhalla. Hence Wotan turns his attention towards a means for saving his race. He himself cannot take back what he had given, he must remain true to his word, so he begets, first, a daughter Brünnhilde with Erda, who shall with eight sisters, bring the heroes, fallen in battle, to Walhalla, to protect it from Alberich; and secondly, a son, Siegmund, who, a man and a hero, shall save the world of the gods from destruction. But Siegmund, who had been separated from his twin sister Sieglinde, when they were very young, finds her again, the unwilling wife of Hunding, and while still unknown to each other, passion flares up between them, and they run away together, after Siegmund has snatched from the tree-trunk the sword which Wotan had placed there for him. Wotan orders Brünnhilde to

---

I. Shaw, II.

protect Siegmund in this battle, but Fricka, the guardian of the hearth, is outraged at the double crime, adultery and incest, and stormily she points out to Wotan that the ruling powers cannot oppose the laws which they themselves have set for others. But Wotan has no desire to let his own will be thwarted by Fricka's pleas, and refuses to interfere against the two lovers. Then the realization comes to Fricka that Wotan's present course of action is bringing destruction upon the gods.

"So ist es denn aus  
mit den ewigen Göttern,  
seit du die wilden  
Wälsungen zeugtest?  
Heraus sagt' ich's -  
traf ich den Sinn?  
Nichts gilt dir der Hehren  
Heilige Sippe;  
hin wirfst du alles,  
was einst du geachtet;  
zerreissest die Bande,  
die selbst du gebunden;  
lösest lachend  
des Himmels Haft -

dass nach Lust und Laune nur walte  
dies frevelnde Zwillingspaar,  
deiner Untreue zuchtlose Frucht!"<sup>I</sup>

Angrily she shows him that rulers will cause their own ruin  
I. Die Walküre, 32.



if they themselves do not honour the laws they have given to the rest of the world. Calmly Wotan attempts to reveal to her his own point of view:

"Stets Gewohntes

nur magst du versteh'n:

doch was noch nie sich traf,

danach trachtet mein Sinn! -

Eines höre!

Not tut ein Held,

der, ledig göttlichen Schutzes,

sich löse vom Göttergesetz:

so nur taugt er

zu wirken die Tat,

die, wie not sie den Göttern,

dem Gott doch zu wirken verwehrt."<sup>1</sup>

Fricka, however, immediately reveals to Wotan what he had not realized before, that Siegmund was not such a free man, and most unwillingly he has to accede to her wishes.

On Brünnhilde's return, he unburdens his innermost soul to his favorite daughter, telling her the story of his transgressions and the necessity for restitution to save his race. But the hopelessness of his case now becomes fully apparent to Wotan, and the thought begins to take hold upon his mind that only through the destruction of this guilt-laden order can the world be free to begin again, fresh and untainted by sin.

"Fahre denn hin,

herrische Pracht,

göttlichen Prunkes  
 prahlende Schmach!  
 Zusammen breche  
 was ich gebaut!

Auf geb' ich mein Werk,  
 nur eines will ich noch,  
 das Ende - -  
 das Ende! -"1

To his destructors, Alberich, and his son, he gives up the  
 worthless glitter of God-head:

"So nimm meinen Segen,  
 Nibelungen-Sohn!  
 Was tief mich ekelt,  
 dir geb' ich's zum Erbe,  
 der Gottheit nichtigen Glanz:  
 zernage sie gierig dein Neid!"2

And so he orders Brünnhilde to protect Hunding. But he forgets  
 that Brünnhilde is naught else but his own will. Fricka  
 speaks of her to Wotan as "deines Wunsches Braut", and says  
 "deinen Willen vollbringt sie allein." Brünnhilde says her-  
 self to him: -

"Zu Wotan's Willen sprichst du,  
 sagst du mir, was du willst:  
 wer - bin ich,  
 wär' ich dein Wille nicht?"

And Wotan answers -

"Was keinem in Worten ich künde,

---

1. Die Walküre, 46.

2. Ibid, 47.

unausgesprochen  
 bleib' es ewig:  
 mit mir nur rat' ich,  
 red' ich zu dir. - - - "I

Thus Brünnhilde will carry out his most inmost wishes rather than his unwilling commands. Until the present moment there had been no conflict between his desires and his orders, but now he must act contrary to his desires, and expects Brünnhilde to do the same. But his "Wunsch-Tochter" is not hedged in by the conventionalities of God-head. The forces of Wotan's will in her act upon her sympathies for Siegmund and Sieglinde, and easily outbalance the desire to obey the commands which Wotan placed upon her at Fricka's bidding. Wotan, therefore, is forced to punish Brünnhilde by putting her to sleep, so that he may "protect the fictions and conventions of Walhalla against her".<sup>2</sup> For Fricka's sake Wotan must uphold the law as long as possible, without bringing disgrace upon them, which would happen if his arbitrary will were allowed full sway. So he must take steps to prevent a similar event from recurring.

With the ringing down of the final curtain in "Die Walküre", Wagner is paving the way for the new race that is to come, a race of heroes. The dwarfs, giants and gods have played themselves out. The new race will break up the old order and found the new. The old order has been proven inadequate by those who founded it. Wotan realized that the laws which his race had set up were no longer capable of governing the world, but he knew also that those laws could only be proven

I. Die Walküre, 40-41.  
 2, Shaw, 90.

ineffectual, and that the world could only be given a new and better system, when his order was destroyed. Only in the disintegration of the old order could a new one arise. The old order had become imbued with materialism, hedged about with conventions, surrounded by empty, worthless glitter. These things are to vanish with the destruction of the God-head, and in their place shall come simplicity, naturalness, fearlessness and love. In this manner is Wagner trying to point out to the German nation the need in their own age for the destruction of the existing order and the foundation of a new one, patterned preferably upon the order of the ancient Greeks.

So in "Siegfried" Wagner paints the picture of perfect naturalness and simplicity in the young hero, the son of Siegmund and Sieglinde, who is to deliver the existing world from its old worn-out laws, and impose new ones upon it. Siegfried is nourished by the smith Mime, Alberich's ugly, timid brother, who hopes to gain, through this young man, the gold which had enslaved him to Alberich, and with which he hopes to make himself master of the world. Siegfried has grown up like a wild, young animal in the forest, absolutely fearless, and he is only waiting for Mime to forge him a sword before he goes off into the world in search of adventure. So far Mime has been unsuccessful; each sword he has forged has been snapped in twain by the strong young hero, and not until Mime produces the pieces of Siegmund's sword, Nothung, does Siegfried find one which satisfies him. When Mime admits he cannot forge it, Siegfried scornfully does it himself. This accomplished he is ready to fare forth into the world.

Parallel with Siegfried's entrance into the world of heroic deeds, is Wotan's withdrawal from the world of action; he becomes a passive hero. He appears first in "Siegfried" to inform Mime that only one who did not know fear could forge anew the sword of the Wälsung, Siegmund. A second time he appears to warn Alberich and Fafner of the coming of Mime and Siegfried, and to tell the dwarf that he will not use his power to help the young hero.

"Wen ich liebe  
 lass' ich für sich gewähren;  
 er steh' oder fall',  
 sein Herr ist er:  
 Helden nur können mir frommen."<sup>I</sup>

Wotan has realized that the fearlessness of this young hero may possibly bring about the redemption of the world, but only if he is permitted to act according to the law of his own nature.

Wotan returns then to summon up Erda and tells her that he is willing the end of the gods.

"Um der Götter Ende  
 gräm't mich die Angst nicht,  
 seit mein Wunsch es - will!  
 Was in des Zwiespalts wildem Schmerze  
 verzweifeln einst ich beschloss,  
 froh und freudig  
 führe frei ich nun aus:  
 weiht' ich in wüthendem Ekel

des Niblungen Neid schon die Welt,  
 dem wonnigsten Wälsung  
 weis' ich mein Erbe nun an."<sup>1</sup>

In the union of Siegfried and Brünnhilde, he sees a  
 chance for the redemption of the sin-laden gods:

"Die du mir gebar'st,  
 Brünnhild'  
 weckt sich hoch der Held:  
 wachend wirkt  
 dein wissendes Kind  
 erlösende Weltenthat. - "<sup>2</sup>

Then he sends Erda to eternal sleep, and waits for Siegfried to come. He tests the daring young hero, holding up his spear to bar the way, but Siegfried breaks it with his sword. This symbolizes " the last ineffectual stand of constituted authority against the young, untrammelled individuality of the future."<sup>3</sup> Resignedly, Wotan picks up the pieces, saying:

"Zieh' hin! ich kann dich nicht halten!"<sup>4</sup>,  
 and Siegfried is left to make his way to Brünnhilde. But the Brünnhilde who is awakened by Siegfried's kiss is now only a mortal woman, and her passion for the great hero outweighs her filial affection for the old order, and she lives now solely for the love of Siegfried.

The close of "Siegfried" marks the finish of the  
 philosophical dramas of the tetralogy. The fourth part

- 
1. Siegfried, 79.
  2. Ibid, 79.
  3. Newman, 232.
  4. Siegfried, 86.

"Götterdämmerung", is grand opera in the old style. Taken in connection with the other three parts of the "Ring", it is an operatic anachronism. This last part, as has been said, was written in 1848 under the title of "Siegfried's Tod", and was intended by Wagner as nothing deeper than an operatic treatment of the old Nibelungensaga. But when, after the Revolution, he saw the need for a new social order in the world of his own time, he began to see the destruction of the old gods and the birth of the world of heroes as the symbol of the annihilation of an old order by a new one. So he changed the title of "Siegfried's Tod" to "Götterdämmerung", and worked backwards upon his tetralogy. But the fourth part lacks the philosophical depth found in the other three, and the characters of Brünnhilde and Siegfried are somewhat incongruous, though they are not incomprehensible. In the fourth part the Brünnhilde of the Walküre, the will and "Wunsch-Tochter" of Wotan, has vanished, and has given place to "a majestically savage woman, in whom jealousy and revenge are intensified to heroic proportions",<sup>1</sup> who in the intensity of her passion plots Siegfried's death with a villain, but who always intends to follow him to death, since life without him would be intolerable. This change in the character of Brünnhilde is motivated by the all-powerful passion of love, which, firstly, makes her disregard the services which filial affection for Wotan demands of her, and secondly, makes her turn into a titanic virago. The Siegfried of the third part is naïve and simple, an ignorant boy, who softly and shyly asks Brünnhilde if she is his mother since she loved

I. Shaw, 87.

him before he was born. But with the fourth evening he has changed into a man of the world, who banters cleverly with the Rhine maidens. Brünnhilde's teachings while he was with her can be taken as a motivation of this change in character, but it is much more convincing when regarded as a remainder of the first version of "Siegfried's Tod".

As has been said before, this last part is very close to grand opera. There is a chorus of men and women, a futile king, a rather simple negative sister, both of these being under the dominance of their sinister half-brother Hagen. Though these figures do not fit in completely with the philosophically symbolic figures of the earlier parts of the tetralogy, the connection with the first three dramas is clearly maintained.

Approaching the subject from such a different point of view, Wagner's treatment of the characters is very different from that of Hebbel. In Wagner Hagen is Gunther's half-brother and the agent of Alberich. He is shown as a much more demoniacal figure than either in the epic or in Hebbel, inspired by personal greed and jealousy and absolutely lacking the redeeming loyalty so characteristic of him in the other versions. In Wagner, there is, of course, no "Kriemhilds Rache" which makes Hagen's role the more despicable. He even, in his effort to get possession of the ring, slays Gunther himself, only to be finally lured to his death by the Rhine maidens.

Accepting Brünnhilde as a Valkyrie, Wagner regards her in the beginning more as an instrument than as a positive per-



sonality, until her awakening by Siegfried arouses the human passions within her. Her ending is much fierier than that of Hebbel's Brunhild, worthy of her proud origin as a Valkyrie, when she dashes upon her steed into the funeral pyre and joins in death the hero who had been separated from her by treachery.

Owing to the absence of the revenge sequel, Wagner felt no need to characterize particularly Guttrune - his Kriemhild. Because she has no important part to play - is in fact only a tool in the hands of Hagen, she is very tame and colourless compared with the Kriemhild of the epic or of Hebbel.

Siegfried, who, according to Wagner, is Wotan's chosen instrument for the great task of redeeming humanity from the curse of their gold, is, of course, presented in the most attractive light - the very personification of fearless and adventuresome youth. Wagner releases him from all responsibility for his failure in carrying out Wotan's plans by having him drink the magic potion of forgetfulness, so cunningly prepared for him by Hagen. In this Wagner is, of course, following the old saga, but this is just a little difficult for the modern to accept. It seems the very fact of making him morally responsible makes it more difficult to regard him as a tragic figure. One feels that Wotan is the hero in this play - not Siegfried.

Those characteristics which mark Wagner as a romantic poet are clearly shown first in his choice of subject matter. He found interest, not in the mediaevalized version of the old sagas, the Nibelungenlied, but in the Völsungasaga, a prose version of the primitive Eddas. The mythical aspects of this

work, the gods, dwarfs and giants, the heroes, the Valkyries, the curse on the gold and the fierce dragon appealed to Wagner's romantic tendencies. He did not confine himself to one treatment of the saga, as Hebbel did, but drew his material from various sources. The theft of the gold by the gods from the dwarf and his ensuing curse upon it Wagner takes from the *Völsungasaga*, but the Rhine maidens and the Walhalla episode are the products of the poet's own genius. In "Die Walküre", however, Wagner follows the northern tale very closely; the union of the sister and brother is related in the saga, but Sigurd is not the son of that union but of Sigmund and Hjordis. Nor is Grane Brünnhilde's horse but one which Odin helped Sigurd to choose for himself, and with the help of the fearless steed he penetrates the flames. The story of Brünnhilde's magic sleep is the same, with the difference that in the saga vengeance and passion motivate Odin's punishment of the Valkyrie, whereas in Wagner it is fate which forces Wotan to put his favorite daughter to sleep. Wagner has very cleverly joined this episode with that of Siegmund, giving a close unity to his drama which is lacking in the *Völsungasaga*. He has also made Siegmund the son of Wotan, whereas in the saga four generations separate Odin and Siegmund. This compression, however, was also necessary for unity.

In "Siegfried" Wagner has departed still farther from the *Völsungasaga*. He has followed the *Thidreksaga* in the account of Siegfried's upbringing in the wood by the smith. This *Thidreksaga* is a later version than either the *Nibelungenlied*

or the Völsungasaga, and has characteristics which show that the author has known both legends and has drawn from them. Although the saga treats mainly the life and adventures of Dietrich von Bern, Siegfried's life is also fully described. The interview and guessing contest between Mime and Wotan indicates influence from a lay in the Elder Edda, "Vafthruthnismal" in which Odin, always in quest of wisdom, seeks in disguise the giant Vafthruthnir, and they have a contest to see which is the wiser. In the Völsungasaga, as in Wagner, there is no mention made of bathing in the blood of the dragon; in the old legend it is Sigurd's gaze that makes his heroes helpless, and Guttorm cannot kill him until his eyes are closed in sleep. Wagner makes Siegfried invulnerable through Brünnhilde's spells, as bathing in the dragon's blood would be impossible on the stage, although the latter method doubtlessly appealed more to the romantic poet. Wagner again reverts to the Thidreksaga in the matter of Siegfried's horse. In the Völsungasaga Odin himself helps him to choose a horse, which is of the same breed as the horses of the gods. With this horse he is able to penetrate the flames to Brünnhilde's resting place. In the Thidreksaga Brünnhilde gives her horse to Siegfried when he leaves her. Wagner is forced to follow the latter story because in no way can Wotan assist the young hero. But Siegfried must have a horse that is fitting for him, and the only steed possible was one that, through its owner, had once known God-head, and as Wotan could take no part in Siegfried's life, Brünnhilde alone could give him the required steed.

In "Götterdämmerung" Wagner has again drawn from various

sources. Siegfried is served with a drink of forgetfulness as in the Völsungasaga, but by Gutrune, not by her mother, as in the old legend. In order to link up this last part with the first parts of the tetralogy, Hagen is made the son of Alberich. In Wagner's dramas Brünnhilde demands Siegfried's death because he deserted her. In the northern legend, however, Brünnhilde had foretold to Siegfried that he would marry another and demands his death because he betrayed her to the mocking Gudrun. Of her own free will Brünnhilde betrays the secret of his vulnerable point, not as in the Nibelungenlied, where Hagen cleverly draws the information from Kriemhild. As in the German epic, Siegfried is killed while on a hunt, but Wagner is influenced by the Völsungasaga in making Brünnhilde follow Siegfried into death.

Wagner makes a greater use of the curse upon the gods than does the old legend. In the Völsungasaga the dwarf Anvari curses the gold, declaring that it should be the bane of every man who should own it thereafter. Strife follows immediately in the family of the owners, Fafnir killing his father and driving out his brother. Although no further mention is made of the curse, through the ring destruction is wrought upon Sigurd. Wagner invests the ring with a deeper meaning by making desire for it symbolical of the evil passions of the world for material gain. In the old legend the curse upon the ring brought ruin and death, with Wagner it means disintegration from a moral and social standpoint as well.

Wagner's master hand is shown in the clever way in which he has moulded together episodes and characteristics from the various sagas and made of them a unified opera, while at the same time investing the characters with his own ideas. More than any other Romanticist, he has accomplished a great deal towards making the old legends known throughout Germany. He probed deeper than the early Romanticists. The picture which they gave of mediaeval life was a superficial one. They restored the legends and songs, the romances and fairy tales, but they did not investigate under the picturesque garments to see if there were hearts and souls beneath them. They presented a brilliantly coloured tapestry but without any depth. Wagner, however, presented these mythical and mediaeval characters as human beings. In this way he was able to gain the interest of the people for their own literature. That was the goal of the early Romantic poets, to make the German national literature known to the people, but none of them ever came as close as Wagner to the attainment of this goal. Yet never did the great master make any compromise with the low tastes of the people. Rather he sought to raise their tastes to his own level.

As one may expect from a truly Romantic poet, there are some beautiful lyric passages in *The Ring*. That which is most worthy of notice is the lovely "Liebe-und-Lenz-Lied" which Siegmund sings in the first act of "*Die Walküre*". As the door of the hut opens and the moonlight streams into the room, Siegmund sings of the coming of spring:

"Winterstürme wichen

dem Wonnemond,  
in mildem Lichte  
leuchtet der Lenz;  
auf linden Lüften  
leicht und lieblich,  
Wunder webend  
er sich wiegt;  
durch Wald und Auen  
weht sein Atem,  
weit geöffnet  
lacht sein Aug'."I

Then he sings of the responding of flowers and trees to his touch, and of his union with his sister:

"Zu seiner Schwester  
schwang er sich her;  
die Liebe lockte den Lenz;  
in uns'rem Busen  
barg sie sich tief:  
nun lacht sie selig dem Licht.  
Die bräutliche Schwester  
befreite der Bruder;  
zertrümmert liegt  
was je sie getrennt;  
jauchzend grüsst sich  
das junge Paar:

vereint sind Liebe und Lenz!"2

---

I. Die Walküre, 22.

2. Ibid, 22-23.

Of unsurpassed beauty is the whole of this love scene between Siegmund and Sieglinde and equally so are the scenes between Siegfried and Brünnhilde in the last act of "Siegfried" and the prologue of "Götterdämmerung".

But it is not only sex-love of which Wagner sings, but also of that other love - caritas - love as it is taught in the finest of Christian idealism. This he sees as the greatest panacea for the ills of humanity. At the end of "Götterdämmerung," Brünnhilde leaves "den Hort ihres heiligsten Wissens" to the world:

"Nicht Gut, nicht Gold,  
noch göttliche Pracht;  
nicht Haus, nicht Hof,  
noch herrischer Prunk:  
nicht trüber Verträge  
trüglicher Bund,  
noch heuchelnder Sitte  
hartes Gesetz:

selig in Lust und Leid

lässt - die L i e b e nur sein! - "I

There are two opposing religious ideas in The Ring, one which is Christian and pessimistic, the other which is pagan and optimistic. The former idea is personified in Wotan, who willingly sacrifices himself and his race to redeem the world from sin. The latter idea is personified in the figure of Siegfried, the gay, light-hearted young hero, who thinks only of the joy of the moment, whose actions are guided by his I. Götterdämmerung, 86.

own desires, and who is cruelly overcome by fate. This optimistic figure resembles very closely the old sun-god, Baldr. But the Christian idea is superior in the end to the pagan one, and the drama finishes with the belief that love will conquer all evils and reign supreme in the world. Thus love, the greatest of all the uniting powers, will form the foundation of the new world of organic unity which arises out of the old world of materialism, swayed by envy, greed and hate.

With the ringing down of the final curtain of "Der Ring des Nibelungen" Wagner's great drama, depicting the disintegration of a social order, comes to a close. He has depicted the members of this order from their first sin through the years in which their ruler finally realizes that the only atonement lies in annihilation. And he has mingled with this drama of the evolution of humanity, the great human tragedy of Siegfried. Kapp sums up Wagner's achievements in The Ring as follows:

"Die Nibelungendichtung zeigt Wagners dramatische Kraft in ihrer höchsten Vollendung. Die Verschmelzung der verschiedenen nordischen Mythen und Sagen, in die noch mehrfach Märchenzüge verwebt sind, zu dem einen ungeheuren Granitblock, dessen bunt-schillerndes Äussere einen gewaltigen innern Kern umschliesst, die erschütternd Wotantragödie und das aus Herz greifende Menschendrama Siegfrieds, steht unerreicht da und hebt sein Werk weit über alle anderen Nibelungendichtungen hinaus. Erst durch Wagner ist dem deutschen Volk dieser Sagenschatz erschlossen und nahegebracht, aus einer toten



Historie zu neuem Leben erweckt worden."I

## CHAPTER IV

### HENRIK IBSEN

No treatment of the great dramas written around the Nibelungensaga in the nineteenth century could be made without a discussion, however brief, of Henrik Ibsen's play, "The Vikings at Helgeland," which he published in 1858, in the same decade which marked the completion of Hebbel's and Wagner's works. But, whereas both the German dramas are products of the more mature stages of development of those poets, "The Vikings at Helgeland" is still a youthful work, belonging to a transition period in Ibsen's life between his early romantic dramas and his later social ones.

At this moment in his life, Ibsen was whole-heartedly taking part in a movement against the dominance of Danish influence in Norwegian literature. Norway was steeped in Danish culture, and instead of originality in the arts, a slavish imitation resulted. But intellectual patriots were trying to arouse a feeling of nationalism in their country, especially in the field of literature. Several writers collected folk-lore material, such as peasant traditions and old folk-lore tales, and rewrote them, retaining, as far as possible, their original characteristics. Ibsen was extremely enthusiastic over this national trend in Norwegian literature, and his study of folk-lore led him in turn to the Scandinavian family-sagas. Of these, the Völsungasaga especially attracted him, and he recognized rich dramatic material in the tragic situation between Sigurd and the two women who loved him.

and Gunther of the German epic. To Brynhild, however, he gives the name of Hiördis, by which Sigurd's mother is known in the Völsungasaga, and Gudrun, the Norse equivalent of Kriemhild, he calls Dagny. Ibsen omits the figure of Hagen entirely, as Hiördis adequately represents the pagan conception of life, even to the point of carrying out her own vengeance. Dagny is much like the early Kriemhild, timid and conventional. Sigurd, some years before the opening of the play, has already committed his fatal error, - he has, out of friendship for Gunnar, given up to him the strong-souled Hiördis who was destined for him by the fates, and has himself married the weaker Dagny. Hiördis, realizing more clearly than he the mistake, tells him later: "All good gifts may a man give to his faithful friend - all save the woman he loves; for if he do that he rends the Norn's secret web, and two lives are wrecked. - - - Had we two held together, then hadst thou become more famous than all others, and I happier."<sup>1</sup> It is the old story of Siegfried and the two Queens, reinterpreted in terms of a realistic modern conflict, love versus friendship.

The play opens with a chance meeting between Sigurd the Strong, accompanied by his wife Dagny, and her father Örnulf, with his sons in the neighbourhood of Gunnar Headman's home. Örnulf has come to avenge the carrying off of his foster-daughter, Hiördis, by Gunnar, and Sigurd has sailed into the harbour for a few days' rest, not knowing near whose house he was. The exposition quickly follows in natural dialogue. With the entrance of the peasant Kåre upon the scene, seeking just-

All through his creative life, this sort of situation was to appeal to Ibsen. It is found in his early plays, but it appears with greater force and vividness in "The Vikings", and foreshadows the use he was later to make of it. Not only did Ibsen delve into the Völsungasaga but also into all the old Icelandic literature, into "Egils' Saga", the "Laxdaela Saga", and the "Njala Saga", and from these various sources he built up his drama.

This play he wrote with a definite purpose in view. By holding up to the Norwegian people the passionate depth of feeling in their ancestors and the rugged grandeur of their own national traditions, he hoped to win them back from Danish influence to a closer allegiance to their own culture. After studying all the old family-sagas, he extracted from them a picture of the austere life of the heroic but primitive ancestors of the Norwegian people, basing the main part of the plot upon incidents of the "Völsungasaga", and enriching it with incidents from the other sagas. Some of the most important features of the Völsungasaga, he did not use at all, however, because they did not fit in with his scheme, - as for example, the golden treasure with its fearful curse. As it was their life in primitive times which Ibsen wished to portray, he set his story in a definite historical period in which the gods and demi-gods had become extinct. The time he chooses is the beginning of the Christian era in the north. Ibsen retains the names of the principal male characters in the Völsungasaga, Sigurd and Gunnar, - corresponding, of course, to the Siegfried

ice, the dominant personality of Hiördis, who soon follows him, begins to occupy the stage. Neither Sigurd nor Örnulf can believe Gunnar to be guilty of injustice to anyone, but when Kåre blames Hiördis, Örnulf murmurs in an aside;

"Ay, ay, 'tis like her!"<sup>1</sup>

From this moment Hiördis fills the canvass, a dark and menacing figure, a purely primitive woman. With the exception of Örnulf, whose feelings for his foster-child are mixed with contempt, the other characters are ill at ease when in the presence of this passionate virago. Gunnar, when he sees her coming, is "disturbed", knowing full well that his plans will be upset. He does not understand his wife, he realizes, however, that she has the power to make him miserable and ridiculous, but he is absolutely helpless, and a reminder of his earlier vow to her is sufficient to force him to change his plans and refuse atonement to Örnulf. Nor is he clever enough to see through her subsequent change of front, and obediently comes back to Sigurd and Örnulf, bringing overtures of peace and an invitation to a banquet at his house.

Ibsen disregarded the divine origin of Hiördis (or Brynhild), but still endowed her with the passionate feelings which seem more rightfully to belong to the race of the gods, yet almost impossible to conceive of as natural in a human being. Brynhild, reduced to human stature, is a difficult character to understand. Never does she exhibit a temperate emotion; her resentment against Örnulf, the pride she exhibits before Sigurd, her contempt for Dagny, all are passionately

---

<sup>1</sup> I. Ibsen, Collected Works, II, II.

experienced. She loved Sigurd, but she seems to have loved him less for himself, than for his powers of achievement - for the satisfaction it might have brought to her boundless ambition. Her feeling for Gunnar is indifference, - she merely uses him as a tool to further her own ambitions. Such intense passion is not out of place in Brynhild, the fallen Valkyrie, who had enjoyed a superhuman destiny, whose one solace in banishment was that only the bravest of mortals could win her, and who was robbed of that solace by a trick. Her feeling of degradation can be understood. But Hiördis is supposed to be an ordinary woman, endowed with a sort of Valkyrie nature. As Gunnar's wife she has not had enough to occupy her, so she has brooded upon her husband's proven prowess, consoling herself with that for the deficiencies he has shown since marriage. Ibsen has given no superhuman strength to Hiördis. The hero who won her had not to overcome her herself in combat, but the fierce bear who guarded her. It seems rather like a combination of slaying the dragon and overcoming the Amazon, like Brynhild of the saga brought down to realistic proportions. As in the saga, it was, of course, really Sigurd.

Hiördis has a two-fold desire in bringing Örnulf and Sigurd to her home; - firstly, to provoke an open quarrel between her husband and her foster-father, who has openly insulted her; and, secondly, to see more of Sigurd that she may humble him. Her lust for vengeance against Örnulf for his insults can only be appeased by bloodshed, which she brings about in a demoniacally clever manner. Brynhild boasted to Gudrun of her husband's prowess, but Hiördis has all the

banquet guests for an audience. Failing to arouse Sigurd, she directs her clever insinuations towards Thorolf, Örnulf's youngest son, who lacks the self-control of Sigurd, and cannot hide his anger. She succeeds in goading Gunnar, who believes that Örnulf has killed his young son, to overhasty vengeance, and he kills Thorolf, although Sigurd begs him to wait.

Hiördis' lack of human feeling is clearly indicated when she shows no sorrow over the dire consequences of her passion.

Örnulf brings back their child, Egil, to them by way of atonement, only to find that they have killed Thorolf, and that after losing all his other sons in the fight to save their child's life. As he leaves, broken-hearted but not bowed, she says scornfully:

"Ay, let him go as he will; we shall scarce need many men to face him should he come with strife again! Now, Dagny - I wot it is the last time thy father shall sail from Iceland on such a quest!"<sup>1</sup>

Though she lives in the tenth century, according to Ibsen, she is extremely barbarous and primitive. She delights, for example, in the thought of sorceries and wild, unnatural experiences:

"Ha, what joy to be a witch-wife and ride on a whale's back - to speed before the bark, and wake the storm, and lure men to the depths with lovely songs of sorcery!"<sup>2</sup>

She makes a bow-string of her own hair, and she sings sorceries over the arrows. Her greatest ambition is to be one of the

heroes and heroines who live in Valhal:

---

1. Ibsen, II, 66.

2. Ibid, II, 45.

"They are the brave men that fell in the fight, the strong women that did not drag out their lives tamely like thee and me; they sweep through the air in cloud-rack and storm, on their black horses, with jangling bells! ( Embraces Dagny, and presses her wildly in her arms.) Ha! Dagny! think of riding on so rare a steed!"<sup>1</sup>

The proud and ambitious soul that dares to aim at Valhal receives a terrible blow when Dagny, roused to ungovernable anger by Hiördis' cruel taunts, blurts out the fatal secret that she had been won by Sigurd and not the husband of whom she has been so proudly boasting. But, whereas Brynhild was most bitter at being duped, Hiördis is roused to fury at the thought that Sigurd had flouted her. To such an insult there can be but one answer:

"Now have I but one thing left to do - but one deed to think upon: Sigurd or I must die!"<sup>2</sup>

In the Völsungasaga, the Brynhild episode occupies but little more than a quarter of the saga, and Sigurd is always the chief character, Brynhild important only because she causes his death. But Ibsen pivots the story around Hiördis; each character is strongly affected by her; Sigurd and Gunnar love her, Kåre hates her, Dagny fears her, Örnulf scorns her. Their feelings towards her enable her to sway them easily. She persuades Gunnar to fight Sigurd, she convinces Dagny that her weak and conventional soul has made Sigurd's life one long misery, and she forces Sigurd to challenge

Gunnar to single combat. In the Völsungasaga, Sigurd

---

1. Ibsen, II, 46.

2. Ibid, II, 68.



offers to put Gudrun aside and go away with Brynhild, but in Ibsen's drama it is Hiördis who attempts to persuade Sigurd to leave his wife and flee with her. Her hold over Sigurd, however, is not as strong as she thought it, for he refuses to sacrifice the gentle Dagny. Hiördis, however, will not be thwarted, she will command her fate, and whether Sigurd die or not, she will be with him. In this respect, Ibsen makes her more consistent than Brynhild. The Valkyrie demands Sigurd's death, knowing that he loves her, and fully intending to follow him; Hiördis wills his death while she thinks he scorns her, but later, learning of his love for her, she determines to follow him, whether it be to life or to death.

Realizing that she will be more sure of him in death, she then decides to kill him by her own hand. But her ferocity, and her passion put fear even into Sigurd, when she tells him where they two are going - to Valhal - and cries out:

"(Shrinking back)."Hiördis, Hiördis - I fear thee!"<sup>I</sup>

Vainly he attempts to bring her back to the present dangers for Gunnar and Egil, but her greatest ambition is now too close to her grasp for her not to reach out and take it. She lets fly an arrow, from the bow-string made of her own hair, and kills Sigurd, but for the second time she is flouted by the great hero, for, before his death, he tells her that he has become a Christian, and is hers, now less than ever. For this fatal blow, there is for Hiördis no solace, as for the first one. Sigurd had humiliated her, but he had really loved her.

Now she has no comfort:

---

I. Ibsen, II, 112.

"Dead! Then truly have I brought my soul to wreck!"<sup>1</sup>

She cannot accompany him, but worse than that, she had summoned the riders from Valhal by her sorceries, and now there is no escape. She flings herself to the bottom of the sea, hoping thus not to have to ride without Sigurd, but the fate she attempted to command is relentless. Her one hope for happiness lay in a life with Sigurd, but to the Christian Heaven she cannot follow him.

The characters of Sigurd, Gunnar and Dagny, Ibsen did not change very much. Sigurd is the same noble hero, but in Ibsen he is a better friend, a wiser counselor, a more thoughtful husband. He gave up Hiördís to Gunnar, not because of a magic potion of forgetfulness, but in a noble act of self-sacrifice. The Sigurd of the Völsungasaga is naïve, young, headstrong; Ibsen's Sigurd is wiser, somewhat older, more thoughtful. He tells Dagny about the slaying of Hiördís' bear, because he realizes that Gunnar's wife has evil plans; he tries to calm Gunnar at the feast; he aids him in every way against Kåre. In the Völsungasaga Sigurd is willing to put Gudrun aside and take Brynhild to wife, but when Hiördís proposes this to Ibsen's Sigurd, he refuses firmly. Hiördís threatens to tell Dagny and Gunnar of their love, but Sigurd, rather than bring pain to Dagny, prevents this by challenging Gunnar to combat. Sigurd, as a product of the tenth century, loses his naïve, god-like charm, and becomes a brave and wise warrior, fully conscious of the duties resting upon him.

---

Gunnar Ibsen has ennobled somewhat. In the Völsungasaga I. Ibsen, II, 112.

he treacherously decides to get rid of Sigurd, to quiet his wife, but as he has sworn the oath of blood-brotherhood with him, he will, by wizard's deeds, persuade his younger brother to commit the crime. In Ibsen, Gunnar never consents to Sigurd's death, and thinks of killing him only for an instant - only when he is under Hiördis' spell, as he tells her:

"It is as I say - there is witchcraft in all thy speech; no deed but seemeth fair to me when thou dost name it."<sup>1</sup> He is only a coward because he fears her strangeness - otherwise he is a true, brave warrior. When Hiördis wildly asks him if Dagny's story be true, he answers with lofty calm:

"It is all true, save only that I am a coward; no coward or dastard am I."<sup>2</sup>,

and Sigurd, much moved, replies:

"That thou art not, Gunnar! That hast thou never been!"<sup>3</sup>

Dagny, while playing a much more important rôle in Ibsen's drama, is a weaker woman than the proud Gudrun. But Gudrun had won Sigurd through sorcery, knowing he loved Brynhild, so she has to have pride to support her, whereas Dagny, overwhelmed and amazed that Sigurd could love her, is easily persuaded by Hiördis that he had never done so, and that she is unworthy of him. Sigurd, however, prizes her, because she is a gentle companion and a loving wife.

In Örnulf, Ibsen portrays a very convincing character. He is an old man, proud of his sons, worshipping the youngest, Thorolf. For Hiördis he has little love, but he would see her

---

1. Ibsen, II, 76.

2. Ibid, II, 68.

3. Ibid, II, 68.

happy, and would atone for the slaying of her father. The loss of his six sons he can bear, but the loss of Thorolf breaks his heart, though not his pride. Lofty and calm he hears of Thorolf's death, but when Sigurd and Dagny attempt to follow to help him carry the body, he breaks forth:

"Stay! Think ye Ærnulf will be followed by a train of mourners like a whimpering woman? Stay, I say! - I can bear my Thorolf alone. Sonless I go; but none shall say that he saw me bowed."I

His spirit breaks after he has buried his sons, but the great gift of the Fates, the skill to sing of his sorrows, gives him back his courage, and he is ready to take his revenge. He is a wonderful old man, hasty of temper, yet kind and thoughtful, a brave warrior, a tender father and a gifted skald.

Ibsen hoped, by depicting these brave rugged characters in his drama, to rouse his people from lethargic imitative emotions to genuine national feeling. So he showed them this tragic conflict from the life of their ancestors. At first the Scandinavian public did not take kindly to his play. Many of the people were too familiar with and had loved the sagas too long, to enjoy seeing pieces of various ones welded into a new shape by a young poet's imagination. They missed the mythical elements, too, the gods and the fiery dragon which for greater realism had been replaced by a fierce white bear. At first they could see little that was heroic about the deeds of these men, and Hiördis, with her primitive, passionate nature, was difficult to comprehend. But later, when Ibsen's

I. Ibsen, II, 66.

social dramas were at their height, critics began to see the value in this early play of his. The kernels of many of his later ideas are to be found in "The Vikings at Helgeland." The drama is, simply, the dramatization of a lie. Ibsen stresses in his later purely social dramas the vital necessity of truth as the fundamental basis of all human relationships. In "The Vikings" he is already pointing this out; Gunnar won his bride through trickery, and a marriage built on such a foundation cannot last. Ibsen points out, moreover, the tragedies that result as civilization progresses. Sigurd has adopted the Christian faith, while Hiördis, who would follow him anywhere, cannot go with him into this world, because she is an out-and-out pagan. And, as has been pointed out before, Ibsen's idea, that a strong man is frequently influenced by two kinds of women, is found in the situation between Sigurd, Hiördis and Dagny. The figure of Hiördis represents his theory that neither uncompromising passion nor uncompromising will can co-exist with organized society.

These social problems, which Ibsen developed more fully in his later dramas, are set, in "The Vikings", in a romantic atmosphere. The time of the drama is a stormy snow-grey winter day; two of the acts are on the rocky sea-cliffs, two in Gunnar's dark feast-room. The scene is northern Norway, where "each night is a whole winter long". It is a perfect romantic setting for such a play. Storms occur at fitting parts in the action, most notably in the last act, in the scene between Hiördis and Sigurd. The Valkyries, riding to Valhal, are, according to tradition, always announced by the storm. Ibsen

allows himself this one touch of supernatural imagery at the end, when the child Egil has a vision of his mother leading the wild ride to Valhal.

As has been said before, this play of Ibsen's is a product of a transition period between his purely romantic and his social dramas, and it is very naturally, strongly under the influence of both these points of view. Hebbel's play, on the other hand, is purely psychological. His purpose was to make relive in the hearts of the German people, the most valuable relic of their mediaeval literature, the Nibelungen-lied, changing it as little as possible and then only to make it psychologically acceptable to the modern reader. Wagner, however, the pure Romanticist, saw in the old myths the eternally human, and the most fitting symbols for the philosophy of life which he so strongly held at the time he wrote his great tetralogy.

Each poet used a vehicle suited to his own ideas; Hebbel, the traditional iambic, the only possible form, to him, for the re-writing of a great epic in dramatic form; Wagner, a fantastic verse of his own making, that could be sung to music, although he was misled by his desire to reproduce the primitive atmosphere into using to extreme lengths the old alliterative form and archaic words and expressions, which make the text more difficult for modern readers, without really achieving the artistic effects he desired; Ibsen, simple laconic prose, admirably suited to his realistic and ethical treatment of the old sagas. Each poet accomplished a great task. They have given to their people, each in his own way, a new appreciation

and an increased interest in the great monuments of ancient teutonic culture.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Simrock, Karl Joseph: Das Nibelungenlied, Stuttgart und Tübingen, 1843.
2. Morris, William: Völsunga Saga, New York, London and Bombay, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901.
3. Hebbel, Friedrich: Samtliche Werke, Berlin, B. Behr's Verlag.
4. Wagner, Richard: Der Ring des Nibelungen, Einzel-Ausgabe, Mainz, B. Schott's Söhne.
5. Ibsen, Henrik: Collected Works, London, William Heinemann, 1906.
6. Bartels, Adolf: Christian Friedrich Hebbel, Leipzig, Philipps Reclam jun.
7. Brandes, George: Henrik Ibsen, Critical Studies, New York, The Macmillan Co., 1899.
8. Carlyle, Thomas: Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, New York, D. Appleton and Company, 1881.
9. Coar, John Firman: Studies in German Literature in the Nineteenth Century, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1903.
10. Eller, Wm. Henri: Ibsen in Germany, Boston, Richard G. Badger, 1918.



- II. Ellis, Havelock: The New Spirit, New York, The Modern Library.
- I2. Francke, Kuno: Social Forces in German Literature, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1897.
- I3. Golther, Wolfgang: Die deutsche Dichtung im Mittelalter, Stuttgart, J.B. Metzler, 1912.
- I4. von Gottschall, Rudolf: Die deutsche Nationallitteratur des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts, Breslau, Eduard Trewendt, 1881.
- I5. Hebbel, Friedrich: Briefe, Berlin, B.Behr's Verlag, 1905.
- I6. Hebbel, Friedrich: Tagebücher, Berlin, B. Behr's Verlag, 1904.
- I7. Kapp, Julius: Wagner, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart, 1912.
- I8. Kuh, Emil: Biographie Friedrich Hebbels, Wien und Leipzig, Wilhelm Braumüller, 1912.
- I9. Kummer, Friedrich: Deutsche Literaturgeschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts, Dresden, Carl Reissner, 1924.
20. Kutscher, Arthur: Friedrich Hebbel, Berlin, B.Behr's Verlag, 1907.

21. Lasserre, Pierre: The Spirit of French Music, London,  
Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., Ltd.,  
1921.
22. Leroy, L. Archier: Wagner's Music Drama of the Ring,  
London, Noel Douglas, 1925.
23. Lichtenberger, Henri: Richard Wagner, Poète et Penseur,  
Paris, Librairie Felix Alcan, 1911.
24. Meyer, Richard M.: Die deutsche Literatur des neunzehnten  
Jahrhunderts, Berlin, Georg Bondi, 1910.
25. Moses, Montrose J.: Henrik Ibsen: The Man and His Plays,  
Boston, Little Brown and Co., 1920.
26. Von Muth, Richard: Einleitung in das Nibelungenlied,  
Paderborn, Ferdinand Schöningh, 1907.
27. Newman, Ernest: A Study of Wagner, London, Bertram Dobell,  
1899.
28. Rehorn, Karl: Die deutsche Saga von den Nibelungen in der  
deutschen Poesie, Frankfurt am Main, Moritz  
Diesterweg, 1877.
29. Scherer, W.: A History of German Literature, New York,  
Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903.
30. von Schrenck, Erich: Richard Wagner als Dichter, München,  
C.H. Beck, 1913.

31. Shaw, G.B.: The Perfect Wagnerite, London, Constable and Co., Ltd., 1926.
32. Weitbrecht, Carl: Die Nibelungen im Modernen Drama, Zurich, F. Schulthess, 1892.
33. Weston, Jessie L.: The Legends of the Wagner Drama, London, David Nutt, 1903.
34. Witkowski: The German Drama of the Nineteenth Century, New York, 1909.