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Völker von Alzey in German Literature

Volker von Alzey  
the figure of the minstrel and standard-bearer  
in medieval Nibelungen tradition  
and in German literature from 1819 to 1968  
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## Abstract

Volker von Alzey is probably based on a real model. The poet of the Nibelungenlied used the minstrel to project himself into the epic and give his interpretation of it. In later medieval heroic epics, Volker continued as self-projection and spokesman for the author. In the early nineteenth century the Nl became the basis for a German national ideology, with its heroes as models for the Germanic virtues of strength, courage, loyalty, chastity, etc. This ideology, taught in the secondary schools and universities, formed the basis for the popular reception of the Nl in dramas, ballads, novels, and retellings in prose and verse. Volker, Hagen's companion and self-projection of the author, is the loyal subject, and reflects the attitudes of the intellectuals to the power structure during the period 1818-1968.

Volker von Alzey est probablement fondé sur un vrai modèle. Le poète du Nibelungenlied a employé le ménestrel pour se projeter dans l'épopée et pour en rendre son interprétation. Plus tard dans des épopées héroïques médiévales, Volker a continué comme projection de soi-même et porte-parole pour l'auteur. Dans la première partie du dix-neuvième siècle le Nl est devenu la base d'une idéologie allemande nationale, dont les héros étaient des modèles des vertus allemandes de force, de courage, de loyauté, de chasteté, etc. Cette idéologie, enseignée aux écoles secondaires et aux universités, formait la base pour l'accueil populaire du Nl dans des drames, des ballades, des romans, et des récits en prose et en vers. Volker, le compagnon de Hagen et la projection de soi-même de l'auteur, est le sujet loyal, et reflète les attitudes des intellectuels aux pouvoirs établis pendant la période 1818-1968.

## Preface

My study of the popular reception of the Nibelungenlied (N1) began at McGill University in the winter semester 1965/66. In a paper written at the suggestion of Professor Wolfgang Hempel, I discussed, on the basis of the few readily available examples, the way in which authors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries presented the N1 to their contemporaries. During the preliminary work, I discovered many hitherto neglected literary works based on the N1 which promised to be most interesting to the study of German intellectual and political history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

When I expressed the desire to write a dissertation on this literature, Professor Hempel agreed to direct my research. Considering the volume of material, it seemed advisable to concentrate on one aspect of these works, leaving a comprehensive analysis to the future. I decided to investigate the treatment of the Volker figure in those works in which he appears, for the Volker figure in the N1 embodies loyalty, heroism, and poetry, and it could be interesting to study the literary and political reactions of modern writers to him. The first definitive bibliography of the literary adaptations of the Nibelungen saga formed the basis for this project and appears here as Part E.

I should like to thank Professor Hempel for his many valuable suggestions during the course of my work. Mrs. Mary Fuller, formerly of the University of Vermont, Mrs. Eleanor Salter, Mrs. Mae Rushing, and Mrs. Jean Myers of Armstrong State College in Savannah, Georgia, were of great assistance through their work in interlibrary loans. Frau Doris Thomann and Frau Erna Wolf of the Universitätsbibliothek Würzburg, P. Marcellinus Grünewald OSB and P. Ulrich Märzhäuser OSB, also of Würzburg, gave most generously of

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## A. Introduction.

In his recent study of Volker von Alzey in the N1, W. J. Grau states that it would be "eine reizvolle Aufgabe, einmal zu untersuchen, wie stark und in welcher Art dieses Volkerbild in den einzelnen Jahrhunderten vorhanden gewesen ist und welchen Wandlungen es unterworfen war."<sup>1</sup> Such is the purpose of the following dissertation: to examine the various transformations and interpretations of Volker from the N1 to the present day, particularly in the popular N1 reception of the last 150 years. Thus it will be both historical and interpretive in scope for a complete interpretation of a literary figure must take into account the conditions of its creation by the writer and its reception by contemporary readers and/or hearers, some of whom then transmitted the figure to future audiences, thus forming the literary tradition. This is particularly true of a figure in medieval heroic literature, which is based at least in part on historical events, and whose very anonymity in respect to authorship underlines the conviction on the part of the various poets that they were not creating original stories, but transmitting ancient traditions which were essentially true.<sup>2</sup>

Part B deals briefly with the medieval Volker figure, which provided the material for the modern popularizations. It first examines the possibility that the warrior minstrel entered the Nibelungen tradition based on an actual historical figure, whose personality made such an impression on a Rhenish poet, that the latter inserted him into his version of the story. This was perfectly consistent with the medieval view of historical truth for the medieval author viewed events and persons from the point of view of eternity so that for him there was no past or future, but one great present.<sup>3</sup> Thus Volker von Alzey could be seen as living contemporaneously with the heroes of the Nibelungen saga because by virtue of his inner qualities he belonged with them. We



shall, therefore, consider the various twelfth-century individuals who have been posited by historians as the actual models of the Volker figure.

Of course, Volker von Alzey is a literary figure; if there was an actual model for the Volker figure, then the Nl poet transformed this minstrel or standard-bearer into Hagen's companion as we know him, just as Goethe transformed his Strassbourg friend Lerse into the Lerse of Götz von Berlichingen. Thus we shall see that the Nl Volker already represents that literary transformation from the given material to the poet's idea which will typify the special treatment accorded to Volker down through the ages but especially in the popularizations of the Nl in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The import of this transformation will become clear only upon examination of the Alzey ministerial and comparison of him with the literary figure in the Nl. }

From the historical Volker we shall move to a consideration of Volker's role in the Nl. That an understanding of a relatively minor figure can lead to a fuller appreciation of the Nl has been demonstrated by previous scholarship. To be sure, the earlier work, as exemplified by Karl Lachmann and Andreas Heusler, was primarily concerned with the pre-history of the epic,<sup>4</sup> in which discussion centered on the question of Volker's probable role in these earlier stages: Heusler believed that he was a minstrel, inserted into the tradition by another minstrel in order to glorify the minstrel class,<sup>5</sup> while Droege saw the Rhenish standard-bearer as Volker's original role.<sup>6</sup> Edward Schröder believed in the existence of a lost epic, in which Volker was both minstrel and standard-bearer, basing this assumption on the alliteration of "venre" and "videlaere," and on the fact that the Kaiserchronik contains a "Volcwin der venre;"<sup>7</sup> I shall come to Schröder's conclusion, but for different reasons. In recent years, however, the tendency has been to focus attention on the Nl itself, as one of the major literary works

of the Middle Ages.<sup>8</sup> Nelly Dürenmatt points out the courtly character of the Nl,<sup>9</sup> while Jochen Splett sees Rüdiger von Bechelaren as exemplifying the ideal courtly man, who experiences the conflict of the Nl from the standpoint of Christian legal thinking.<sup>10</sup> Gottfried Weber sees Dietrich von Bern as the key figure to the meaning of the epic,<sup>11</sup> and although his conclusions have been effectively refuted by Helmut Brackert<sup>12</sup> and Hans Kuhn,<sup>13</sup> his brief discussion of Volker is valuable in that it suggests that an "idea" of the poet's is also incorporated in the minstrel figure.<sup>14</sup> We shall continue with short discussions of Volker in later medieval poetry, including the Danish ballad and the Hvens Chronik, and conclude with an attempt to understand Volker as he was perceived by the Middle Ages.

Part C investigates the treatment of Volker in modern German literature, i.e. in those literary works which deal with the Nibelungen saga, in the Scandinavian or in the German form, or in a combination of the two. The criticism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries invariably weighed these works against the medieval Nl, and just as invariably found them wanting.<sup>15</sup> One need not be surprised at this: the modern era can no more produce a medieval heroic epic than the Middle Ages could have produced a Faust or a Zauberberg; for, as Brackert has pointed out, one cannot interpret the Nl by reworking it on the basis of modern attitudes, but must approach it as a work essentially different from post-medieval experience, yet accessible to our understanding.<sup>16</sup> The value of the modern Nibelungen works lies not in their esthetic merit, nor in their contribution to interpretation of the Nl, but rather as evidence of the popular reception accorded the Nl, from the Wars of Liberation, when it first became widely studied, to the present day. This was first realized by Eldo Frederick Bunge, who in 1940 treated especially the use made of the Nl for propaganda purposes during the early days of the Third Reich.<sup>17</sup> Thirty years

later, Helmut Brackert published his brief survey of the reception of the Nl in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as reflected in the literary adaptations.<sup>18</sup> Here and in the afterword to Volume I of his Nl translation, Brackert describes the development of a German ideology which saw incorporated in the Nl the eternal Germanic qualities of loyalty, bravery, strength, and that patriotism which rejects the foreign as intrinsically inferior, and which used the Nl as a focal point in developing a national awareness in the German-speaking people. The history of the reception of the Nl in Germany reflects, according to Brackert, the evolution of the "German ideology" from national awareness before 1848, to nationalism, then to imperialism, and finally to the fascist racism of the Third Reich.<sup>19</sup>

The mode of interpretation which formed the basis for this evolution remained essentially the same: Siegfried, Hagen, and Kriemhild incorporated the archetypal Germanic qualities; the hoard stood for German unity and greatness; finally, the entire Nl was interpreted as a testimonial to the ancient Germans' unquestioning and unconditional loyalty to their ruler.<sup>20</sup> Volker von Alzey, too, has his particular role in this popular interpretation of the Nl, a role which is prefigured in the medieval epic, where as self-projection of the Nl poet, the Burgundian minstrel figure expresses certain attitudes of the writer.<sup>21</sup>

The development of a German ideology based on a simplification and popularization of the Nl took place in five phases.<sup>22</sup> In the first phase which ended in 1848, the epic was seen as evidence of the bygone greatness and unity of the German nation, and served to stimulate enthusiasm for the efforts of those liberal progressives who wished to achieve national unity. After the failure of these efforts in 1848-1849, the epic remained a symbol of what Germany could become, of the national mission of the Germans. This tone, which soon after 1862 became an expression of the hope and

confidence which the national liberals placed in Bismarck, and Volker's role within it, dominated the NI reception until 1888, when Wilhelm II became Kaiser. Then Bismarck's star began to wane, and the first flush of enthusiasm for the new Reich gave way to far-flung imperialist ambitions. This third phase, from 1889-1918 sees Volker emerging in a new role, as his relationship to Hagen and to the action of the NI changed in response to Germany's new role in the world. When this role collapsed in 1918, the German nationalists sought to compensate for the national disgrace by seeking out and cultivating the eternal qualities of the German soul. Once again the NI was called into service. Finally, in 1933, National Socialism set out to exploit the national epic in developing unquestioning loyalty to its Führer, and Volker von Alzey did his part as the most heroic of the vassals, as the poet of Burgundy, and as Hagen's most committed follower.

After the catastrophe of 1945, which put an end to the German ideology, the popular interpretation of the NI took new directions: while it still saw the Germans as the Nibelungen, this identification was put to new uses based on the experiences of the preceding era. Siegfried could become a symbol of peace and reconciliation, or else, in an exercise in national psychoanalysis, the epic was interpreted as paradigmatic for the faults and virtues of the German soul. In all cases, however, the NI exegesis persisted in its identification of the Germanic medieval heroes with contemporary Germans, an identification at best questionable and at worst tragically false.

Extensive preliminary studies of all available Nibelungen works led gradually to the insight into the ideological purpose behind them. The first step was to identify all of the German "Nibelungendichtungen;" an examination and comparison of the earlier bibliographies<sup>23</sup> showed them all to be incomplete, for each contained items not listed in the

others. It was, therefore, necessary to search Kayser's Bücherlexikon under the key words "Nibelungen," "Siegfried," "Kriemhild," "Brunhild," "Rüdiger," and "Hagen" year by year from 1834 to 1911, and then to do the same with its successors, the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie, the Deutsches Bücherverzeichnis, and the Jahresverzeichnis des deutschen Schrifttums. Also consulted under the appropriate key words were Körner's Bibliographisches Handbuch, Kosch's Literaturlexikon, Max Schneider's Titelbuch, and Franz Anselm Schmitt's Stoff- und Motivgeschichte, each of which contained titles to be found nowhere else.

Having compiled a complete bibliography of literary works in German based on the Nibelungen tradition, it then became a matter of locating and reading them, together with the critical work dealing with them. This literature is, for the most part, extremely rare and difficult to obtain: extensive correspondence with university and municipal libraries throughout the United States was a necessary and time-consuming aspect of the research which led to this dissertation.

Since over half of the literary adaptations of the Nibelungen tradition, and much of the relevant criticism, are not available in the United States, it was necessary to attempt to locate them in Europe. Lists of these unavailable works were sent to the University libraries at Würzburg, Munich, Göttingen, Heidelberg, and West Berlin; also to the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek in East Berlin, the Schweizerische Landesbibliothek in Bern, and the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna. On three trips to Germany, in the summers of 1966, 1970, and 1971, the Universitätsbibliothek Würzburg most kindly placed its facilities at my disposal, so that through the "Fernleihe" I was able to obtain all of the works located by the above-mentioned libraries, as well as many other works from libraries in the German-speaking countries.

In the reading room on the fourth floor of this Renaissance building, with the towers of the Salian cathedral a short distance away, I, like the youthful Friedrich Panzer, read "die unerhörte Mär bis zum traurigen Ende,"<sup>24</sup> not once, but many dozens of times, while the summer breeze drifted through the open windows. Some of those works which were called retellings or "Neugestaltungen" were in fact attempts at literal translation into modern German; these works were not included in the definitive bibliography of Nibelungen works in German which formed the basis for this study. Others, like the Brunhild dramas of Wachter and Consentius turned out to be based on the life of the Merovingian Brunhild, while the Attila dramas deal with his career before his contact with the Burgundians. Still others, like Hahn's Kriemhild, are scholarly works on the N1 itself. These all had to be examined and eliminated from the list of literary adaptations of the Nibelungen tradition. The retellings on the other hand, many of which had heretofore been included in lists of translations, are included in the bibliography, because they invariably make additions to or deletions from the work which they purport to retell, and these emendations reveal the ideological purpose behind the author's work, while at the same time giving it the character of an independent literary creation.

Of the 183 titles which comprise the bibliography, thirty-five have not as yet been located. Of the 148 works which I was able to examine for this study, forty-six do not contain a Volker figure. The remaining 102 literary adaptations of the Nibelungen saga contain the figure of the Burgundian standard-bearer and minstrel, or at least some mention of him: his role in these works provided the actual material for this dissertation. Within the six periods, into which this material, as mentioned above, naturally falls, the works are discussed by genre: first the dramas of the given period, together with any short poems which the authors of

these dramas may have produced. Then the ballads are examined for their treatment of the Volker figure, and after them the novels. Next I discuss the verse adaptations, that is, longer works in verse form which deal with all or part of the Nibelungen legend and contain a Volker figure. This genre reaches the height of its development between 1866 and 1882, when ten works were produced in sixteen years. Finally, I shall examine the Volker figure as it appears in the retellings of the Nibelungen material in prose form, a genre which becomes most important in the early twentieth century. Joachim Fernau's recent best seller is the last work to be treated; it being the most recent work and also not fitting into any of the above categories, I shall deal with it under the heading of essay. This grouping of the works within the eras by genre has several advantages: it enables us to view, for example, Jordan's Nibelunge as one work, although its two parts appeared in 1866 and 1874, while noting at the same time the development of the Volker figure during these years. Also, and more important, the works within the various genres exhibit similarities in tone and emphasis which facilitate comparison with each other and aid in developing a synchronic overview of the period. A summary at the end of each section recapitulates the treatments of the Volker figure during the period and examines its possible relevance to the contemporary situation in Germany.

B. The Volker figure in the medieval Nibelungen tradition

I. The historical Volker von Alzey

herre, daz ist Volkêr  
der helt vil vermezzen  
was von Alzeye erborn. (Kl 1331, 1360-61)

1. Previous attempts at identification

The town of Alzey in Rheinhessen calls itself the "Volkerstadt" and has traditionally had a fiddle as its coat-of-arms. The new coat-of-arms of the combined Landkreis Alzey-Worms contains a dragon in the upper half and a golden fiddle on a red background in the lower half, the latter in reference to Volker von Alzey, the minnesinger and royal standard-bearer in the Nl.<sup>25</sup>

The fiddle was also the coat-of-arms of a family which called itself von Alzey and is verified in various branches from 1140.<sup>26</sup> The oldest example of the fiddle as a coat-of-arms is the seal of the Truchseß von Alzey branch, which appears on a document dated 1254; this fiddle escutcheon also appears on the gravestone of Jacob Rapa von Alzey, who died in 1265, on seals of the Winter von Alzey (1285), Wilche von Alzey (1316), and in compendia of heraldry from the sixteenth century in various forms for the Rapa, Rode, Wilche, and Volker von Alzey.<sup>27</sup>

Truchseß Heinrich von Alzey, verified from 1190,<sup>28</sup> was a ministerial at the court of Count Palatine Konrad von Hohenstaufen (1156-1195), the half brother of Frederick Barbarossa. Under Konrad, Alzey had become the principal residence of the Counts Palatine, and remained so under Heinrich I (1195-1213) and Heinrich II (1213-1214).<sup>29</sup> The local ministerial offices became hereditary: thus Truchseß Heinrich was succeeded by his son Werner I (1208-1225) who



was succeeded by his son Werner II (died 1265).<sup>30</sup> On a document dated 26 November 1220, Truchseß Werner appears as one of the witnesses, together with his brother, Wignand, as well as Volkmar and Rudolf von Alzey, and Werner Rapa von Alzey. This Volkmar von Alzey further appears as a witness on documents up to 1243.<sup>31</sup> Volkmar's son is the Jacob Rapa von Alzey, whose gravestone shows the fiddle as coat-of-arms.<sup>32</sup> On this stone there is a chalice beneath the shield, probably signifying that he became an ecclesiastic before he died, after a rather warlike life.<sup>33</sup> Volker is a nickname for Volkmar; we can therefore say that a Volker, whose son used the fiddle as his coat-of-arms, witnessed documents in Alzey from 1220 to 1243. This Volker was probably born in or before 1205.

To this evidence for the existence of an historical person named Volker von Alzey must be added the fact that the name Volker was probably hereditary in a noble family of Alzey. In a "Weistum," which enumerates the traditional prerogatives, rights, and duties of the Count Palatine's representative, when he sat as judge in Alzey, a "Hof der Volcherin" is mentioned as one of the houses where the Count Palatine's representative ("faut," i.e., "Vogt") may require lodging.<sup>34</sup> The "Weistümer" recorded legal precedents and customs which had acquired the force of law, and were usually written during times of political and social upheaval, when it was deemed necessary to set down the unwritten laws of a community.<sup>35</sup> In Alzey, just such a period began in 1195, when the Count Palatine Konrad von Hohenstaufen died, and his brother-in-law Heinrich, son of Henry the Lion, succeeded him. This period ended in 1305, when Count Palatine Rudolf (1294-1314) was able to acquire the castle in Alzey from Metz Truchseß von Alzey and his brother Konrad, thus breaking the power of the rebellious Alzey ministerials, who were well on the way to establishing their territorial independence of the Count Palatine.<sup>36</sup> The "Weistum" was,

therefore, probably written sometime between 1195 and 1305.

It is, however, possible to date the "Weistum" even more precisely. When Heinrich I became Count Palatine in 1195, Henry VI, his wife's cousin, was firmly established as King of Germany and Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. This situation changed a few years later, however, when, after King Henry's <sup>death</sup> murder, Otto IV, the brother of Count Palatine Heinrich, and King Henry's brother, Philipp of Swabia, both declared that they had been duly elected and began to struggle over the throne of Germany. This struggle did not end with Philipp's death in 1208, since his nephew, Frederick II, took up the Hohenstaufen cause. In 1211, Heinrich I abdicated in favor of his son, Heinrich II, in order to join his brother Otto. Soon after the battle of Bouvines (1214), which decided the great struggle in favor of the Hohenstaufen, Heinrich II died, and the Emperor Frederick II appointed a total stranger to the area, Heinrich von Wittelsbach, called the Kelheimer, as Count Palatine. In 1229, Heinrich turned the Palatinate over to his son Otto, who four years earlier had married Agnes, the sister of Heinrich II, thus obtaining Alzey as an allodium.<sup>37</sup> It seems likely that the local nobles deemed it necessary during this period of rapid change of rulers to set down legal procedures which had heretofore been well-known. We may, therefore, assert with some assurance that there lived in Alzey, ca 1195-1229, a family in which the name Volker was hereditary, and which owned a house where the Count Palatine's representative might reside when in Alzey on official business. Volkmar von Alzey was probably a member of this family.

In 1829 Wilhelm Grimm already considered the possibility that the Volker figure in the N1 was inspired by the fiddle on the coat-of-arms of the Alzey seneschals,<sup>38</sup> and the fact that the Alzeyer were popularly known as "die Fiedler." In support of this latter, Grimm cites Storck's

Darstellungen aus dem Rhein- und Mosellande, 1818, a work which I have been unable to locate or verify. It is therefore impossible on the basis of these data to state when this epithet originated, whether before or after Volker von Alzey's entrance into German literature. Karl Müllenhoff, writing in 1865, goes beyond Grimm and asserts that the Volker figure was indeed inspired by the fiddle escutcheon, but that Volker von Alzey was invented by Rhenish minstrels before the N1 was written down in its present form.<sup>39</sup> This version was accepted by Eigner, who added that Volker was invented as a vassal worthy of the musical role which had been Gunnar's in the Edda.<sup>40</sup> Edward Schröder, on the other hand, believes that, far from being a creation of Rhenish minstrels, Volker is actually a figure out of older heroic poetry.<sup>41</sup> He bases this assertion on the alliteration of Volker's two roles, "venre" and "videlaere," and on the fact that a "Volcwin der venre" appears in the Kaiserchronik. There is, however, no evidence for the existence of an alliterative Volker saga, although, as we shall see, there is reason to believe that Volker was both minstrel and standard-bearer in pre-N1 tradition. We also agree that there must be a connection between the Alzey ministerials, their fiddle escutcheon, and the Volker von Alzey of the N1.

Julius Reinhard Dieterich was the first to suggest that the Volker figure might have been inspired by an historical Volker von Alzey, an acquaintance of Abbot Sigehard of Lorsch (1168-1198) whom Dieterich postulated as the author of the Rhenish N1.<sup>42</sup> Later he identified a Volker von Dune, ministerial to the Sponheimer and the Wildgrafen, as this model for the N1 Volker, basing his assertion on the assumption that Volker von Dune belonged to the family which later called itself Dünne von Leiningen, used the fiddle as its coat-of-arms, and originated in Alzey, where, in 1278, Count Friedrich von Dune was burgrave for the Count Palatine. This Volker, who engaged in litigation with Ravengirsburg

monastery ca 1195, belongs, however, to the von Daun family which lived on the Nahe and in the Hunsrück and was related to the Wildberg-Starkenburgs as Dieterich himself points out.<sup>43</sup> The latter, however, has as its coat-of-arms a golden bend on a black field and is not connected with the Alzeier or the Dünne von Leiningen.<sup>44</sup> One must search further for the historical Volker.

Most recently, Hans Jacobi has proposed that Volker von Alzey was a Burgundian who became commandant of the fort in Alzey when the Romans evacuated the area in 406.<sup>45</sup> Jacobi bases his arguments on the work of local archaeologists who believed that the fort was in use until the middle of the fifth century.<sup>46</sup> A more recent study, however, points out that the actual material found in the excavations does not justify such a conclusion<sup>47</sup> although the author is willing to concede that the Volker figure may have been inspired by a vassal of King Gundicharius,<sup>48</sup> a theory which, with Richard Wilhelm, we must reject on the basis of lacking concrete evidence.<sup>49</sup> As Wilhelm points out, we cannot ignore the "riesige Lücke, die zwischen dem 5. und dem 12. Jahrhundert klafft," and before the twelfth century there is no mention of Hagen's companion, of a standard-bearer, or of a minstrel figure in the Nibelungen tradition. In addition, Volker is a specifically medieval figure, there is nothing of the Germanic hero about him; even his "wüeten" (Nl 1967,4)<sup>50</sup> is completely in keeping with the character of a medieval warrior.

Wilhelm himself sees Volker von Alzey as a creation of the Nl poet who found the figure of Volker in "einer reichen Streuung von Nibelungensagen" which existed in medieval Germany, and some of which found their way to Norway by way of Münster and Bremen.<sup>51</sup> This Volker was neither a minstrel nor a standard-bearer, but simply Hagen's partner. The courtly minstrel of the Nl was inspired by Daurel, while his location in Alzey was a tribute to Alzey's position as residence of the Count Palatine and to the importance of the Alzey

ministerials, especially Eberhard von Lautern, who in 1207 and 1208, together with Wolfger von Erla, Patriarch von Aquileja, conducted negotiations between Innocent III and the German princes, which concluded favorably for Philipp of Swabia. It is indeed tempting to see this connection with Alzey emanating from the circle around the former Bishop of Passau, whom most scholars regard as the patron of the N1 poet, yet in doing so we place ourselves in a dilemma. If the N1 poet belonged to Wolfger's circle but wrote the N1 and located Volker in Alzey after Wolfger became Patriarch of Aquileja, then the N1 cannot have been written in Passau ca 1204, as is commonly believed. Wilhelm himself thinks that the N1 poet got his impression of Alzey from an "objektiven Bericht oder unbestimmten Gerücht,"<sup>52</sup> which also contradicts the impression which the poet gives of being intimately acquainted with the area around Worms.<sup>53</sup> Finally, Wilhelm's thesis contradicts one of the few points of general agreement among N1 scholars: that the author of the Klage (K1) located Volker in Alzey, whence this information passed to the \*C version and eventually into the existing mss of the \*B version or vulgate as stanza 9.<sup>54</sup> We would be left, therefore, with the Volkmar von Alzey 1220-1243, about whom we know nothing except his name, were it not for the Volkmar discovered in 1955 by Karl Hermann May.<sup>55</sup>

## 2. A possible solution to the Volker problem

In 1106, Count Werner von Gröningen was sent by Henry V to Hammerstein castle, where he was to receive the royal insignia from the castellan. Count Werner was, like his father before him, imperial standard-bearer, and it was probably in this capacity that the new Emperor entrusted him with this mission. A man named Volkmar accompanied him, and this Volkmar was clearly in sympathy with the emperors in their rivalry with the Church, for the partisan Hildesheim Annals

refer to him as an "archrascal and accomplice in all the crimes of Henry IV."<sup>56</sup> Volkmar is probably, at least for this mission, adjutant standard-bearer to Werner von Gröningen.

Volkmar is often verified as imperial seneschal: 1104 in Regensburg, 1105 in Cologne, and further until 1141 in Cologne. In addition, he is mentioned in the death registry of the Speyer cathedral to which he donated ten marks for the repose of the souls of his parents Eppo and Richenza. Eppo is short for Eberhard, a name which also occurs in the von Alzey family. Since Volkmar's parents were buried in the Speyer cathedral, we can deduce that his home was in the middle Rhine area.<sup>57</sup>

Even though Volkmar's office of adjutant standard-bearer can only be inferred from the fact that he accompanied the imperial standard-bearer on an important mission, nevertheless we do know that Werner von Bolanden was adjutant standard-bearer ca 1194-1198 and that his grandson and great-grandson were imperial seneschals.<sup>58</sup> It is, therefore, possible that the Bolander were both seneschals and standard-bearers, a combination of offices which we have postulated for Volkmar. Granting two offices and their fiefs to one person would make the dangerous office of standard-bearer more attractive and seems to have been common: the Counts of Laurenburg-Nassau were standard-bearers and cupbearers to the Archbishops of Cologne.<sup>59</sup>

This Volkmar, who on at least one occasion acted as adjutant standard-bearer, is nowhere called von Alzey. Nevertheless, Braune's assertion, that the author of the Kl first located Volker in Alzey, implies that the Volker figure in literature is older than this location. We shall now, therefore, attempt to establish the date of the Kl as well as the time of Volker's entrance into the Nibelungen tradition, as these dates may shed some light on the real model for the Burgundian minstrel and standard-bearer.

The author of the Kl is believed to be an ecclesiastic of Bavarian-Austrian origin.<sup>60</sup> It is most probable that he spent some time in the Rhineland before or during his work on the Kl, as evidenced by his intimate knowledge of the region (Lorsch, etc.). The same is true of the author of \*C: as Panzer<sup>61</sup> points out, he too must have been in Lorsch where he saw the great stone coffins; he must also have been familiar with a Nibelungen tradition beyond the \*B version, as he knew that Siegfried was killed near the village of Otenheim on the edge of the Odenwald.

The dating of the Kl, as well as of the \*B and \*C versions is, however, still a matter of controversy. Friedrich Wilhelm<sup>62</sup> claims that a Bavarian in the service of Ludwig the Kelheimer, Count Palatine since 1214, would have become acquainted with Alzey and Lorsch and inserted them into the Kl, and then into the \*C version, which according to Wilhelm, was written by the author of the Kl. The Wittelsbacher, however, moved the court of the Counts Palatine from Alzey to Heidelberg,<sup>63</sup> so that there would have been less opportunity for someone in their service to become acquainted with the Worms area.

Panzer on the other hand dates the Kl shortly after the completion of the \*B version, and the \*C version shortly after the Kl, both around the year 1205. He gives convincing evidence for this and agrees substantially with Braune as well. From 1195 to 1211, as we have seen, Count Palatine Heinrich I, son of Henry the Lion, resided in Alzey: one could expect to find a Bavarian ecclesiastic in his service, and this cleric could have become familiar with local personalities and traditions. We may see in him the author of the Kl, which influenced variant \*C and its Kl; it was undoubtedly he who identified the Volker of the "alten maeren" with Alzey. The questions we must answer now are: did he make this identification in honor of Alzey as residence of the Count Palatine? Or did he wish to honor the

Alzey ministerials? And did the Alzey ministerials, flattered at this identification, adopt the fiddle as their escutcheon? And finally, did branches of the von Alzey family adopt the name Volker because of the Burgundian minstrel?

The N1 poet speaks of "alten maeren" full of admirable heroes, great sorrow, etc. There was a tradition, known to the author, which he is retelling in his own style, according to the custom of the Middle Ages.<sup>64</sup> Andreas Heusler in his reconstruction of the earlier tradition claims that there was an "ältere not," written ca 1160, which contained what we now call the second part (N1 II),<sup>65</sup> and in this opinion, Hermann Schneider<sup>66</sup> and Helmut de Boor<sup>67</sup> concur. They see the Thidrekssaga (Ths), which was written ca 1260 in Bergen, Norway, as a fairly accurate reflection of this "ältere not," and base their opinions on convincing internal evidence. Heusler and Schneider also see the Danish ballad Grimilds Hævn (GrH), which we have in three versions, as derived from the "ältere Not."<sup>68</sup> It is certain that both of these works used German rather than Norse sources; Kriemhild avenges Siegfried's death by having her brothers killed, whereas in the Norse version she avenges her brothers by killing Atli, and the reasons which Heusler gave for considering the Ths and the ballad as derived from a pre-N1 version of the tradition, have never been successfully refuted. We can therefore regard the Volker figure as he appears in these works as being older than the N1 Volker.

Recently, scholars have begun to assert that Heusler's "pedigree" of the N1 was too simple, that in reality there were more predecessors to the N1 than he supposed.<sup>69</sup> Heinrich Hempel<sup>70</sup> and Gerhart Lohse<sup>71</sup> see the first part (N1 I) and N1 II as having been combined already in the "ältere not" and even before: in a Rhenish version of the Nibelungen legend which Lohse dates, on solid historical grounds, at 1130. On the basis of Panzer's interpretation of the Bechlaren episode as having been inspired by events of 1189, Lohse



dates the "ältere Not" at 1190, roughly ten years before the Nl.

Volker most likely entered the Nibelungen tradition before 1130 in the Rhenish version; in this version he was probably present in Nl I and II. In the war with the Saxons and Danes he was the standard-bearer: this must have been so, otherwise the Nl poet would have used his own favorite creation, Dankwart, for this role.<sup>72</sup> He was Hagen's companion,<sup>73</sup> but in a subordinate relationship, as the *Ths* shows, and was a member of the lower nobility, for the Nl must carefully distinguish him from the plebeian "Spielleute" or wandering minstrels, acrobats, jugglers, etc. GrH relates furthermore that Volker's escutcheon was a fiddle,<sup>74</sup> indicating his musical ability.

In his discussion of the Faeroese Nibelungen ballads, Gustav Neckel states his belief that they are based on Danish and Norwegian versions of end-rhyming German ballads which had evolved out of alliterative heroic songs before the end of the first millenium<sup>75</sup> and which found their way to the North during the twelfth century.<sup>76</sup> Dietrich Kralik also saw GrH as based on pre-Nl tradition, a "Rachelied" written ca 1131,<sup>77</sup> which together with a "Notdichtung" ca 1160 and a parodistic "burgundische Komödie" formed the bases for the Nl and *Ths*. The Rosengarten is based more on the comic epic while the Nl and *Ths*, which were written independently of each other, were based more on the "Notdichtung."<sup>78</sup> According to this thesis, therefore, the valiant minstrel Volker with the fiddle as his coat-of-arms entered the tradition in the "Rachelied," whence he became part of the GrH, of the comic epic, and of the Rosengarten. Thus we see the standard-bearer, the minstrel, and the fiddle escutcheon all postulated for the first half of the twelfth century, during which time Volkmar was seneschal and adjutant standard-bearer.

The Volker figure of the Rhenish Nl was most probably

inspired by this Volkmar. Given his name and the name of his father, Eberhard, it is not impossible that his home was in Alzey, an imperial fief and stronghold of the Salian emperors.<sup>79</sup> An Alzeier would have been as loyal a partisan of Henry IV as the Hildesheim Annals suggest. Given the tenacity with which certain families retained characteristic Christian names from generation to generation, it is most unlikely that the Volkmar von Alzey whom we see verified 1220-1243 received his name from the Nl; more likely the name was traditional, an assumption supported by the existence in Alzey of the "Volcherin" estate.

In addition to Volkmar, there is one other historical personage whom we must consider. In 1910 the historian Harry Bresslau published the text of a document dating from 1130/31, wherein a "Folkir ioculator" is described as holding a piece of land owned by Oldenburg monastery in West Flanders, and for which he paid six denars a year to Count Dietrich of Flanders. In this document, Dietrich relinquishes this sum, together with many similar rents, to Oldenburg monastery "causa salutis anime mee."<sup>80</sup>

West Flanders was one of the chief centers of chivalric knighthood during this period; holding a piece of land meant receiving the income from it, while the holder could be an aristocrat: finally, "ioculator" meant entertainer<sup>81</sup> and was used to indicate a "Liedersinger,"<sup>82</sup> of the type which sang the "Rachelied," for example. This "Folkir ioculator" could, therefore, have taken his name from, or provided the inspiration for, the minstrel Volker of the Rhenish Nl. Heinrich Hempel states: "Diese überraschende Benennung von der des Spielmanns Folker in der Nibelungen-dichtung unabhängig denken zu wollen hieße doch aller Wahrscheinlichkeit ins Gesicht schlagen."<sup>83</sup>

So be it: let us assume that by the time of this document the Nl was known in Flanders. There is also mentioned a "Rumold filius Siberti" in the same document, as well as

a "Sigerd filius Walkirs." This evidence, together with Saxo Grammaticus' report that in 1131 a Saxon singer in Denmark sang of "notissimam Grimildae erga fratres perfidiam,"<sup>84</sup> shows how widely known the German version of the NI° was at this time. It is most unlikely that "Folkir ioculator" inspired the NI Volker figure, for to do so he would have had to travel to the middle Rhine area, where his language would not have been understood. Also, a Flemish minstrel would not have prompted a family of Alzey ministerials to adopt his instrument as their coat-of-arms.

The fashion of painting an emblem onto one's shield came into use in Germany ca 1130, for the purpose of making the knight in armor recognizable to friend and foe.<sup>85</sup> Bliigger von Steinach adopted the golden harp as an allusion to his poetry, and his family retained it in various colors and with various attributes to designate the different branches.<sup>86</sup> The same is probably true of the Alzeier: they retained the golden fiddle which had been adopted by an ancestor whose musical ability was well-known to those who needed to recognize him by his escutcheon. This ancestor may well have been the seneschal and adjutant standard-bearer Volkmar, whose descendants, living in Alzey and bearing his name, explained the significance of their coat-of-arms to the author of the KI, who reinstated Volker in his ancestral home.

In his portrayal of Volker von Alzey, the poet was, no doubt also influenced by the personalities of the Alzeier ministerials themselves, and by what he knew of the typical standard-bearer in the armies of his day. During the reign of Henry V (1106-1125), in whose service Volkmar acted as adjutant standard-bearer, the importance of the ministerials in general increased, as the more prominent nobles gradually ceased to support the central authority. The ministerials sprang into the breach, proving themselves to be reliable administrators of the crown territories.<sup>87</sup> Originally an

unfree favored class of serfs,<sup>88</sup> these domestic servants whom their lords had trained for personal military service,<sup>89</sup> first assumed significance during the time of Conrad II (1024-1039), when they began to be entrusted with military or administrative offices.<sup>90</sup> Gradually they took over the actual duties of the crown vassals and court officials, whose subordinates they had been,<sup>91</sup> and the farms which had originally been given them for their support<sup>92</sup> developed into genuine feudal holdings.<sup>93</sup> So it happened that a class of men, whose value to their lords had lain in their unfree dependent condition, had become by the twelfth century powerful vassals, building castles of their own and developing their originally subservient functions into hereditary offices.<sup>94</sup> One such ministerial was Werner von Bolanden, of the area near Alzey, who is said to have owned seventeen castles and claimed the homage of 1,100 knights;<sup>95</sup> another was the aforementioned Eberhard von Lautern, whom Barbarossa called from Alzey, where he had been serving the Count Palatine, to become imperial governor in Tuscany.<sup>96</sup>

Connected with the military role of the ministerials was the function of burgrave or castle guard, whose task it was to lead attacks on a besieging army when the occasion arose.<sup>97</sup> Near the end of the eleventh century Henry IV was building stone castles in Saxony and Thuringia, the defense of which was entrusted to ministerials from Bavaria and Swabia, who were disliked by the Saxons on account of their turbulent and arrogant conduct. Besides the royal castles, those of lay and ecclesiastical lords were also manned by ministerials.<sup>98</sup>

Our Volkmar was undoubtedly one of the ministerials described above: the haughtiness so often found in the self-made man, together with the loyalty of the ministerial to the central power, the source of his position, could explain the uncomplimentary reference to him in the Hildesheim Annals. This brawling conduct we also see in the Alzey ministerials:

the same Wormser Chronik which describes the character of Jacob Rapa says that in Alzey "alle Landstreifer und böse Buben ihre Aufenthaltung drinne hatten."<sup>99</sup> It is easy to understand the resentment which the older nobility felt towards these parvenus, who for their part would naturally be eager to claim that they were also freeborn knights, and we shall see below that in analyzing the character of the ministerials and their relationship to the central authority as well as to the older aristocracy, we have taken the first step in the interpretation of Volker von Alzey as he appears in the vulgate N1, variant \*C, and the K1.

There remains the historical standard-bearer to consider: he was probably a young man, for even today the ensign is the lowest rank of a military officer. The standard-bearer's place was always beside the king, for the banner symbolized the king's power over life and death, and during a battle this flag provided a rallying point for the rest of the soldiers.<sup>100</sup> The position of standard-bearer required unusual bravery and prowess at arms, as well as loyalty to the lord, for one of the principal objectives in medieval warfare was to kill the king and/or the standard-bearer: at the battle of Legnano, Barbarossa's standard-bearer fell just before Frederick himself had his horse slain under him, causing his men to believe that he had been slain, a rumor which led to the ensuing rout of the imperial army.<sup>101</sup> Likewise, in the battle of Florchheim (27 January 1080) between Henry IV and the counterking Rudolf of Swabia, one of the King's subordinates, Duke Wratislav of Bohemia, struck down Rudolf's standard-bearer, causing the rebels to take flight.<sup>102</sup> Associated with the position of standard-bearer was that of "Vorstreiter" or leader in battle,<sup>103</sup> which likewise required the headlong valor usually associated with youth.

In our consideration of possible historical models for the Volker figure, we have concentrated on the ministerial and standard-bearer, and have come to the conclusion that

the original Volker of before 1130 was probably inspired by the seneschal and adjutant standard-bearer, the Rhenish Volkmar, who entered the tradition as standard-bearer and Hagen's companion with musical ability. Only Hagen's companion was taken over by the Ths, the nobleman with musical accomplishments however survived in the GrH. The Ths, being of Saxon origin, omitted the Saxon war and made Gunther standard-bearer where one was needed; however this role must have originally belonged to Volker, otherwise the N1 poet would have given it to Dankwart, as we have seen. The N1 poet of ca 1205, being aware of the entire tradition, took over all of Volker's attributes, while the K1 poet located him in Alzey, incorporating into his depiction the personalities of the Alzeier as he knew them. This location was then taken over by the poet of the \*C version, and the fact that "von Alzeie" found its way into ms B as well indicates that even in the vulgate Volker is most likely a composite of these two Volker figures, one from before 1130, the other living in Alzey ca 1205, possibly being a descendant of the first.

Volker is known today, however, as the minstrel: Alzey's coat-of-arms recalls this Volker and not a ministerial to Henry V or to the Count Palatine. Herein lies the genius of the N1 poet: he transformed the living model, the historical Volker, into a figure which suited his own purpose, giving us in the unforgettable Bechlaren and night watch scenes a minnesinger who was also a valiant fighter, and in the fighting scenes a ministerial who can hold his head as high as the old nobility. Having examined the probable historical basis of the Volker figure, we shall now turn to a study of the Burgundian minstrel in German literature.

## II. Volker von Alzey in the Nibelungenlied

### 1. In the vulgate

#### a. The Burgundian standard-bearer

ouch sol dâ mit rîten Volkêr der küene man.  
der sol den vanen fûeren; baz ichs nieman engan. (162,3-4)

er bant ouch z'einem schafte ein zeichen, daz was rôt.  
sît kom er mit den kûefegen in eine groezliche nôt. (1595,3-4)

After stanza 9, in which Volker is enumerated among the Burgundian heroes, he is introduced in stanza 162 as the standard-bearer in the Saxon campaign, selected by Siegfried himself, who knows no one to whom he would rather entrust this assignment. Volker rides at the head of the company (196,3), and fights valiantly together with Hagen and Ortwin (201,1); with Hagen, Gernot, and Dankwart (211,1-2) he springs to Siegfried's aid when the latter is surrounded by hostile soldiers, and we must agree with Lachmann that 235,2 should read "Volkêr" rather than "Rûmolt," for the seneschal is nowhere else mentioned as taking part in the campaign, and it is unlikely that in his report to Kriemhild the messenger would forget Volker, as he seems to here.<sup>104</sup> There is no further mention of Volker in N1 I, for the poet probably thought of Volker as a vassal not living at court, but on the estate given to him in return for his military service, after the feudal custom. Thus he takes no part in the trip to Isenlant, nor in the plot to kill Siegfried, for he seems to come to Worms only when his assistance in a military undertaking is needed.

This is the case when the Burgundians travel to Gran; in fact, Volker's very presence seems to underline the idea that this is not a carefree journey to a dear relative. Here,

too, Volker is the standard-bearer, and carries the red flag bound to a lance, symbol of the presence of King Gunther in foreign territory, and of the King's power over life and death.<sup>105</sup> Volker also has charge of the retinue, that is of the 9,000 men who accompanied the 1,060 Burgundian knights; he is only given this dual responsibility, however, after the crossing of the Danube, when Hagen requires Dankwart, the marshal of the realm, to assist him against Gelpfrat. This indicates that Volker is used for various subordinate offices: Hagen had originally led the troop (1524), and Dankwart was the marshal; now, when both are needed for a reinforced rear guard, Volker takes over their positions. Later we see Volker again subordinate to Dankwart, who tells him that he and the retinue must ride on until daybreak (1622). There is no more mention of Volker as standard-bearer; from now on we see him in the related role of leader in battle.

This was originally the function of the king; now one of his selected vassals has taken it over, and with it the ringing words of defiance once spoken by Gunther in response to Dietrich's warning:<sup>106</sup>

Ez ist et unerwendet

daz wir vernomen hân.

wir suln ze hove rîten und suln lâzen sehen

waz uns vil snellen degenen müge zen Hiunen geschehen. (1731)

Actually, this statement is a reaction to a speech which Volker could not logically have heard: Dietrich has taken the three Kings aside to warn them that Kriemhild is still sorrowing over Siegfried. Volker's answer shows the author of the N1 amplifying Volker's role at the expense of Gunther and as we shall see, of Hagen who, as Stout points out, is even in the vulgate becoming the villain we see in the Kl.<sup>107</sup>

Likewise, after the arrival in Gran and Hagen's first clash with Kriemhild, he selects Volker to stand by him in the coming struggle. When Kriemhild sees the two together (1767-68), she warns her men that Volker is more dangerous



than Hagen, so that sixty Huns would be too few in a battle with them. After this decisive confrontation between the two enemies, Volker points out to Hagen the value of friends sticking together and then goes to warn the Kings. At this point, Volker seems to take over the leading role, for Hagen says to him: "Nu wil ich in volgen" (1802,1) and Volker can even say to the Kings: "wie lange welt ir stên / . . . ir sult ze hove gên" (1803,1-2) not exactly the way one speaks to one's lords.

It seems likely that the mockery which Volker employs toward the Huns is an aspect of his role as leader in battle, for this provocation, or "gelf" as it is called in the N1, is used to challenge one's opponent and is a stock aspect of heroic poetry (430 and note). Volker uses this "psychological warfare" device in various ways: first when he holds his sword close to him while sitting on the bench beside Hagen; he does not do this out of disrespect but only to show the Huns that he is prepared to defend himself and is not afraid. He goes further after the banquet on the first evening when he rebukes the Huns, who are milling around and threatening the Burgundians: they had best get out of the way of the "recken," for they may be called "degene," yet they do not have the same courage as the Burgundians. Hagen then adds that if the Huns are wise, they will call it a day and go to bed (1820-23). Whether Volker is accusing the Huns of treachery, as de Boor believes, or of cowardice, the Huns do not react to Volker's insult, for the Burgundians go peacefully to their quarters, while Hagen and Volker keep watch.

The night watch is Volker's great scene: here and in the battle in the banquet hall, the N1 poet outdoes himself in portraying the heroic minstrel at his finest. But here too we recognize the standard-bearer, the fighter accustomed to being in the thick of battle and to leading others, for it is Volker who first sees the approaching Huns (1838) and

who is first recognized by them (1840), while Hagen is to the Huns an afterthought: "bî im stêb ouch Hagene" (1841,4). Accustomed to plunging into battle, Volker's first reaction is to attack the Huns, but Hagen restrains him, pointing out that this would expose their lords to danger, so Volker must content himself with insulting his enemies again: "pff, ir zagen boese" (1847,2), calling them thieves and murderers (1846,2-1847,4) so loudly that Kriemhild can hear him and take the insult as partly meant for herself (1848,1-2).

On the following day, Volker and Hagen try once again to provoke the Huns into revealing their intentions, first by disrupting Kriemhild's retinue in front of the minster (1859-66), a neat counterpiece to the Senna in Nl I, and then by Volker's killing the margrave during the tournament. The strategy behind these actions appears to be an effort to divert the Huns from the Burgundian Kings and even, by forcing Kriemhild's hand, to enlist Etzel's assistance without appearing to do so, for to ask for help would seem cowardly. Nothing comes of these efforts, however, and only after hostilities have broken loose in the hall, can Volker spring into the fray, but now it is too late. He fights like a wild boar, Etzel laments, and Hagen praises his prowess, yet Volker knows that the end is near, for Etzel, having lost his son, will never rest until all of the Burgundians are annihilated.

The first battle is over, the dead and dying Huns have been thrown from the great hall to the ground, and Volker once again accuses the Huns of cowardice, for they stand about weeping like women instead of helping the wounded. Then when one of them tries to help a wounded relative, Volker kills him with a spear (2016). This is the first and only base action by our courtly minstrel; we are reminded of how Hagen tricked Siegfried and killed him with the same weapon. The Huns now begin to curse Volker, who throws another spear as far as he can, and thus drives the Huns

out of his range. Volker can still mock them, however, for as Kriemhild offers a shield full of gold in return for Hagen's head, Volker ridicules the cowardice of warriors, who eat their lord's bread, but refuse to help him in his need (2026-27).

Upon hearing this, Iring the Dane comes to do battle; again Volker can mock Etzel's forces, as a thousand knights join Iring, who had come to fight Hagen in single combat. After Hagen has killed Iring and his lord Hawart, while Volker has disposed of Irnfried of Thuringia (2071), all of the Danes and Thuringians attack the Burgundians. Volker shows his skill as a strategist by luring them into the hall, where they suffer the same fate as the Huns had earlier in the day. After this battle, as night begins to fall, Volker once again looks for more opponents (2079), and, since no one is in sight, he and Hagen begin the second night watch (2081).

After the fire in the hall, which 600 Burgundians have survived (2124), Volker, again the strategist, advises the Burgundians not to show themselves, so that the Huns, believing them all dead, may be lured once more into the hall. The ruse does not work, and only after being offered Kriemhild's gold and Volker's taunts: "ine gesach ûf vehten nie helde gerner komen, / die daz golt des küneges uns ze vâre hânt genomen" (2131,3-4), do 1,000 warriors attack the Burgundians, suffering the same fate as their predecessors. Volker is still in the forefront when Rüdiger arrives with his men, but unlike the inexperienced Giselher, Volker recognizes their hostile intentions and realizes that the one-time ally has become their enemy.

Finally, when Hildebrand comes to ask for Rüdiger's body, Volker once more seizes the initiative. As we have come to expect, he is the first to see Dietrich's men and to notice that they are armed. When Wolfhart shows impatience at Gunther's apparent reluctance to hand over the body,

Volker answers simply: "niemen in iu gît" (2266,1), and suggests that they come in and fetch him. In the ensuing "gelf," which injects some comedy just before the final catastrophe, Hildebrand tries vainly to calm both sides down, while Hagen seems to encourage his comrade-in-arms (2268). The fighting begins, Volker kills Siegestab, a member of the royal family, and is killed by Hildebrand. In revenge, Hagen inflicts on Hildebrand a wound from which he is still suffering in the Kl (2091-2125), (3882-85).<sup>108</sup>

Thus far, we have examined Volker the standard-bearer in the N1: when we understand his mocking quarrelsome speeches as part of this role, we see that it spans the epic, from Volker's entrance in the war with the Saxons, over the trip to Gran, and throughout the final battle up to his death. He has a role of leadership, yet as we have seen he is a subordinate to Dankwart and to Hagen, who calls him his "geselle," while pointing out, albeit regretfully, his own superior rank. In this context it is interesting to note that when Wolfhart is urging Hildebrand not to approach the Burgundians unarmed, it is Hagen, not Volker, from whom he expects mockery, and at the mention of Hagen's name, Hildebrand dons his armor; further, when Volker refuses to hand over the body, Wolfhart addresses him ironically as "her spilman" (2267,1), as though he did not expect backtalk from him. This is the only time that Volker's music is referred to in an even slightly derogatory fashion; his music, throughout the epic, enhances his heroism.

b. The Burgundian minstrel

durch daz er videlen konde, was er der spilman genant. (1477,4)

Before the Burgundians depart for Gran, Volker's music is mentioned only once: stanza 196,2-3 refers to him as "der starke spileman, / Volkêr der herre" emphasizing at

the same time his nobility. This is also the case in stanzas 1476-77, where the poet takes some pains to explain that Volker is such a great aristocrat that even his thirty vassals who accompany him are dressed like kings, and that he was called "der spilman" only because he was able to play the fiddle, and not because he was a traveling minstrel or a court musician. The poet seems to have had the "alten maeren" in mind, most likely the Rhenish version and/or the "ältere not," in which Volker was known as the "videlaere," and probably wished to correct this image in favor of the Alzey ministerials and their tradition.

Volker entered the Nl tradition before the advent of the "Minnesang;" yet before our eyes, the "starke spileman" becomes in fact a minnesinger, an aspect of his character which seems to have grown out of his original role as fiddler. Between the Rhenish version and the Nl this takes place, so that his departure from Bechlaren is, according to de Boor, a "durchgeführte Szene höfischen Minnedienstes" (note to 1705). Volker sings a song several stanzas long, which he has composed, and dedicates himself thereby to the service of a married woman of higher rank than he. His reward is twelve golden bracelets, which the poet speaks of as "friuntlicher gâbe," a sign that his service has been accepted (1705-06).

Volker takes up his violin a second time in the night watch, when he plays for his anxious comrades: first a wild forte "daz al daz hûs erdôz" (1835, 1b) to raise their courage, then "süezer unde senfter" (1835, 3a) lulling them to sleep with gentler melodies. The poet praises his art and strength as mutually enhancing each other: "sîn ellen zuo der fuoge, diu beidiu wâren grôz," (1835, 2), an unforgettable picture of the tenderness and physical prowess of the ideal knight.

Volker's courtly refinement emerges in his relationship to Brünhild, for it is he who, at her request, tells Werbel and Swämmel that she will not receive them. Likewise in

Bechlaren, when the ladies return to the dining hall, his "gämêliche sprüche" (1673,3) call attention to the beauty of Rûdeger's wife and daughter. Volker is not married, but he recognizes in Rûdeger's daughter the qualities that make a good wife: "diu ist minneclîch ze sehene, dar zuo edel unde guot" (1675,4). Volker's lower rank makes her inaccessible to him, but he is clearly implying that a bachelor prince, like Gernot or Giselher, could do no better than to take her for a wife. In Gran, Volker urges Hagen to rise before Kriemhild (1780) and even after Rûdeger's death he addresses her in polite yet most biting terms, when he defends Rûdeger against her charge of collaborating with the Burgundians (2230-32). His response is civil because it must be, yet as a gentleman he must call her accusation what it is, "tiuvellichen . . . gelogen" (2230,3). The knightly minnesinger maintains his bearing to the last.

Volker's music also affords an opportunity for heroic comedy as the juxtaposition of the art of music and the art of warfare produces the battlefield humor of the sword-fiddle-bow motif. By skillfully varying this motif, the poet never lets it become tiresome: first his sword is like a fiddle-bow (1785,2-3), then the Huns become the instrument on which he will demonstrate his art (1821,1). In *Aventiure 33*, the poet develops his invention more fully: Volker strides "videlende" across the hall, Etzel laments that: "Sîne leiche lûtent übele, sîne züge die sint rôtt" (2002,1), but Gunther is jubilant: "hoert ir die doene, Hagene, die dort Volkêr / videlt mit den Hiunen" (2004,2-3), and Hagen answers: "sîn videlboge im snîdet durch den herten stâl . . . die sînen leiche hellent durch helm unde rant" (2006,3, 2007,3). The poet takes up the motif again in Volker's confrontation with Wolfhart, who threatens to throw his strings out of tune, and Volker retorts that he will dull the shine of Wolfhart's helmet in return. When he fights with Siegestab: "er begonde im sîner künste alsohen teil dâ geben" (2285,2),

that Dietrich's nephew falls, to be avenged by Hildebrand. Volker's music and his strength, his songs and his swordsmanship are uniquely combined into one heroic personality.

## 2. Volker in the \*C version

Volcher was ir marschalch. der solde ir herberge pflegen.  
(1311,4)

Do chom der herre Volker. ein kuene spileman.  
hinze hove nach eren. mit drizzech siner man. (1509,1-2)

When Kriemhild leaves Worms to become Etzel's wife, ms C and related mss cast Volker in the role of marshal as quoted above.<sup>109</sup> The vulgate names Giseler and Gernot, as well as Gere, Ortwin the seneschal, and Rumolt the head cook among those who accompany Kriemhild as far as the Danube; the \*C poet, well-versed in courtly etiquette, saw the need for a marshal as well, and since, as we have seen, the vulgate already saw in Volker the adjutant standard-bearer, it was natural to choose him rather than the regular marshal, Dankwart.

C 1509 deviates from the corresponding stanza in the vulgate (1476) only in the first two lines: the poet describes Volker as a lord rather than as the noble minstrel, and points out that he came to court seeking honor, an interpretation of Volker which bespeaks the ambitious ministerial. Stanza 1662 is missing from ms C; from ms a we know that line two read: "Volkêr der küene, der des vanen pflac,"<sup>110</sup> a further reference to his role as standard-bearer, rather than marshal, as in the vulgate (1622).

The remainder of the \*C version is equally close to \*B: in C (2176,4) Hagen and Volker are concerned with the welfare of the Burgundian warriors, rather than with the harm which Etzel's men can do them as in the vulgate (2120,4), while C (2327,1) has Wolfhart refer specifically to Volker's

mockery as provoking the hostilities between the two heroes. Finally, in C (2430,2), Hagen, (in his final defiance of Kriemhild), enumerates Volker and Dankwart among those slain, and not only the Kings, as in the vulgate (2371).

In sum we can say that \*C rounds out Volker's role, making him slightly more prominent than he is in the vulgate, and, in keeping with the general tendency of \*C, adding a few touches of courtly refinement. At the departure from Bechlaren, Volker receives only six arm rings from Gotelind (1745,3), rather than twelve (1706,3), as the token, not the number, is important to the noble minstrel. Most significant is the statement that he came seeking honor, a trait which, as we shall see, comes from the K1 in its vulgate version.

### 3. Volker in the Klage

'herre, daz ist Volkêr,'  
'der helt vil vermezzen  
was von Alzeye erborn.' (1331, 1360-61)

N1 criticism generally considers the K1 to be a contemporary interpretive commentary on the epic, and to have inspired the modifications found in variant \*C. Volker von Alzey is no exception: the poet gives a picture of him as the Middle Ages experienced Hagen's companion, the minnesinger, the hero who could also play the fiddle. In its brief summary of the N1, the K1 first mentions Volker as having killed Irnfried, as well as many of Hawart's Danes (405-16). In this connection it is noteworthy that Hagen's killing Iring is only mentioned after Volker's exploits. Later, when Dietrich orders the peasantry to clear away the corpses which are lying in front of the great hall, the poet points out that Volker and Hagen had slain all of these men (677-85). Again the poet mentions Volker before



Hagen. The discovery of Gunther's headless body gives the poet occasion to relate the end of the tragedy, how Hagen refused to enter into truce negotiations with Dietrich, since Giselher and Gernot were dead, and Volker, too, had been slain by Hildebrand (1148-80).

Volker's body, with the blood still trickling through the links of his chain mail, is found right after Hagen's (1319-1402). Etzel does not recognize him at first, and so Hildebrand must identify the hero "'der uns diu groezesten sêr / hât mit sînen handen / gefrûmt in disen landen'" (1332-34), adding that Volker had fought him in single combat, and further, that if Helpfrich had not separated them, Volker must surely have slain him (1342-48). This detail, an invention of the Kl poet's, was probably inspired by the general tendency in the Kl to minimize Hunnish victories, by the etymological significance of Helpfrich's name, and by N1 2278, where Wolfwin must help Wolfhart in this fight with Volker.<sup>111</sup>

Hereupon Etzel begins his lament over Volker: "'sîn zuht diu was sô lobelîch, / dar zuo vil manlîch gemuot,'" (1350-51) thus attributing to him the primary virtues of chivalry. The poet then has Etzel ask after Volker's home, an interest which he shows in no other of the dead heroes: this affords the opportunity of stating that Volker "hete bî Rîne daz lant / mit Gunthere besezen," and that he was born in Alzey (1358-61), to which Hildebrand adds: "'sîn manheit ûz erkorn / diu ist alze fruo gelegen'" (1362-63), indicating that Volker died young, a detail consistent with his role of Burgundian standard-bearer. Later, when Swämmel, as Etzel's messenger, relates the end of the Burgundians to Brunhild, he describes how "'von Alzeije Volkêr / tet vil micheliu sêr'" (3827-28); these are the only two references to Volker's home, but the manner in which the poet presents this information indicates his realization that he was making an addition to the N1 account, that he considered

this addition to be true, and of considerable importance.

Hildebrand's account of Volker's musicianship also agrees with that in the N1: "'durch daz er videlen kunde, / daz volc in zaller stunde / hiezen einen spileman'" (1389-91); he continues: "'er was von vrîen liden komen, / und het sich daz an genomen / daz er diene scoenen vrouwen'" (1393-95). This latter is consistent with the N1 characterization of "Volkêr der herre" and with the Bechlaren scene, which the K1 poet did not include in his account of the N1, but alludes to here and in verses 1810-11, which state that Giseler's engagement to Dietlinde was advised by Volker. The K1 poet wishes to emphasize Volker's free birth, very likely at the behest of the Alzey ministerials; the manner in which his minnesinger role is related seems to indicate that, at the time of writing, this convention was relatively new; the \*C version of the K1 states simply: "'er was gar ein hübesch man / und diene gerne frouwen'" (1464-65), finding this quite natural in a courtly knight.

Finally, we must consider three lines in the Volker characterization which state: "'der sîn vil hôhvertiger sîn / der scadet uns immer mêre. / er warp nâch ganzer êre'" (1386-88). Mss DNb read "nimmer" for "immer," ms A reads "nie" for "immer," 1387. Here the K1 poet seems to be passing judgment on Volker from the point of view of contemporary moral theology, particularly as a cleric would understand it: "hôhvertig" is the adjective form of "hôhvert" which was synonymous with "übermuot," and "übermuot" was the MHG equivalent of "superbia," the sin of Lucifer which caused his fall from grace, and the cardinal sin according to medieval religious thinking.<sup>112</sup> It is in this context that we must also understand "vermezen" as applied to Volker, for this quality also belonged to the category of sins which the Middle Ages grouped under "superbia." There is no mention in the \*C K1 of Volker's seeking "êre" as the \*C poet, influenced by the vulgate K1, had already included this detail

in his N1. The K1 indicates that contemporary audiences saw in Volker von Alzey a valiant knight, but guilty of "superbia," the sin of Lucifer and the cause of man's fall from grace.

It is perhaps significant that in its detailed account of Volker's character, the K1 makes little mention of his friendship with Hagen. Only once, when he, Hagen, and Dankwart are buried near the three Kings, does the poet allude to this relationship: "Hagene der starke / und sîn geselle Volkêr" (2366-67), as though he were embarrassed by it. Likewise Volker's agreement with all of Hagen's actions (N1 1584) and Hagen's approval of Volker (N1 2268,4) are omitted, in the poet's attempt to minimize their comradeship. Yet in referring to Hagen as "der vâlant / . . . der ez allez riet" (1250-51) and to Volker as "sîn geselle" the poet shows his awareness that Volker had in fact stood by Hagen, and that since Hagen, in the medieval interpretation of the N1, had deliberately caused the entire catastrophe, Volker's loyalty to him is an aspect of his tragic flaw, an expression of "übermuot." Volker knew that Hagen was leading the Burgundians to their doom, and followed him nevertheless.

By locating Volker in Alzey and emphasizing that he sought honor, the K1 poet underlined his interest in the Volker figure and increased his importance. The location in Alzey made Volker the more real and contemporary to the hearers of the N1 and K1, who could envision the minstrel living in one of the important towns of the Palatinate. Thus Volker became not only an identifiable contemporary type, namely the minnesinger, but received a well-known home. Volker's pride could also be identified by the hearers as one of the characteristics of those aristocrats of ministerial origin, from whose ranks Volker sprang. The K1 therefore placed the final touches on the figure of Volker, whose contemporary reality made him an ideal vehicle for expressing the purpose of the poet in writing his work.

4. Summary: the function of the heroic minstrel in the N1

"Volkêr von Alzeie, mit ganzem ellen wol bewart." (9,4)

This line, which the vulgate took over from variant \*C, and with the location of Volker in Alzey taken from the K1, may be seen as stating the essence of Volker's character as the poets ca 1205 saw him. Volker is a heroic personality, and his heroism proceeds from his role as standard-bearer and minstrel, for were he not a true hero, this combination would be impossible. The hero is an expression of ideal values: nobility, self-control, strength, responsibility, and bravery;<sup>113</sup> to what extent the poets saw these virtues embodied in the historical bases for the figure we cannot tell, but in the N1, variant \*C, and the K1, they combined these ideals into a heroic, yet at the same time thoroughly believable human being. Volker is not only an aristocrat in rank, he has the nobleman's sense of honor, and despises the Huns when they attempt a sneak attack (1846-48). The very beginning of the N1 emphasizes his strength and bravery, "ellen," and gives frequent examples of it, even at the expense of Hagen. Nine strophes are devoted to Volker's feats in the "Saalkampf," and Volker kills two famous heroes, one of royal blood. He receives a kiss from Rûdeger's daughter, not because of his rank--he is subordinate to Hagen and Dankwart--but "durch sînes lîbes ellen" (1666,4). He fulfills his responsibilities as marshal conscientiously, showing great care for the welfare of the retinue (1622,2-4), of his lords (1800, 1821), and of all of the Burgundians (night watch).

Yet Volker also has his faults, principally that of impulsiveness. He does lack the self-control which we find in Hagen, who must restrain him from pursuing the Huns during the night watch, as this could expose the Kings to danger. It can be construed as impulsiveness when Volker

enters the lists and kills the overdressed Hun during the jousting: he may believe that the Hun, like himself, is in the service of a lady (1885) and slay him for decking himself out excessively, for to Volker "Minnedienst" is not to be trifled with. It is also out of impulsiveness that Volker slays the margrave who attempts to assist his wounded relative: the minstrel has been killing Huns for several hours and cannot resist this one, no more than he could resist killing the Hun who tried to slip out along with Etzel and Kriemhild (1999). These flaws in Volker's character underlined his heroism and made him believable to the readers and hearers of the N1, who could surely identify with them, just as they saw the ideals of courtly knighthood reflected in his virtues.

An historical Volker von Alzey could not possibly have been known to the author of the vulgate, for the figure entered the tradition at least two generations before the Passau cleric wrote his work. The poet knew only a literary figure, the fiddler and standard-bearer of the "alten maeren," which he was relating, and, through the K1, which as we have seen influenced the vulgate, the Volker of Alzey tradition. The very vitality of the Burgundian minstrel, however, suggests that the poet has added something of his own to the Volker, with whom he was already acquainted.

The Würzburg sculptor Tilman Riemenschneider used to make the figure of Nicodemus at the foot of the cross into a self-portrait: it is also conceivable that the anonymous author of the N1 has given us in the figure of Volker von Alzey an idealized self-portrait,<sup>114</sup> not only of himself but of his class, the lower aristocracy, many members of which were ministerials, like Volker, holding benefices in return for services given. In doing so, the poet compared his own class with that of the feudal lords, exemplified in the figure of Rüdiger. The lord's principal virtue is generosity, which finds its highest expression in the gift

of his shield to Hagen, who thereupon refuses to fight him. The ministerial's principal virtue was loyalty, which Volker demonstrates likewise towards Hagen, when he vows never to budge "ûz helfe nimmer einen fuoz" (1778,4) from his comrade-in-arms, a vow which he keeps until his death. Thus Volker's virtue is equal to that of Rûdeger's and through these figures the Nl poet has apotheosized their respective classes. This desire to elevate Volker's status and thereby that of the ministerials becomes most apparent when even Hagen, the most powerful lord in Burgundy, expresses his regret at ever having occupied a higher place than his comrade-in-arms (2005). Volker is his "geselle" (2005,3), or more specifically his "hergeselle" (2290,3), i.e. Volker is Hagen's subordinate with the same titles and functions as Hagen himself, but by virtue of his loyalty and bravery Hagen sees them as equals, just as on another level, Rûdeger, the lord, is elevated to the status of equality with the Kings when Gunther accepts not only his daughter as sister-in-law, but also a coat from the generous margrave. By thus transforming the Volker of Alzey and of pre-Nl tradition, the poet gives an important insight into his intentions when casting the old tales into courtly form, and thus we see that the Volker interpretation aids in our understanding of the entire Nl.

At the outset of the epic, Kriemhild gives us its "message," "wie liebe mit leide, ze jungest lônem kan" (17); at the very end the poet uses almost the identical words:

Diu vil michel êre was dâ gelegen tôt.  
die liute heten alle jâmer unde nôt.  
mit leide was verendet des küniges hôhgezît,  
als ie diu liebe leide z'allen jungeste gît. (2378)

The first line of this strophe speaks of "êre" lying dead; de Boor interprets this as referring to the splendor of the retinue (note to 2378), which it may, but it can also be interpreted more broadly. This "êre" was one of the central

concepts of knighthood: it referred to the respect which a person enjoyed among his peers, a respect based upon possessions and external signs of rank, power, and authority. Loss of "êre" meant loss of that quality which defined the knight or lady, and thus loss of self: Brünhild lost her "êre" through Siegfried's fault, and had to be avenged; Kriemhild lost her "êre" when she lost Siegfried and the hoard: the result was the destruction of the flower of Burgundian knighthood.

The feeling that one's "êre" was intact and that one was living to the fullest the life of a heroic warrior was described in MHG as "hôher muot," the exalted self-confidence of the hero. "Hôher muot," however, belonged to that complex of personality-centered values which the Church had been combatting in the Germans since the beginning of its mission to them. A cleric grounded in moral theology would see "hôher muot" as its exaggerated form, "übermuot" or "superbia," a turning away from God, a reliance on one's self and on earthly values as the basic principle of human behavior. Translated into concrete terms for the Germanic peoples and later for courtly knighthood, "superbia" meant the heroic self-assertion of the Germanic warrior as well as the attempt on the part of knightly chivalry to develop an ethical system based on the personal values of "êre" and "hôher muot."<sup>115</sup> It is to be expected that a work coming from the hand of a cleric residing at the court of the Prince-Bishop of Passau would be imbued with the moral-theological outlook of his day and place. Only when we hold the mirror of "superbia" up to Volker's actions, as this cleric, the Kl poet, and the author of variant \*C must have done, can we see the heroic minstrel as the poets intended him to be seen.

Already in the Saxon war we read that Volker, along with his comrades, killed many Saxons and Danes. The medieval Church regarded this as "homicidium" an aspect of "superbia,"

irrespective of the circumstances. The "gelf," a part of his function as standard-bearer, was included in the sin of "iactantia" (boasting). His impulsiveness is "temeritas," a sin which even includes boldness, his stock appellation, "der küene Volkêr." When he jumps up from the table in the banquet hall, the poet says: "dô Volkêr unde Hagene sô sêre wüeten began" (1967,4); in "wüeten" we recognize "ira" one of the principal sins connected with "superbia." The poet has prepared us for this interpretation in (1966,3) with "dô videlte ungefuoge Guntheres spilman," for "ungefuoge" implies that Volker is now out of tune, in the sense of not acting in accordance with moral principles. And just before his death, Volker hears from Wolfhart: "iuwer übermüeten mag ich mit êren niht vertragen (2269,4); pride and honor clash, the result, as we have so often seen in the N1, is mutual destruction. The K1, the first interpretation of the N1, interprets Volker as "vermezzen," a term which also belongs to the category of "übermuot."

An "idea" of the N1 is thus expressed through the figure of Volker: an autonomous human order, based upon prestige and reputation among men is shown to be unstable and condemned to destruction; the world of chivalry, based upon the self-confidence of the individual, without reliance upon God, carries within itself the seed of its own destruction. The fact that God is only superficially mentioned and that religion is not an integral part of the life of these heroes, is not, as has been traditionally claimed, proof of the "heathen" character of the N1. It is more likely, however an indictment of the world of 1200, a statement by traditional moral theology in opposition to the development of a self-reliant courtly life style based on chivalric optimism.

Volker is an ideal vehicle for the expression of this idea: he is probably based on an historical person, an individual who lived in the world of chivalry, so that the



author and his readers could identify with him more readily than they could with a pale abstraction or with a semisupernatural figure like Siegfried. Volker von Alzey was a knight, and not a figure out of the dim past, a person of flesh and blood, sharing many of the traits of the author himself. Secondly, Volker is a decent person, according to the standards of the times. He is not a villainous murderer, like Hagen, nor is he a weakling like Gunther, who, at least in Nl I, has to be carried along by his friends. So through Volker, the poet can prove that even a good man comes to destruction through pride: This is the true significance behind the emphasis on Volker at the expense of Hagen: the ideals of chivalry, i.e. bravery, strength, and cultural accomplishments are exemplified in Volker far more than in any one else in the Nl, even more than in Hagen, the mighty hero of the "alten maeren," yet, once "superbia," takes over, and man relies on himself rather than on God, then even Volker, "der edele videlaere" (1670,4) must perish.

One of the burning issues of the day was whether or not it was possible to gain honor and worldly goods and at the same time enjoy God's favor. Chivalry as we know it was based primarily upon the first two, and was in the process of developing an ideal of human conduct based upon these secular values. Walther von der Vogelweide realized the implications of this controversy and saw that it went beyond the struggle between the Empire and the Papacy, between Guelf and Ghibbeline, for the Papacy could easily become secular in attitude and values, just as an emperor could guide his people in the direction of spiritual ideals.

Walther himself was a Ghibbeline, yet he could ask himself:

wie man zer werlte solte leben

wie man driu dinc erwurbe

der keinez niht verdurbe

diu zwei sint êre und varnde guot,

daz dicke ein ander schaden tuot:

daz dritte ist gotes hulde. (67, 84, lines 7, 9-13)<sup>116</sup>

Walther's answer is that of the Nl poet, who gives his answer through the figure of a man like himself, Volker von Alzey: "jâ leider des enmâc niht gesîn."

The contemporary reality of the Volker figure can also underline the poet's opposition to the Germanic belief that fate guides the destinies of men, for as a medieval Christian he saw man's fortune as the result of faith and works together with God's grace. He has, therefore, systematically eliminated from the Nl the idea that an ancient curse by supernatural beings caused the catastrophe, and replaced it by demonstrating that when wrong decisions are once made, unhappy results are bound to follow, but that all could have been otherwise. This is the true sense behind Volker's "Ez ist et unerwendet" (1731): the Burgundians have made the catastrophe inevitable by their own misdeeds, and although their doom was by no means predestined, their sins have now made it unavoidable and the only choice left to them is to die like men. Volker himself has made his own destruction inevitable through his faults of pride and misplaced loyalty.

### III. The Volker figure in later medieval heroic poetry -

#### 1. the medieval Walther epic

Our knowledge of a medieval German epic dealing with the adventures of Walther and Hildegund is based on fragments of two Austrian manuscripts, which are based on the N1 and belong, therefore, to the thirteenth century.<sup>117</sup>

After the battle with Gunther and his men, Walther and his betrothed are given leave to travel through the Wasichenwald (Vosges) to Lengres (Langres), where Walther's father is King. Volker and sixty of his men provide a protective escort past Metz, where, on Volker's advice, they do not tarry as Ortwin might attack them, and through the Burgundian territory. Volker is described as "der held," "der vil kune," and "der stolze videlaere in der Burgonde lant" (str. 3, 6, 18).<sup>118</sup>

The author of this version of the Walther epic clearly had all of Volker's functions in the N1 in mind: primarily he is the leader through unfamiliar territory, where he alone knows the way; his music, as well as his boldness and heroism are mentioned but not developed. The figure of sixty men is twice the number which he brought to Worms in the N1, an example of doubling for rhetoric effect. Volker's pride is also pointed out; apparently this trait was recognized by the author and deemed worthy of mention even in this brief characterization. Whether Volker had any other part in this epic, we cannot tell; its loss leaves an unfortunate gap in our knowledge of the reception of Volker in later medieval literature.

#### 2. The Rosengarten poems

If the N1 is an indictment of the secular chivalric ethic, then the Rosengarten is a parody of it. It exists

in two principal manuscript versions, A and D, of which A preserves the original outline of the poem, which was written ca 1250, while D is a "modernization" written ca 1270/80 to make the poem more acceptable to courtly taste.<sup>119</sup> In both versions Volker is called von Alzey, and has a golden fiddle on his shield. In A he is called: "ein küener man" (7),<sup>120</sup> "den ûzerwelten degen / er kan ouch wol videln" (99). He fights with Ortwin and gets the worst of it, in fact "dô muoste von ime entwichen Volkêr der spilman" (284); this is the only time that the author calls him a "spilman," just before he runs away. Here too the sword-fiddle-bow motif comes into its own: Ortwin has great fun asking Volker why he carries a fiddle, as they are not there for amusement; Volker retorts that whomever he reaches with his fiddle-bow "muoz von einander gân" (283), but the motif is not so well-developed as in D, which is much longer.

Dietrich's brother, the warlike monk Ilsan, is Volker's opponent in D. Ilsan is one of the more comical characters in medieval German literature, a huge ruffian who, as he is leaving his abbey, promises not only to win a garland for himself, but also to bring one to each of his fifty-two fellow monks. As Gibeche calls Volker to do battle with him, the King laments that Ilsan is making fun of Kriemhild and everyone else in the garden. Clearly Ilsan will be a good partner for Volker, and the two engage in a good bit of crosstalk comedy after the fighting is over, for when Kriemhild sees that Volker is being worsted, she separates them, declaring Ilsan the victor. Volker wishes: "dîn klôster müeze verbrinnen . . . du hâst mir mit dîme predeger stabe sô starke streiche gegeben" (455). Ilsan answers that his staff is bright and sharp, to which Volker replies that they must live under an easy rule in their abbey, their habit ought to be silk instead of rough monk's cloth. Ilsan finally asks Kriemhild whether she has any more such fine fiddlers here on the Rhine, for no matter how sweet their

music sounds, their bows are sickly. D also refers to Volker as the son of Kriemhild's (in a variant reading Brunhild's) sister.

In only one of the versions of the Rosengarten (B) does Volker get killed; in the others he is injured, but apparently not seriously. Here too, Volker von Alzey seems to be a favorite of the poet's, as we have seen in the N1 and in the K1. Nothing essential is added to the Volker figure by the Rosengarten; we hear nothing of him as standard-bearer or guide, but his heroism, his "gelf," and his fiddle-playing combine to provide some broad humor as they did in the N1. The spirit of the N1 pervades the poem: Volker is called "ein helt ze sîner hant" (D-281), and in A Ortwin promises: "ich verschrôte ime die videln, des sült ir sicher sîn" (A-281). The fiddle in his shield and his relationship to the royal house are new, and given the lack of supporting evidence in literature or history, it is most unlikely that Volker was of royal blood. Perhaps his close friendship with Hagen suggested this detail, as it seems to have inspired GrH to make him Hagen's brother. As to the origin of the fiddle on his shield, the source of this was most likely the same pre-N1 tradition which provided the name Gibeche for Gunther's father; this coat-of-arms may have been inspired by the historical escutcheon of the Alzeier, which probably predates the writing of the Rosengarten. The poets of the N1 and the K1 do not show any interest in heraldry, and so Volker's shield would not be mentioned in those works. The intention of the Rosengarten is parody, and the principal expression of this tendency is the monk Ilsan. Volker provides the foil par excellence for this warlike cleric, and underlines the poet's purpose, for most minstrels were, no doubt, better talkers than fighters; a monk and a minstrel would naturally be ideal opponents in this mock epic.

### 3. Das Buch von Bern and Die Rabenschlacht

Although this double epic dates in its original form from the same time as the N1, the only versions we have of it are from the late thirteenth century, and the Volker figure in them belongs to the sections added by the only named author associated with heroic poetry, Heinrich der Vogler.<sup>121</sup> He made his revisions and additions to the epic during the period of tension between the higher nobility and the territorial lords, which culminated in the conspiracy of 1295-1296 against Duke Albrecht of Habsburg, and in this struggle Heinrich is clearly on the side of the rebellious nobility.

In both epics Volker is called "von Alzey her Volkêr,"<sup>122</sup> and in both cases, since, as in the Rosengarten, he is on the side opposing Dietrich, he is overcome by his opponent. The Buch von Bern pits him against his old enemy from the N1, Wolfhart (9235-41); the Vogler says of them "die wâren küene beide." In the Rabenschlacht he is overcome by Baltram (705).

### 4. The appendix to the Heldenbuch

Before we leave the specifically German treatments of the Volker figure, we must mention the note in the appendix to the Ambraser Heldenbuch, which enumerates: "Fölcker von altzen genandt eyn Fiderer, wan er furt ein Fydelen in synem schilte, der was frau crimhilt schwester sun."<sup>123</sup> The source of this statement is probably Rosengarten D.

### 5. The Thidrekssaga

German scholars do not agree on the place of the Ths in the development of German heroic poetry. Panzer states that it was based on our N1, and that deviations from it are

due to the fact that the author of the *Ths* was "ein gewissenloser Literat" presumably with no respect for tradition. Others regard the *Ths* as based on pre-N1 tradition, and see the deviations from the N1 as evidence of the rougher, more primitive style of the early twelfth century. Based on statements by the author of the *Ths*, his work is most likely based, at least in part, on the songs alluded to by Saxo Grammaticus as having been sung in 1131 by a Saxon singer in Denmark, about Kriemhild's notorious betrayal of her brothers.<sup>124</sup> Volker enters the action after the Niflungen discuss Attila's invitation; since his attempts at dissuading Gunnar from the trip to Susat have failed, Högni goes into the hall and tells his blood brother Volker that he will be coming with the others to Susat, that he must arm himself quickly, and that only those who dare to fight need come along (p. 387).

When they arrive, Attila leads them into a hall and lights a fire for them; when Grimhild enters, Högni puts his helmet back on and binds it fast; Folkher does the same (p. 396). On the morning of the next day, after Thidrek has warned the Niflungen, they all stroll into the courtyard and thence through the town, Folkher at Högni's side. The two are dressed as splendidly as Gunnar himself, but on account of their helmets, Attila does not recognize them, and must ask who they are. Blodlin identifies them; Högni and Folkher stroll arm-in-arm through town, raising their helmets occasionally so that the ladies can admire them (p. 398).

At the feast in the orchard, the Niflungen set aside their spears and shields, and Folkher takes his place beside the tutor of the King's son Aldrian (p. 401); later, Högni begins the battle by slaying Aldrian and then reaching over Folkher's head to kill the tutor for teaching the lad poor manners (p. 402). After the Niflungen have broken out of this walled-in orchard, we see Folkher together with Giselher

and Gernoz, with their backs to the hall, fighting valiantly (p. 405). Later, after Gunnar is taken prisoner, Folkher, with the rest of the King's troops, fights under Giselher, while Högni and Gernoz lead their own men (p. 407). At last, when the battle order has been completely disrupted, Folkher fights his way to the hall where Högni is fighting. His feet do not touch the ground, for it is covered with corpses. Högni does not recognize him, but after Folkher has identified himself, Högni thanks God that Folkher's sword sings thus upon the helmets of the Huns. This is the only indication of Folkher's music in the *Ths* (p. 410). Then Thidrek, who in the meantime has seen his friend Rodingeir fall, joins the fray and, with one blow, decapitates Folkher (p. 411).

Folkher's role in the *Ths* is that of Hagen's comrade-in-arms. We see only one dim reminiscence of his minstrelsy, and it is Hagen, not Folkher who bears the royal standard. The war against the Saxons and Danes, in which Volker acts as standard-bearer in the *N1*, is left out of the *Ths*, most likely because the story is set in Saxon territory. Folkher's subordinate role in the *Ths* is clear, as he does not take part in the deliberations over Attila's invitation, and he takes orders from Gernoz. His importance as a hero, however, is underlined by his being named along with Gunnar, Gernoz, Giselher, and Högni, who are all brothers and therefore members of the royal family; also, Folkher dies at Thidrek's hand, a great honor for an ordinary man.

## 6. The Danish ballad

This ballad, although later than the *N1*, is, as we have seen, most likely based upon pre-*N1* tradition.<sup>125</sup> Grundtvig's edition gives three versions, A, B, and C; A and B are editions of older versions, set down by Anders Vedel in the sixteenth century, and which appear as Ab and Bb in Grundtvig's edition; C is Vedel's work, which Grundtvig



did not edit. Hagen and his brother, Falquor Spilmand, dominate the action, which begins with the crossing of the Sund to the island of Hven, where the action takes place. In one version, (A,18), Falquor is rowing Gynter, Gierlo, and Hagen (spellings are those of A) across the water, when a storm springs up and the oars ~~snap~~ in his hands, so that Hagen must steer the boat with his shield. A watchman sees the two arrive (the Kings are forgotten completely), and reports to Kremold that two men are standing before the gate, the one with a fiddle as coat-of-arms (A,23, B,16, C,23). Kremold explains that they are her brothers, and that the one is not a court minstrel, in the service of a lord, for both are the sons of a duke (A,24, C,24).

After Kremold has offered gold to whomever slays Hagen, Falquor begins the fighting. The three versions of the ballad give three accounts of the battle: common to all is that Falquor fights with an iron pole since his sword has broken, in A before, in B after he has broken a door open; in C his sword is not mentioned. In A, Hagen compares his own sword to a fiddle after Falquor seems to have been killed (32-33), (the account is confusing), while in B Falquor himself compares his iron pole to a fiddle as he slays thirty warriors in one blow (26-27). In C, Hagen compares Falquor's iron pole to a fiddle and admires his bowing technique (33), while the older version of A has Kremold's men dancing and leaping in a circle as Falquor plays (Ab,32). Falquor is killed before Hagen, who laments his helper, invoking the name of God (A,33, B,32, Bb,33).

The tendency, observable in the N1, of Hagen and Volker to eclipse the Kings, has here been carried to completion, for only the two vassals engage in the fighting. Of Volker's minstrelsy, only the fiddle on his escutcheon remains, and the comparison of his fiddling to his fighting, of which we saw a reminiscence in the Ths. His friendship with Hagen has become Volker's dominant characteristic: the comrade-in-arms

7.

of the older tradition, who became Hagen's blood brother in the *Ths*, has become Hagen's actual brother in the ballad, further intensifying the relationship between the minstrel figure and the cause of his destruction.

#### 7. The Danish heroic songs

Of the heroic songs, which deal with the exploits of Didrik von Bern, two contain references to Folqvard Spilman.<sup>126</sup> In the one, he has a fiddle and bow on his shield and wants to drink, and not sleep (p. 25); in the other his shield is not mentioned, but he is given a son called Sonne (p. 56). Since Folqvard does not take an active role in either of these songs, we can assume that their author used him to flesh out Didrik's army. The fiddle as coat-of-arms belongs to the Nibelungen tradition, while the reference to his drinking may be based on the behavior of the professional entertainer as the author knew him.

#### 8. The Hvensche Chronik

A translation from the Latin into modern Danish written in 1603,<sup>127</sup> this work also localizes the German saga on the island of Hven and is closely connected with the Danish ballad. Folqvard and Hagen fight in two different castles, having been separated by a ruse of Kremold's. After Folqvard has slain all of Kremold's warriors, she tells him that his brother Hagen has been slain in Nörborg castle by other knights. Folqvard becomes so sorrowful over this, that he drinks the blood of the slain men, and dies.<sup>128</sup> Noteworthy here is that Folqvard and Hagen fight separately, and that Folqvard seems to drink himself to death on the blood of Kremold's warriors. This motif, which we first encounter in Hagen's advice to the distressed Burgundians in the *Nl*, does not occur in the *Ths*, but reappears in the Danish ballad,

attributed to Hagen. The manner in which Folqvard takes this role over in the Hvensche Chronik is consistent with the tendency to intensify the closeness of the Volker-Hagen relationship, which we have observed in the Danish ballad. Here, at the end of the Middle Ages, the two figures have become practically two aspects of one personality.

IV. Summary: The idea behind the medieval Volker figure

We have examined the development of the Volker figure over the course of four centuries, from the Rhenish N1 and the "ältere not" as reflected in the Ths and the Danish ballad, to the N1 and related German epics, down to the Hvens<sup>chr</sup> Chronik, which, as part of the Scandinavian development, also reflects the pre-N1 tradition. On the basis of our previous conclusions, we may say that Volker entered the tradition ca 1130 as Hagen's comrade-in-arms and adjutant standard-bearer, who could also play the fiddle. The N1 poet took Volker's musical role and developed it into that of a courtly minnesinger, while his role as Hagen's companion receded temporarily into the background, to be recalled only after the Burgundians had crossed the Danube, thus making it necessary to "introduce" Volker a third time. In the post-N1 German works, Volker's friendship with Hagen all but disappeared, leaving him his role as guide (Walther), fiddler (Rosengarten), and warrior (Buch von Bern and Rabenschlacht), with his alleged kinship to the Burgundian royal house as a possible reminiscence of his partnership with Hagen. In Scandinavia the reverse was true: the standard-bearer disappeared entirely, while the musician survived in an oblique reference in the Ths, in his escutcheon and the sword-fiddle motif in GrH, and in the references to his drinking in the heroic songs and the Hvens Chronik.

The Volker characterization remained as consistent as it did because he began with relatively few traits and as a specifically medieval figure: there is nothing about Volker of dragons or Valkyries, of having been sired by a supernatural father or of wedding a superhuman bride. These aspects of Siegfried, Hagen, and Gunther remained in the N1 of 1205 and in subsequent tradition, casting an aura of unreality over them, so that the poets felt freer to change them, from hero to villain for example, as the circumstances

required. This was not so with Volker: probably entering the tradition based on a real person, with his portrayal in the Nl based on the real standard-bearer and minnesinger, and influenced by the Alzey ministerials as the Kl poet knew them, Volker remained more firmly rooted in contemporary reality than his fellow Burgundians.

Being rooted in reality, Volker was an ideal vehicle for expressing the poet's purpose in writing his work, whether this was didactic or parodistic. The poets could identify with Volker, his social class and his artistic ability, and so could see the virtues and faults of contemporary society, of which they were a part, reflected in him. Thus Volker could be a mirror and at the same time a warning: he expresses the ideals and aspirations of the ministerial class, but his downfall serves as a warning that he who cultivates the chivalrous virtues of bravery, loyalty, and honor, at the expense of Christian humility, who adheres to a purely secular value system, must finally perish.

There seems to have been no purpose other than entertainment behind the Scandinavian works which we have examined. Here too, however, Volker displays those secular virtues of bravery, loyalty, and honor, which we observed in the German epics, and here too, Volker perishes, at the side of Hagen. The medieval interpretation of the Nl saw Hagen as the villain, to which the Germans reacted by allowing Volker to eclipse his demonic friend, while at the same time affirming his loyalty to him. In Scandinavia, Volker and Hagen eclipsed the Kings, but Volker was never emphasized at Hagen's expense; rather the relationship remained constant, and Volker's loyalty retained the object which it lost in Germany. The reason for Volker's downfall, which disappeared after the Nl in Germany, remained explicit in the North, for in the Nl and in Scandinavia, the poet-minstrel remains at the side of the motive force in his own catastrophe.

C. The Volker figure in modern German Nibelungen works

I. 1815-1848

1. The dramas

Uhland	Eichhorn	Kopisch
Hermann	Zarnack	Wurm
Müller	Raupach	Vischer

Volker first appears in modern German Nibelungen works in Uhland's plan developed between November 1817 and the end of the year 1818.<sup>129</sup> In the second part of this projected two-part drama, Uhland characterizes him as the minstrel, Gunther's vassal. In Act II, scene three, the night watch, which Uhland combines with the scene "how they did not rise before the Queen," Volker has already lulled the Burgundians to sleep when the confrontation between Hagen and Chriemhild takes place. The noise of the quarrel awakens the Burgundians, and so, after Chriemhild and her Huns withdraw, Volker must once more lull his companions to sleep, this time singing ominous words (p. 391).

In Act IV, scene three, in the course of the negotiations between the Huns and the Burgundians, Hagen offers to give himself up to Chriemhild if she will spare Giselher, an offer which the latter rejects. At this point, Uhland notes in the margin that Volker's spirit will one day travel over the earth and sing the tale of the Nibelungen, but now he must fight. These and a reference to his mocking refusal to surrender Rüdiger's body are the only references to Volker in Uhland's outline; they show clearly, however, the function of the minstrel as Uhland saw it, namely to look, albeit dimly, into the future, and to announce his visions to his companions, and secondly to transmit the heroic traditions of the German past to future generations.<sup>130</sup>

The first drama to include a fully-developed Volker figure is Franz Rudolf Hermann's trilogy Die Nibelungen, an attempted fusion of the Thidrekssaga, the Nibelungenlied, the Rosengarten, and the Lied vom hürnen Seyfried.<sup>131</sup> In Act III of Part II, "Siegfried," which corresponds to NI I, Volker makes his first appearance. Hagen and Günther have already hatched the plot to kill Siegfried, and in scene eight are preparing for the hunt. Siegfried greets Volker, who is carrying his fiddle on his back by a blue ribbon, as "edler Sangesheld," and believes that Volker will once again entertain the Burgundians as they go into battle against the Saxons and Danes (p. 178). Then Günther gathers his knights around a table, calls for wine, and suggests that each sing a short song praising that which he loves best. After Siegmund, Günther, Siegfried, and Hagen have sung their quatrains in praise of the month of May, wine, heroism, love, and braving death in battle, Volker sings of battle, which inspires his poetry, and music, which he enjoys in peacetime (p. 180).

In the next scene, the war having been called off, Günther requests a hunting song of Volker. This second song, replete with the conventional imagery of romanticism, shows hunting as the ideal pastime of the knight, where danger beckons and rewards him with the joy of freedom under the clear blue heaven. A stage direction indicates that Volker accompanies Günther and Hagen, but he takes no part in the hunt and never alludes to Siegfried or to his murder (p. 184).

Only in the prelude to Part III, "Chriemhildens Rache" does Volker reappear, not as standard-bearer but as minstrel: after the Nibelungen have crossed the Danube, Günther requests a song to cheer them up on the long trip. Hagen adds to this that the song may be jolly, but ought to have a gruesome ending, whereupon Volker promises them "Alfarts Tod" (p. 263), an appropriate choice, since this song of a heroic youth, whose bravery leads him into death in battle, was probably

composed by a minstrel,<sup>132</sup> and it is this side of Volker's character which Hermann wishes to emphasize.

At this point, too, Hermann begins to develop the second aspect of Volker's personality, his friendship with Hagen. It is Hagen's prompting which governs Volker's choice of the song he wishes to sing, and many of Volker's subsequent actions are influenced by his relationship with Hagen. In the night watch at the end of Act II, Volker sings his second song for Hagen, whose heart is heavy on account of Siegfried's murder. Volker chooses a song which a "Nordermann" from "Nordlands" icy coast has taught him, about a giantess who plays with lions to while away the time and uproots oak trees when enraged. Whenever a knight comes into her desolate region, however, she becomes a rose maiden, entices him with promises of riches and love, only to kill him when he follows her; finally, according to the old legend, a knight conquers her, whereupon she turns into a wolf, howling through the forest every midnight. At the end of the song Hagen starts, as though awakening, and asks whether the "Wölfin" is still howling about. Realizing, however, that midnight is past, he rests his head upon his sword, lost in thought. Thus his friend's song affects him, not cheering him up but making him, if anything, even more pensive (pp. 308-09).

This mood continues into the first scene of Act III, where Volker asks Hagen, who had hurried from the minster at the end of Mass, why he did so. Hagen then relates to Volker how no holy water fell on him as the priest was blessing the congregation, and how one of Chriemhilde's ladies in waiting took him to a niche behind the altar where Siegfried's casket is displayed. This has unnerved Hagen to the extent that Volker must remind him of his duty to his Kings, who expect reassurance from him. This time, however, Volker does not play a song, but strikes his shield with his sword, whereupon his friend pulls himself together (pp. 310-13).

In the ensuing tournament it is Hagen's turn to follow



Volker, who joins in the fray against Günther's wish, since he recognizes Etzel's brother Hornbog from their encounter of the previous night. Volker kills Hornbog, but Etzel pacifies both sides and prevents further bloodshed. During the battle in the banquet hall, Hagen sends Volker to assist Dankwart in preventing any Huns from leaving or entering, but as Chriemhilde is leaving under Dietrich's escort, Volker offers to kill her. Günther refuses permission out of fear of Dietrich, and Volker, hearing the clash of weapons outside, tells Hagen that the "Wölfin" is howling already, an allusion to his song in the night watch (pp. 316-18). Volker appears for the last time in Act IV, scene four, where he joins the other Nibelungen in refusing to surrender Hagen to Chriemhilde (p. 347).

In this first modern full-length literary treatment of the medieval German N1, Volker is the hero-minstrel and vehicle for Hermann's poetic aspirations; his friendship for Hagen, even though constant and sincere, is not the determining aspect of his character. Neither his two songs, nor his quatrain in Part II refer to it; these rather interpret the spirit of the heroic minstrel and, in the night watch, the N1 itself. The "Wölfin" appears at first hearing to refer to Brünhild, to Siegfried's conquering her, and to her rage at this deception; Hagen, on the other hand, sees the "Wölfin" as Chriemhilde, who, having been deprived of her power through the loss of Siegfried, rages at midnight against those responsible for his murder.<sup>133</sup> Both interpretations seem to be equally valid and both also seem to leave something out; the reader is reminded at this point of the conflicting and rather vague theories regarding the genesis of heroic saga which were current when Hermann began writing his drama (1816), and of the indistinct foreboding which Uhland's Volker was to have expressed in the same situation, even though it is highly unlikely that Hermann was acquainted with Uhland's ideas.

It is equally unlikely that Hermann's drama, published in Leipzig in 1819, was known to Johann Wilhelm Müller, who published Chriemhilds Rache in Heidelberg in 1822.<sup>134</sup> This 254-page trilogy takes place entirely in Etzelburg (Ofen), thus presenting a broad interpretation of the last twelve Aventiuren. Previous events are retold in the dialogue, and Müller added a chorus of Chriemhild's ladies in waiting, to comment on the action in the Greek manner.

Volker, as "Herr von Alzey, Sanger," is one of the Burgundian leaders, the other two being Hagen, Herr von Troneg, cupbearer, and Dankwart, marshal. Volker sings two songs in Part II, after the Burgundians have learned that they must do battle with Rudiger: a four-line love song and a seven-line battle song with a three-line refrain. The love song praises the sweet face of the beloved, and Gieselher is reminded that he will never see Sieglinde (Rudiger's daughter) again, but Gernot, together with Dankwart, demands a "Kampflied;" thus is shown the other aspect of the warrior-minstrel, as he praises the merry knights who disperse the cowardly Hunnish dogs and drive them into the jaws of death (pp. 152-53).

Fighting is Volker's chief occupation in this drama, and, since most of it must, for technical reasons, take place off-stage, he does a good deal of talking about his exploits, both past and future. The Burgundians are attacked by the Huns already upon their arrival in Etzelburg, and so must withdraw to a safe hall within the castle complex, where they will attempt to defend themselves. Hagen and Gunther then begin to quarrel, each blaming the other for having caused the trouble in which they find themselves. Volker interjects that such internal bickering is useless, and that he for one wants only to fight the Huns, of which they have already killed thousands (p. 69), and among them Irnfried, the state-oak of Thuringia, felled by Volker. The whole castle will, he promises, resound from the strokes of his bow, as soon as Etzel is able to recruit new warriors (p. 71). With the

internal strife over, the Burgundians are able to turn their attentions, in Part II, to more pressing matters. Etzel offers to let them all go home except Hagen, but Volker, whose sarcasm comes here to the fore, retorts that he would then compose a song about the honorable departure of the Germans, were they to accept this offer (p. 155).

In Part III this sarcasm comes into its own: now only Gunther, Hagen, and Volker are still alive and well, and as the latter surveys the situation, he observes that Gunther is now in an ideal position for a ruler, in that he has no unruly subjects to contradict him (p. 211). Volker consoles the wounded Gieselher, by pointing out that he will be able to die before the rest (p. 213), and tells Hagen, who has once again complained that he must take all the blame in spite of his well-meant efforts, that it were most unjust indeed, in view of the fruits of his efforts, to receive such royal ingratitude. Then, as Gunther offers Hagen the blood of the slain warriors to drink, Volker encourages his friend Hagen (the only time Volker uses this phrase) to think of it as mead and to enjoy his King's humane gift (p. 219). When Gunther rebukes him for this bitter mockery, reminding him that God still rules in heaven, Volker retorts that now is the time for faith, since they can no longer act. At that moment, flames break out, for the first half-chorus has set the hall on fire; Volker advances to confront them, threatening to fiddle them to the edge of hell, when they hurl firebrands at him and he falls (p. 221).

Müller's Volker emerges as that member of the Burgundian force who sees most clearly the cause of the catastrophe and the guilt which they all share (p. 69). Having recognized the futility of mutual recriminations, he urges them as Germans to unite against the common foe. When this common-sense approach fails, irony takes over, and Volker, seeing that all is lost, highlights the futility of their situation with metaphors of kingly rule and royal service. He comments on

the action but does not advance it: as in the N1 he can best be understood as an interpretation of the Burgundians' experience. Müller's play was rejected by contemporary critics as being based on unsuitable subject matter,<sup>135</sup> lacking in individual characterization and excessively wordy.<sup>136</sup> The latter criticism is well-founded, but as to characterization, Gieselher and Volker do emerge as individuals, very likely because Müller could deal with minor characters more comfortably than with a Gunther or Hagen.

Christian Friedrich Eichhorn wrote Chriemhildens Rache<sup>137</sup> while a student of mathematics at the University of Göttingen.<sup>138</sup> Eichhorn's tragedy uses the medieval German tradition exclusively, is shorter than either of its predecessors, and like them has never been produced. Volker's action begins during the Senna, when he and Dankwart appear together (p. 62) to report to Siegfried that Brunhilde and Chriemhilde are quarreling. Siegfried and Hagen leave the knights' hall, where they have been planning Siegfried's coronation--Hagen is to accompany him to the altar--and attempt to settle the dispute. Volker remains behind and relates the details of the quarrel to his friend Ortwein, the royal seneschal. He blames Brunhilde for having referred to Siegfried as Günther's vassal in front of Chriemhilde, which, although true, was undiplomatic (p. 68). This made Chriemhilde so furious that she related the whole story of how Brunhilde was won for Günther. Volker does not at this point comment on Chriemhilde's behavior, for he is interrupted by the King's return from Siegfried's coronation, and does not appear again until the night watch scene in Act V, which contains the action of N1 II.

This night scene, interrupted by thunder, comets, and the ghosts of Siegfried, Ute, and Brunhilde, contains just three lines of Volker's song invoking peace in the bosom of nature. The ghosts upset Hagen to the extent that he falls

in a faint and Volker stops playing, believing him dead (pp. 158-61). In spite of Etzel's efforts at reconciling Chriemhilde and Hagen, Siegfried's ghost, announcing its will through the thunder, demands revenge. Volker and Hagen will perish too, and, as Volker explains, he had seen it all coming; therefore he did not join in their oaths of eternal friendship (p. 177). Hagen weeps in remorse, and exits, leaning on Volker's shoulder, to gird himself for the coming battles. Rüdiger and Gernot fight, each receiving a mortal wound from the other, whereupon Hagen and Volker carry both heroes outside the hall, where Volker reproaches Chriemhilde and curses her unjust revenge (p. 188). He refuses to hand Rüdiger's body over to Hildebrand, who kills him in the ensuing combat, avenging Siegestab's death.

Goedeke calls this drama "eine Ausgeburt tollster Jugendverirrung,"<sup>139</sup> and Karl Rehorn terms it overdone romanticism.<sup>140</sup> Indeed, when we see the Burgundians, except for Dankwart and Volker, behaving like sentimental young romantics, we can understand their dislike. Dankwart has fewer lines than Volker, and this neglect may well have saved him. Volker, too, speaks relatively little: he relates the Senna, encourages Hagen to pull himself together, and reproaches both Brunhilde's arrogance and Chriemhilde's revenge. When Volker does speak, however, he appears to give Eichhorn's own interpretation of the causes behind the catastrophe.

August Zarnack's Siegfrieds Tod<sup>141</sup> deals, as the title indicates, with N1 I, and, since the action begins with the return of Siegfried and Kriemhild to Worms at Gunther's invitation, Zarnack has had to invent a Volker role in order to have him on stage at all, giving him some of the lines, which, in the N1, are spoken by unidentified persons. Volker appears to live at court, for Gunther terms him a pillar of his realm (p. 8), and appears on stage only after the Senna.

He seems to agree with the plot to kill Siegfried, since he asks only how to accomplish it, since Siegfried is invulnerable and a mighty warrior (p. 67).

Volker accompanies the Burgundians on the hunt in the Odenwald, where he reproaches Siegfried for taking so much game that nothing will be left for the others (p. 120). After Siegfried's death, it is Volker who suggests they say that robbers had killed him (p. 127). While the rest are laying Siegfried on his shield, a hermit enters, looking for Siegfried. When Volker tells him that the King is already dead, he asks who gave the fatal stroke. Volker replies that a robber, hidden in the underbrush, killed him with a spear; thus Volker becomes not only the inventor of this tale, but also the first of the Burgundians, to tell it to the "outside world."

In a few strokes, Zarnack has created a loyal vassal, who is ready to stand by his lord and even to represent him and his actions to the world. Volker does not question the right or wrong of Siegfried's murder, but, once it has been decided, carries it off as his lords wished. There is, however, a subtle irony in what he tells the hermit, for he describes the murder as having been committed by a cowardly thief, but the other detail, the spear, describes Hagen's method of killing Siegfried accurately. The interpretation suggests itself that Volker is at the same time passing judgment on the act, without betraying the perpetrators.

The year 1828 saw the first dramatization of the Nl to be produced on the stage. Ernst Raupach's Nibelungen-Hort<sup>142</sup> was first staged in Berlin on 9 January and in Vienna on 29 December.<sup>143</sup> It was in a production of this drama in 1847, that Hebbel saw his future wife as Chriemhild, and the inadequacies of the play, together with the excellent performance of Christine Enghaus, inspired him to write his own dramatization of the Nl.<sup>144</sup>

Raupach's "Vorspiel" dramatizes the Lied vom hürnen Seyfried,<sup>145</sup> in which Chriemhild is kidnapped by a dragon, and rescued by Siegfried. Although Volker does not appear in the original work, Raupach has introduced him into Günther's retinue as they welcome Chriemhild and her rescuer. When Siegfried asks for Chriemhild's hand in marriage as his reward, Hagen protests that this reward would be too great, but Volker approves of the request. Siegfried offers to help Günther win Brunhild, whereupon Günther too agrees to his request and commissions Volker to accompany Chriemhild to Worms (pp. 25-27).

Act II contains the Senna: after Brunhild has been humiliated by Chriemhild, Hagen sends Dankwart to fetch Günther, leaving Hagen, Brunhild, and Volker alone on stage. To Volker's premonition of gathering storm clouds, Brunhild answers that the Valkyries are riding through the heavens crying for blood (p. 80). Volker is also present as the Kings, Hagen, and Brunhild debate whether to accept Siegfried's oath that he has never slandered Brunhild. Volker and Dankwart are willing to accept it, because, as Volker points out, an oath is sacred and the King is above having to consider public opinion (p. 88). Hagen points out, however, that Volker, who is merely a "Spielmann" in Günther's employ, cannot see things as clearly as he, the King's vassal, who realizes the importance of preserving the honor of the King, may it cost what it will. Over Volker's protest they decide to kill Siegfried.

In Act III the murder takes place: Volker reproaches Hagen with "O Freund! welch arges Werk hast Du vollbracht!" (p. 118); Hagen explains that he had to sacrifice his honor for the sake of his King, to which Volker answers: "O wohl dem freien Manne!" and launches into an impassioned eulogy of Siegfried, condemning his murder, then weaving a wreath of furze, placing it on Siegfried's head and promising him immortality in the hearts and songs of coming generations.

N1 II is retold in Acts IV and V. At Etzel's wedding feast (pp. 151-55) Volker sings a song warning Günther of betrayal, which appeals neither to Etzel nor to Günther; to their objections Volker points out that they must not dispute with the "Sänger," for it is he who will interpret their reputations to posterity (p. 154). Just before the Huns attack, Hagen advises that Günther and his men flee from Etzel's camp; Günther is unwilling, as such suspicion could insult Etzel. Volker agrees, and adds that in any case they should let the Huns make the first move, for, should they violate the laws of hospitality, then God will be on the side of the Burgundians. When the attack comes, Volker joins forces with Hagen and Günther, even though the latter offers: "O edler Spielmann, sondre Dich von uns! / Du hast nicht Theil an dieser argen Nacht" (p. 163). Honor and morality, however, impel Volker to stand by his friend, and together they guard the door while the others arm themselves. Günther refuses to surrender Hagen to Etzel and Blödel, as his life would be nothing without his faithful friend; this is Volker's cue to give a flowery speech on the value of "Treue," the basis of human existence, happiness, and prosperity (p. 167). Loyalty is likewise the theme of Volker's last speech, before he is killed off-stage. Thus his development is completed, and loyalty emerges as its culmination, as well as being the cause of his downfall.

As Raupach's play is the best-structured of those we have encountered, so too is his Volker the most clearly delineated. Although he disagrees with Hagen throughout most of the play, in sharp contrast to the Volker of the N1, and although he even seems to make nothing of Hagen's concept of honor, yet loyalty and "Sitte" (p. 163) prompt him to remain faithful to his King and his friend. Of interest too, for the later development of the Volker tradition in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is the statement that the "Sänger" is the custodian of the King's fame.



The lyric poet August Kopisch disappoints the reader who expects a song from Volker. In Chrimhild,<sup>146</sup> which begins with the arrival of the Burgundians in Etzelburg, the night watch is retold by two Hunnish nobles, who mention Volker's mockery, but not his music (p. 104). Volker is Hagen's comrade, whom Chrimhild describes as "der herzlose, Gletscher-Eis" (p. 85); this is not entirely true, for when Volker reminds Hagen that Gunther had not wished Siegfried's death, for "weit mehr / Als er begehrte, thatet ungeheißē ihr," he points out that the King had wept as Siegfried fell.

The rest of Volker's role follows the N1: before the confrontation with Chrimhild he promises to stand by Hagen, he urges him to rise as she approaches, and speaks his proverb about the value of friendship after Chrimhild has revealed her hostility (pp. 93-98). During the battle in the banquet hall he guards the door with Dankwart and then fights furiously (pp. 118-20). He mocks the Amelungs, who refuse to fight because Dietrich has forbidden it (p. 162). Volker recognizes that Rüdiger is not coming as a friend, and, like Hagen, does not fight Rüdiger, but asks him to tell Gotelind how honorably he wore her golden armbands (pp. 165-69).

Volker is Hagen's comrade-in-arms, who appears to disapprove of Siegfried's murder, but nonetheless stands by his friend. Perhaps Kopisch, a poet himself, did not wish to depict a poet in the role of Burgundian hero and friend of Hagen, since his sympathies are clearly with Chrimhild. Volker's objection to the murder is, however, significant: he does not say that it was wrong, but rather that the King did not order it; Volker's loyalty is primarily to Gunther.

Nine years later, Christian Wurm published Siegfrieds Tod,<sup>147</sup> calling it a romantic tragedy. Like Zarnack's Siegfried drama, it too has an invented role for a Volker figure;

here he is a messenger and servant, who occasionally indulges in mild buffoonery with Ortewein, the seneschal, and Rumolt, the cook. From the vantage point of the servants' hall they observe the action and comment on it. In this capacity Volker announces Siegfried's arrival in Burgundy, and, after the opening interview, in which Siegfried had offered to fight Günther or his champion for the crown of Burgundy-Niederland, Günther asks his men what they think of the new guest. Volker answers: "Ein grader Mann, / Der's besser meint mit andern, als mit sich" (p. 20). This statement certainly cannot be based on what has gone on up to now; perhaps Wurm had the forthcoming trip to Isenland in mind.

Later, after the Saxon messengers have brought the declaration of war from their King, Volker re-enters with the news that Siegfried, having heard of Chriemhilde's famous beauty, had come to Burgundy looking for a wife. Volker had been drinking with Siegfried's men, and heard them speak of the union as though it were a foregone conclusion. Günther, pre-occupied by the coming war, receives this news absent-mindedly, and chides Volker for his extravagant praise of Chriemhilde, telling him he is not in the mood for poetry. Volker persists, however, since he is merely repeating what the guests were saying; Günther takes the matter under advisement (pp. 36-38).

Volker seems to have accompanied the Burgundians to the Saxon war, as indicated by his leading the captured Lüdeger and Lüdegast to their freedom, which had been granted at Siegfried's request. Volker does not approve of this generosity, however, for he does not like to see something given up which cost him a great deal of trouble to get (p. 61). Nevertheless, when Rumolt later criticizes Siegfried for not demanding a large dowry in return for his help against the Saxons, Volker will hear none of it. Far be it from him to find fault with Siegfried, for "Er ist ein Herr, der Seinesgleichen nicht / Im vielgelobten deutschen Lande hat" (p. 62). Rumolt answers: "Mit Freuden stimm' ich in dieß Lied mit ein,"

a second reference to Volker's minstrelsy. The rest of the conversation is devoted to praise of Siegfried and Chriemhilde, and how the town is celebrating their wedding. Rumolt advises Volker to enjoy himself today; "morgen seyð ihr wieder kalt," giving the impression that Volker is not very well-off (p. 63). He and Rumolt exit upon the arrival of Siegfried and Günther, who now wishes to court Brunhilde.

After the successful trip to Isenland, Siegfried, returning in advance of the rest, inquires of Volker how things have been going since they were away. He answers that it was like winter, and "Das Leben war vom Leben ein Geripp, / Seit in der Ferne waren unsre Herrn" (p. 85), thus demonstrating his loyalty to the royal house. The next scene contains a discussion between Volker and Ortwein of the beauty of Brunhilde compared to Chriemhilde. It develops that Ortwein is skeptical about the new Queen and her beauty, preferring that to which he is accustomed, namely Chriemhilde. Volker, on the other hand, desires novelty and is anxious to see Brunhilde, about whom he has heard so much, for, although he would like for himself a wife as lovely as Chriemhilde, yet at court there must always be something new going on, to give the people something to see and talk about (p. 89). Later, however, Volker finds Brunhilde too haughty as compared to the more modest Chriemhilde, a premonition of the coming disaster, for which Wurm, like Eichhorn, blames Brunhilde.

During the hunt on which Siegfried is killed, Volker, Rumolt, Sindolt, and Ortwein are in the hut which serves as a field kitchen. Volker and Sindolt discuss the situation in Worms: Sindolt complains that Brunhilde has introduced a more elaborate court etiquette, so that all is not as informal as in former times; Volker agrees that one must bow lower now, adding that that is the purpose of the vertebrae (p. 167); he does feel more at ease, to be sure, when the women are not present, particularly since Günther is in bad

humor nowadays, which inhibits Volker's singing (p. 168). Sindolt attributes the trouble to the fact that Brunhilde and Chriemhilde do not get on (p. 169), which Volker has also noticed, but in this quarrel he refuses to take sides. Evidently he knows nothing of how Brunhilde was won for Günther, and has only indistinct knowledge of the Senna. Sindolt objects strongly to the fact that the Queen is mixing in affairs of state, as that is men's work, but Volker is happy as long as he has his food and drink and can mind his own business (p. 170).

Wurm's Volker figure is the most Biedermeier minstrel we shall meet. He is, to be sure, a poet and musician, yet his character is that of the typical middle-class German citizen, with his desire for novelty and entertainment coupled with a reluctance to involve himself in political issues. Wurm himself was a German teacher, who taught in Nürnberg from 1823 to 1835, and in Hof from 1835 to 1849. He wrote a commentary to Goethe's "West-östlicher Divan," and worked toward a reform of the Bavarian school system in the direction of increased emphasis on the study of German and less on Latin stylistics.<sup>148</sup> In the Frankfurt National Assembly, Wurm was a member of the radical left wing,<sup>149</sup> demanding immediate unification of Germany. Although he made no secret of his aversion to "democratic excesses,"<sup>150</sup> he was imprisoned for some time on account of his political activities. In 1849 he was barred forever from teaching in Bavaria. He retired to Munich, where he published articles attacking inadequacies which he had found in Grimm's Deutsches Wörterbuch. It is clear that Wurm was anything but a placid philistine: his Volker figure emerges as a parody of this type of citizen, by which Wurm saw himself surrounded. Volker's loyalty to the crown probably reflects Wurm's view, as he was an ardent German patriot, but Volker's other attitudes must be interpreted as a satirical description of contemporary society, which in the author's opinion bowed lower

than it ought, particularly before arbitrary authority such as the Metternich regime.

Friedrich Theodor Vischer believed that the Nibelungen saga was best suited for an opera.<sup>151</sup> He groups Volker together with Hagen and Rüdiger as an example of comradely unity, Volker being the honest comrade-in-arms, while Hagen and Rüdiger are the faithful vassals (p. 409). Volker's great scene would be the night watch, with appropriate music for the Burgundians; then, as the Huns stealthily approach, the faithful guardians drive them off (p. 427). As day breaks, Hagen and Volker sit down to rest on a bench in front of the hall. They renew their oath, never to desert each other. As they hear approaching voices, Volker would awaken the others, but Hagen will not allow it. Chriemhilde appears, as in the N1, and Volker urges Hagen to rise, but he refuses. Hagen admits his guilt, but the Huns are afraid to attack the two heroes (p. 428). This scene, and the note that Hagen and Volker avoid fighting Rüdiger (p. 432), are the only references to Volker in Vischer's outline. He is the good comrade and noble minstrel, the loyal companion to the loyal vassal, Hagen.

2. The retellings in prose

Bäbler

Pfarrius

Vilmar

The years 1843-1845 produced three retellings of the Nibelungen saga in prose. They were not meant to be works of literary art, and like their numerous successors were probably intended to be read by young people who would not be able to read the MHG original and would find it difficult to follow the verse translations of Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen,<sup>152</sup> Joseph von Hinsberg,<sup>153</sup> or Karl Simrock,<sup>154</sup> to name the three most popular of the day.<sup>155</sup> In our study

of these retellings, we will concentrate on the additions to or omissions from the Volker figure of the N1.

The first retelling which is not a direct translation into prose, is that of Ferdinand Bäßler.<sup>156</sup> The author retells N1 II, so that Volker is not called "von Alzey." Otherwise, every major reference to Volker is included except N1 2016, in which Volker kills the margrave while he is trying to help his wounded kinsman who has just been thrown from the hall. This "ignoble act" of Volker's is rarely included in the prose versions, very likely because it was deemed unedifying to the intended audience.

In the following year another prose version of the same material appeared: Chriemhildens Rache by Gustav Pfarrius.<sup>157</sup> He introduces Volker as "Volker, der kühne Spielmann, also genannt, weil er fiedeln konnte und fechten mit gleicher Meisterschaft, Herr von Alzei und Bannerträger des Heeres" (p. 9). When Chriemhilde and Rüdiger depart for Etzel's court, all of the Burgundian nobles accompany them, except grim Hagen and the bold minstrel Vólker, the inseparable friends (p. 20).

Pfarrius leaves out the following: Volker's concern about the retinue after the fight with Gelfrat; his reproach to the Huns before the night watch; his killing the Hun who attempts to leave the hall with Dietrich; Hagen's and Gunther's praise during the fight; his killing the margrave and driving the Huns away with the spear. His reproach to Chriemhilde after the fight with Rüdiger is also much milder: he merely tells her to look and see how Rüdiger and his men kept their word.

August Vilmar's Geschichte der deutschen National-literatur<sup>158</sup> contains an extended prose account of the entire N1, in which Volker enters the action only when the

"Dienstmannen" are summoned for the journey to Hunnenland. He is described as a "Held . . . der kühne, fröhliche Volker von Alzei, ein Spielmann" (p. 95). To the scene "how they did not rise before the Queen," Vilmar adds the detail that the Huns do not dare to attack the two German heroes. The night watch does not give us a Volker song, but some impassioned prose in praise of the Burgundian heroes, their love of battle, their courage, and their loyalty (Treue, emphasized in the text, p. 103).

The only omissions are Volker's killing the margrave as he attempts to assist his wounded relative and Volker's reproach to Kriemhild, which we have already seen moderated by Pfarrius. Vilmar's use of the Nl in the development of a German ideology exemplifies the classic attitude of the Germanisten in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: he is less interested in teaching literature than in developing patriotism and the heroic virtues of bravery and fidelity which were to be placed in the service of a national state.

### 3. Summary

We have examined twelve Volker figures taken from the years 1819-1845, and seen that the poets of the nineteenth century adapted the minstrel figure to their own purposes; just as did the German and Scandinavian poets of the Middle Ages. Müller and Zarnack do not present him as Hagen's faithful comrade, and Zarnack does not even present him as a minstrel; Wurm alludes to his music and poetry, but only by the way, it is not an essential part of his personality. These twelve authors have something in common, however, which gives a clue to the significance of the Volker figure, which, even though unessential to the action, was deemed necessary, even to Zarnack and Wurm, who did not find him in the basis for their dramas. With the exception of Hermann, and perhaps of Pfarrius and Bäßler, these authors were also

teachers. Müller taught secondary school in Landau in the Palatinate;<sup>159</sup> Eichhorn taught mathematics in Göttingen and mechanics in Hannover;<sup>160</sup> Zarnack directed a school for orphans in Potsdam;<sup>161</sup> Raupäch taught in St. Petersburg,<sup>162</sup> Kopisch in Berlin;<sup>163</sup> Wurm in Nürnberg and Hof; Vischer<sup>164</sup> and Uhland<sup>165</sup> in Tübingen; Vilmar in Marburg.<sup>166</sup>

Hermann lived as a private scholar in Vienna and Breslau;<sup>167</sup> his introduction to his trilogy states his purpose in writing it: he wishes to lead the German people, who have lost contact with their roots, back to the "Teutonischen Urbrunnen \* . . . auf daß sie sich erlabe und erstärke."<sup>168</sup> His efforts are particularly directed towards the German youth: "wird ihr nicht dieser Gesang, wie jener des Homers, schon am Eingang des Bildungspfades gleichsam als Willkomm und als geistig stärkender Labetrunk entgegengetragen?"<sup>169</sup> Hermann would like to re-embodify the German national epic in the drama, or at least see this accomplished, should his own creative powers fail him. He does not have excessively high hopes regarding the reception of his own efforts: "gern bescheide ich mich, wird mir ein Dank, mit dem süßen Lohn des Minnesingers."<sup>170</sup> Hermann wants the old sagas to serve as an example and an inspiration to the German youth, and sees himself in the role of minnesinger, whom he probably equated with the minstrel. At the beginning of the literary adaptations of the N1, therefore, this didactic, propagandistic purpose is stated. Fouqué's Held des Nordens as well, which was published in 1808<sup>171</sup> but does not contain a Volker figure, being based on the Eddas, was intended to inspire enthusiasm for the Wars of Liberation.<sup>172</sup> This purpose was nothing less than to glorify the "Germanic virtues" and by so doing to develop among the youth a sense of pride in their heritage, and a rejection of foreign culture. To this end the N1 was ideally suited, for unlike the courtly epics of Hartmann and Wolfram, it was based on Germanic tradition and not on foreign sources.



Hermann's purpose, therefore, in writing his trilogy is to transmit the Germanic tradition, and the national values which he believed it embodied, to his own and to future generations. The Germanisten of his day believed and taught that this function, namely transmitting the sagas in the form of heroic song from generation to generation, was performed by the "Sänger" the Germanic minstrel, whom they saw represented in Volker von Alzey. Wilhelm Grimm wrote in 1808, that among the Teutonic peoples the "Sänger" comprised a special class, devoted to the preservation of the old songs: they were not the poets, for Grimm believed that these songs came into being through the collective activity of the "Volk," but that they were especially capable of singing them.<sup>173</sup> He goes on to state explicitly: "Ein solch edler Spielmann war Volker von Elsass . . . und wo ist wohl schöner die Macht der Poesie angewendet worden, als wie er seine Freunde nach dem großen Verderben in den Schlaf singt und den Schmerz in Gesang mildert."<sup>174</sup> Grimm has identified Volker "ein edel spilman" with the "Sänger" of the Völkerwanderung: his influence on the views of the later students of Germanic philology can hardly be underestimated.

Grimm was not the only philologist who made this identification: in the winter of 1803-1804 August Wilhelm Schlegel read a lecture on the NI in Berlin, in which he states that the Teutonic princes had "epische Sänger" residing at their courts, and adduces as proof of this the figure of Volker, whom he compares with Achilles, in respect to musical talent.<sup>175</sup> Schlegel also calls for a renewal of German national mythology in the form of individual dramas, based on parts of the tradition.<sup>176</sup>

For Grimm, the "Sänger" was not a poet; for Schlegel, however, he was, since Schlegel saw the songs as being composed by individuals, not by Grimm's collective.<sup>177</sup> This controversy occupied the attention of the German scholars during the first third of the nineteenth century<sup>178</sup> and was finally

resolved by Uhland, who, in his lectures at Tübingen in 1830-1831, stated that the "Volks poesie," can only be transmitted by individuals, even though it gives, in its totality, a picture of the creative activity of the people. The originators, "Urheber," of these songs are unknown, while those whose names we know do not disturb the uniformity of the poetic whole, since they are at work on the common structure which is never finally completed.<sup>179</sup> Although Uhland does not mention Volker explicitly in this context, it is possible that the figure of the Burgundian minstrel occurred to Uhland's audience.

With these ideas current among the scholars of the day, it is more likely that their pupils, among whom we number our authors, were influenced by them. In this way they did in fact establish a continuity of tradition which was transmitted from the professors and teachers to their pupils, who in turn became the teachers and professors of the next generation. Since the authors of the Nibelungen works saw themselves as the successors to the Teutonic minstrels, it is understandable that they found the Volker figure particularly appealing, and desired to include him in their works even though it became necessary to invent lines and action for him. Thus Uhland states that Volker's spirit will carry the tale of the Nibelungen over the earth; thus Hermann gives Volker two songs, one an interpretation of the tradition, and makes him into Hagen's confidant to an extent which is foreign to the Nl; thus Müller has him remind the Burgundians that they are Germans, and must oppose the common foe; thus Zarnack makes him into an official spokesman for the Burgundian Kings.

We see a common denominator to these and the other Volker figures emerging: when in Eichhorn and Wurm, Volker blames Brunhild for the Senna, when in Kopisch and Raupach, he expresses disapproval of Siegfried's murder, when in Müller and Wurm, he calls the Burgundians Germans, we seem

to hear the authors themselves speaking. In these examples and those cited above, Volker speaks for the author, giving the author's interpretation of the action. We have seen this clearly in Wurm, whose Volker is a satire on the burgher of his day, and in Vilmar, whose description of Volker accentuates his loyalty to the monarchy and his identification with the German nation:

Vilmar was a conservative deputy in the Hessian parliament; Wurm and Vischer were deputies to the National Assembly, otherwise we know nothing of the political views of the authors, and the examples mentioned are the only signs of a national awareness on their part. When Volker speaks disparagingly of the Huns, as he does in Hermann (pp. 301, 305, 307) and Müller (p. 153), the author is merely enlarging on the N1, and it is more significant that these are the only instances of it. The authors of the Restoration period in Germany seem, like much of the rest of the nation, to have been apolitical in their outlook.<sup>180</sup> However, the awareness that the N1 was Germany's national epic, and that its heroes embodied the qualities of strength, courage, and loyalty, never left the minds of those who tried to popularize the N1 through their literary efforts.

Furthermore there is an aspect of the Volker figure which bears the seed of a political attitude, and that is his relationship to the centers of power, specifically Gunther, Siegfried, and Hagen. Volker's "Treue," his loyalty to his King, runs through all of the works discussed thus far. The retellings emphasize this, while suppressing the darker side of Volker's character; Kopisch seems to reproach Hagen for overstepping his bounds, for taking an undue liberty, and does so through Volker. Eichhorn and Raupach see Volker as drawn to the source of power, to Siegfried while he is alive, but in admiration, not in disloyalty to Gunther or Hagen, for when Gunther tries to dismiss Volker from their midst and save him from the coming doom, the heroic minstrel refuses

to go. When Hermann makes Volker into Hagen's confidant, when Zarnack uses him for Gunther's spokesman, and when Bäbler invents a scene in his retelling to emphasize his close relationship to Gunther and Hagen, we see the poet-minstrel in a new light: the poet stands in a relationship of subordinate cooperation with the powers that be. And since Volker speaks for the authors of the works in interpreting the action of the story, it is probable that he reflects their attitude towards authority as well. Thus the Volker figure has found his role in the ideological interpretation of the Nl.

II. 1849-1888

1. The dramas

Osterwald	Hebbel	Wilbrandt
Glaser	Duboc	Prott
Gerber	Hosäus	Veihel-Müller
Geibel	Arnd	Siegert
	Dahn	

Wilhelm Osterwald's Rüdiger von Bechlaren<sup>181</sup> commences with the arrival of the Burgundians at Rüdiger's castle, and focuses on the conflict between friendship and the vassal's duty, as reflected in the hero, and on the love between Giselher and Rüdiger's daughter, whom Osterwald calls Diotlinde. The "edle Markgraf" welcomes the three Burgundian Kings and then Volker, as "ritterlicher Spielmann" (p. 17). He sings his first song at Giselher's request to bridge the embarrassment caused by Diotlinde's fainting at the sight of Hagen; the theme of gathering roses in summer before the cold winds wither them is couched in the meter of the folk song and appropriate to Giselher and Diotlinde, who are already attracted to each other, although Volker disclaims having had the two in mind (pp. 24-26). This leads to Hagen's observations on the nature of the minstrel: that no matter how accurately their songs apply to the immediate situation, they never realize the truth in what they sing. (Hagen consistently refers to his friend as "Sänger," not "Spielmann.") On the next morning, when Volker complains of having slept poorly, Hagen attributes this to his "Sängerschwärmereien" which lead to nothing but sleepless nights (p. 31). These fantasies must have their positive side however, for in spite of Dietrich's warnings, Volker feels as happy in Etzelnburg as though he were out on a boyish prank (p. 52). Hagen also attributes this to his minstrelsy, for "Sänger" become intox-

icated on their own thoughts, and laugh where they ought to cry.

After these commentaries, elucidating the nature of the minstrel as prophet and entertainer, Volker sings for the second time. In the night watch, he apostrophizes night in two eight-line stanzas, night which banishes foreboding through sleep and dreams and as death in life and life in death, ushers in the new day (pp. 76-77). His song is interrupted by the approach of a band of Huns, whom Hagen and Volker drive off with threats and insults. Volker calls them cowardly dogs and has already shown his contempt for them as "die braune Brut des Südens" (p. 50) and "langweiliges Geschlecht" (p. 59). Now, with "Die Hunnen, Freund, sind feige, schwache Knechte," Volker states that the Huns are not only different in appearance but also in manly qualities from the Burgundians. Hagen adds that the Huns and the Germans will never get along together, for ancient hatred between these tribes will lead to bloodshed whenever the two meet, and that the Huns, by virtue of their greater numbers, could even overcome Hagen in the end (pp. 74-75).

Volker replies that as long as he is alive, Hagen will never die alone. At times his courage even exceeds Hagen's, for when the latter alludes to the bitter end of their journey, Volker replies that the end does not concern him, for it can only be that which awaits everyone (p. 18). After the first song, Volker recalls the theme of the Nl in remarking there is no joy without sorrow, but adds that no sorrow is entirely devoid of joy (p. 25), while to Hagen he promises loyalty "In Tod und Leben, Zeit und Ewigkeit" (p. 51).

Osterwald has drawn his Volker according to contemporary philology, giving a deeper insight into the psychology of the heroic minstrel than previous authors have done. Volker is also a vehicle for his poetic aspirations, which otherwise found expression in six volumes of patriotic and religious poetry, and eight volumes of short stories,<sup>182</sup> as well

as for his dislike of things foreign, as seen in Volker's attitude toward the Huns. Volker's loyalty to Hagen is also given more impassioned expression than was the case with the authors of the previous era.

Adolf Glaser published Kriemhildens Rache under the pseudonym Reinald Reimar in 1853.<sup>183</sup> A "Vorspiel" and five acts dramatize the entire N1: the prelude and the first three acts take place in Worms, the last two at Etzel's court in Vienna. In a dispute over Siegfried's murder between Hagen and Volker (pp. 67-71), Glaser develops the theme of duty versus inclination. To Hagen's statement, that he had simply done his duty in killing Siegfried, Volker asks whether murder is part of duty. Hagen's reply is that obedience belongs to duty, and Brunhilde is the wife of his lord. Volker then asks whether one's own will counts for nothing, to which Hagen answers that, as "Hochmut" is the source of all evil, so it is destructive to follow one's own will; the force of obedience is salutary: it is the mother of every virtue, and her fairest daughter is "Treue." He calls obedience the staff with which we conquer our willfulness, the touchstone of our inner strength. When Volker objects that even the horse is obedient, Hagen explains that the dignity of man lies in his consciously applying the reins to his passions, in conquering willfulness by his own will, and thus choosing between good and evil. The prudent man chooses his own limits, knowing that only by so doing can he define himself and develop effectively.

To this, Volker counters that we do follow our own will after all, and the prudent more than others; Hagen's reply, which ends this discussion, is, that he had acted according to traditional norms, and "Bestehendes zu nehmen, wie es ist, / Ist klüger, als ein neues Feld zu bauen" (p. 70). We are still our own masters, even when we choose to be loyal vassals, for if we follow our own drives, we gradually lose our identity.

Everyone is bound by family, by position, by custom, and morality, and while nothing stops us from having our own feelings, yet we must submit to the duty which we respect most highly. Hagen feels sorry for Siegfried, doubly sorry as a women's quarrel led to his death, yet through his death he had to atone for Kriemhilde's guilt.

At this point we must ask who is speaking for the author, is Glaser on the side of the loyal vassal or the valiant minstrel? The answer is contained in Act IV, scene three: Volker and Hagen are in the courtyard of Etzel's castle; Volker tries unsuccessfully to convince Hagen that his forebodings are unjustified, that Kriemhilde cannot possibly be planning vengeance for something which happened so long ago: "So tiefe Leidenschaft hegt nie ein Weib!" (p. 91). After more discussion in the same vein, Kriemhilde approaches, and after the confrontation Volker must admit: "Führwahr, nun glaub ich selbst, was ihr gesagt" (p. 96). Volker then swears loyalty to Hagen, even though his hand, which coaxed sweet music from the fiddle must now wield the sword to show its worth (p. 98).

Volker's role is to learn from Hagen the lessons which a man needs to learn. The author, who at the time was a twenty-three-year old student,<sup>184</sup> appears to be speaking to himself through Hagen's speeches to Volker, who finally achieves self-realization under Hagen's guidance. The youthful, inexperienced minstrel needs the tutelage of the wiser more mature Hagen, who, for his part, states that he can now die happily, knowing that "ein treues Herz" is standing at his side. The minstrel has developed into the loyal partner.

E. Gerber's opera, Die Nibelungen, was produced the following year in Weimar, on 22 January 1854.<sup>185</sup> The opera tells the story of the Nl from Gunther's arrival in Isenstein to the end as in the Nl; Gunther and Volker are tenors, Dankwart and Siegfried baritones, and Hagen is a bass; "Ehre" and



"Treue," determine the actions of the characters. Josef Stammhammer<sup>186</sup> disliked the opera, and it does suffer from comparison to Wagner, not only in respect to Siegfried's role: "Schon in der Jugend ersten Tagen, hab' einen Drachen ich erschlagen" (p. 19), but in the general quality of the work. Volker takes part in the journey to Isenland, which occupies Act I; in the finale a sextet gives the reactions of all concerned to the contest. Brunhild and Gunther are enjoying "des Glückes höchstes Pfand," Volker and Dankwart rejoice at the successful outcome, but Hagen does not trust the whole business. His lines point out that the contest was won by magic, that its success depends on Siegfried's silence, and that come what may, his loyalty will protect the King (p. 48).

In Act II, Brunhild is welcomed in Worms, and then she requests a song from the "edler Spielmann, Herr Volker von Alzei" (p. 51). He obliges with praise of Germany, her landscape, her castles, her vineyards, and the fidelity of her women: "O dreimal Heil den keuschen Schönen, umschlingt sie zarter Anmuth Band; so preist mein Lied in stolzen Tönen der deutschen Frauen Heimathland" (p. 53). Immediately following this aria, the Queens quarrel; Volker, Dankwart, and Hagen sing: "Des Königs Ehre ist verletzt, für sie wird alles eingesetzt," and even after Siegfried's oath, the three vassals realize that the harmony at court is ended and discord reigns in Worms (pp. 78-80).

Volker does not appear on the scene again until the arrival of the Burgundians at Etzel's court. Volker, Gunther, Dankwart; and Hagen sing that they have traveled "im Treuverein" from the German Rhine to distant Hungary at Chriemhilde's invitation: "Wir kamen hier in Frieden, der sei auch Euch beschieden. Denn deutsche Treue, deutsches Wort, das ist der Nibelungen Hort" (p. 136). Etzel, however, has other plans and demands atonement for Chriemhilde's suffering, which the Burgundians refuse, and Chriemhilde's revenge

takes its course. Act IV ends with Volker's aria: "Aus diesem Saal soll keiner uns vertreiben" and the oath never to desert Hagen; their resistance shall be "ein Denkmal deutscher Treue" (p. 157). At the beginning of Act V, Volker, Gunther, Dankwart, and Hagen sing: "Ehre, höchstes Gut, leuchte Du voran! Stähle Kraft und Muth!" (p. 158) thus summing up the themes of the opera. Volker sounds the patriotic note, in praise of all things German, and emphasizes the necessity of loyalty to each other in the common cause.

In 1857 Emmanuel Geibel published Brunhild<sup>187</sup> which was, however, not staged until 1861.<sup>188</sup> Hagen and Volker are Gunther's "Dienstmannen," with Volker in a distinctly minor role. In the opening scene he directs the servants, who are cleaning up after Gunther's and Siegfried's wedding feast. Hagen expresses his dislike of Siegfried, who is eclipsing Gunther by his splendor, as Volker recounts his impressions from the banquet of the previous day. While Siegfried and Kriemhild seemed happy, Gunther had appeared nervous and Brunhild aloof. Hagen substantiates this observation and both agree that it bodes ill for the future of Burgundy. At Volker's request, Hagen then gives an account of the trip to Isenstein; how Gunther left his helmet closed during and after the contest with Brunhild, while Siegfried was away bear hunting. Volker does not like Brunhild: he calls her a "Männin" and a "Hünenweib" (p. 6), but Hagen, who had observed her before she realized that Gunther was suing for her hand, remarks that she can be quite different (p. 7).

In Act II, contests of skill and strength take place, in which Siegfried wins the first prize, a spear. In an apparent effort at gaining Hagen's friendship, he has a boy carry the spear to him, but Hagen throws it to the ground in understandable anger. Volker chides Hagen, saying that Siegfried meant well, and blaming Hagen for the hostility between them. This reproach leads Hagen to justify himself and explain

his hatred: Hagen has devoted his life to building and strengthening the realm, he has renounced a wife, children, and property, and in return has had the satisfaction of being "Der Pfeiler dieses Königiums," but now that Siegfried has arrived, Hagen is being ignored. Volker objects that Siegfried is not seeking favor for himself, to which Hagen retorts that Siegfried's presence is degrading him and Volker to the role of servants, but, that just as the tallest tree may have an ax already chopping at its base, so Hagen, if the gods should will it, would strike down Siegfried. Volker is shocked at this, but his "Dienst" calls him away, making further protest impossible (pp. 45-47).

At the beginning of Act V, Volker is on stage with Hunold, a Burgundian warrior. The latter has been alarmed by a "Zauberweib," who is wandering about the castle murmuring incoherently. Volker is about to look for her and send her home, when she enters: it is Sigrun, a priestess, who had accompanied Brunhild, and her ramblings are clear enough to the audience, for she is talking about Siegfried's murder. Even Volker does not grasp her meaning, however, and she exits towards Brunhild's chamber as Giselher bursts in with the news that robbers have murdered Siegfried and that Hagen found the body. To this Volker answers: "Hagen?-- O all ihr Ew'gen!--Nein, das tat / Kein Räuber. Wehe, wehe diesem Haus!" (p. 94).

In 1854 Geibel wrote "Volkers Nachtgesang,"<sup>189</sup> in six eight-line stanzas. The song is appropriate to the night watch: it evokes in the first two stanzas a mood of foreboding, "Der Tod schleicht draußen um," together with defiance, "O Heldenblut, wie kühn du glühst," followed by three stanzas which sing of happier times in war, "Hei Schildgekrach im Sachsenkrieg," at home, "Des Schwarzwalds Wipfel wehen / Herüber an mein Ohr," and in love, "Du rother Mund, gedenk' ich dein, / Es macht mich stark wie firner Wein."

The last stanza gives Volker's vision of the coming day, "Gott grüß dich, grimmer Schwerterstreit!" and his own defiance of death.

The Volker of the play is little more than a walk-on; he and Giselher admire Siegfried and are genuinely upset at his death, yet they are powerless to act on their convictions either before or after the fact. Volker provides a partner to Hagen, to whom the latter can enlarge on his jealousy of Siegfried, whom he considers his rival; although Volker alludes to the Saxon war, he does not seem particularly heroic, and his minstrelsy has gone. The Volker of the poem, on the other hand, bespeaks the official and celebrated poet of the German unification under Prussia, who from 1840 on received an annual salary of three hundred talers from the Prussian King, while teaching at the University of Munich.<sup>190</sup> Here Volker sings of the beauty of his German home: the wine, the women, and the mountains. His love of his homeland together with his eagerness to fight and die for it set the example which Geibel's fellow Germans will soon have to follow in their struggle for national unity. Where Volker appears as the minstrel, the poetic element of the tradition, the poet can, and appears to, identify with him, as he projects onto the German minstrel the virtues of bravery and loyalty, even to the cause of his doom.

Friedrich Hebbel's Nibelungen<sup>191</sup>, is, in terms of number of performances and of critical acclaim, the most successful dramatization of the NI tradition to date. He wishes to bring the great national epic to the people in dramatic form, without any additions of his own,<sup>192</sup> although he does elaborate on some aspects of the tradition which are merely alluded to in the epic.<sup>193</sup> The theme of the drama is the confrontation of two "world orders" in that period during which the older is forced to give way to the newer: the heathen world of the primitive Germans is being replaced by the new world of

Christianity as represented by Dietrich.<sup>194</sup> Volker is "der Spielmann," and his role is usually to reveal what is unknown to the rest, but is of importance to them. We never learn the source of Volker's knowledge: he belongs to the "old order" and his character is that of the "Volkssänger" as the nineteenth century saw him;<sup>195</sup> one may assume that he learns these things on his journeys, either from his own observations or from other minstrels.

Volker's heroism is characterized by Hagen in the opening scene; "Ja du bezögst auch . . . dir die Geige / Gern mit des Feindes Darm und strichest sie / Mit einem seiner Knochen" (73-75), a variation of the sword-fiddle motif.

In this opening scene Volker is also the news bearer: since it is Easter Sunday and they are not allowed to go hunting, Gunther asks Volker to tell them a story, but about real heroes and real women. Volker's response is a riddle, about the hero whom no one dares to challenge and the woman whom no one dares to woo. Hagen recognizes Siegfried as the hero, but Volker himself must relate the story of Brunhild, while warning Gunther not to woo her. Gunther pays no heed to the warning and vows to make Brunhild Queen of Burgundy. Simultaneously Siegfried arrives in Worms.

He, too, knows of Brunhild and offers to assist Gunther, to which Volker objects: "Es endet schlecht" (654) and when pressed for his reason: "ich meine nur, / Daß falsche Künste sich für uns nicht ziemen!" (655-56). Gunther, however, answers that using Siegfried's powers to win Brunhild is the same as using a boat to cross water or a sword to kill one's armed foe. Volker does not answer, but goes along, literally, in that he replaces Dankwart on the journey to Isenland. Brunhild greets them by outlining the conditions of the contest, which include death to all who accompany the unsuccessful suitor. Volker asks her why she is so determined not to leave this dismal country, claiming that she can love it only because she knows nothing better; the place "Ist fürchterlich

und paßt nur für den Teufel: / Man trinkt ja Blut, indem man Atem holt!" (841-42).

After the Queens' quarrel, Volker reminds the King of his warning before the journey to Isenland. To be sure, he points out, it was a tragic misfortune, that Brunhild's belt clung to Siegfried's clothing and that Kriemhild found it, however, Gunther must now choose whom this misfortune will destroy. Volker thus remains neutral and never alludes to the murder after it is committed. He sees it here as a necessary consequence of their and Siegfried's deeds, for Gunther chose to woo Brunhild and Siegfried chose to help him, using "falsche Künste."

Volker does not reappear until the beginning of the journey to Etzel's court. Werbel and Swemmel have accompanied the Burgundians as far as the Danube, and as they are taking their leave, Volker asks whether Kriemhild is still sorrowing over Siegfried. Werbel answers that she is so "fröhlich" that one could believe she had never known sorrow (3329-30). Volker expresses skepticism at this, for Kriemhild was never "fröhlich" even at home, and had always laughed only with her eyes. After their departure he observes that the messengers are obviously lying, but that Kriemhild must want to see them; he cannot believe, however, that Etzel would risk his life to avenge Kriemhild's first husband. This common-sense observation is contradicted by Hagen, who recounts his encounter with the "Meerweiber" and concludes: "wir sind im Netz des Todes--" to which Volker replies: "Gewiß! Doch ist das neu? Wir waren's stets" (3460-61). Then he recounts his own dream, how he saw all the Burgundians bleeding and everyone's wound was in his back "Wie sie der Mörder, nicht der Held, versetzt, / Drum fürchte nichts, als Mäusefallen, Freund!" (3492-93).

In Bechlaren, Volker deliberately arouses Giselher's interest in Rüdiger's daughter, Gudrun, in order to secure "Etzels redlichster Vasall" as their "Freund" (3694). To

Dietrich's warning that Kriemhild is weeping day and night, Hagen, who has revealed what he knows only to Volker, tells Gunther that they will need good armor, but Volker interjects that it will be of no use to them. The night watch is combined with the scene "how they did not rise before the Queen" into one of the most powerful scenes in the drama, and the most important to Hebbel's rendering of Volker. His vision of the Nibelungen hoard and of the curse attached to it, which he relates in a semitrance, contains, according to Hebbel, the mythological basis of the entire tragedy.<sup>196</sup> It tells how the hoard was won, how blood was shed each time it changed hands, and how the dwarfs placed a curse on everyone who should possess it, until finally, ownerless, it shall give rise to an unquenchable fire "Weil es die ganze Welt in Flammen setzen / Und Ragnaroke überdauern soll" (4294-4333). On the morning of the next day, as the Burgundians are going to Mass, Volker kills a Hun with his spear, showing, as he says, his willingness to die with Hagen (4670-78). That evening, at the banquet, as Etzel expresses his admiration for the civilizations he has destroyed, Volker observes how one often realizes the value of a man after his death "Und gräbt ihm mit demselben Schwert ein Grab, / Mit dem man kurz zuvor ihn niederhieb" (4892-93).

Upon closer inspection, Volker emerges as more than the prophetic minstrel of the nineteenth century: he is a proof of Klaus Ziegler's contention that Hebbel the theoretician and Hebbel the dramatist were not always identical.<sup>197</sup> For the theoretician has indeed given us the minstrel, but the dramatist has shown in Volker human common sense interpreting the Nl. Aside from the hoard myth, all of Volker's statements point to the tragedy of the Burgundians as having been the results of human decisions, which, once made, led to Siegfried's murder and the ensuing catastrophe. Volker, too, has made his decision: he goes along on the journey to Isenland and commits himself as a vassal to his Kings and

as a friend to Hagen. He seems to realize the consequences of his decision, and this probably accounts for his rather matter-of-fact heroism as the doom closes in around his friends. Volker, even more than Hagen, appears to see a cause-effect relationship at work in the fate of the Burgundians, and not hoards, dwarfs, and pagan gods, as guiding their destiny. Volker seems to form the bridge from Hebbel as theorist to Hebbel as dramatist, reflecting the two aspects of his genius, and most likely giving Hebbel's commentary on the Nibelungen tradition.

Charles Edouard Duboc first published Brunhild during the time when the dramas of Hebbel and Geibel were playing in Germany, and therefore published a second edition in 1874.<sup>198</sup> Volker is "der Fiedler;" he and Gieselher admire Siegfried (p. 10), wish that he were King instead of the weaker Gunther, and hope that he will stay in Burgundy. In the course of conversation, Volker casually mentions Sigurd, the invulnerable hero, about whom he has sung on occasion (p. 11). Hagen picks up the name and wonders out loud whether Siegfried and Sigurd could be identical, much to Volker's astonishment (p. 13). When it develops that Siegfried is the Sigurd of Volker's song, the minstrel must admit that he had embellished his tale to the extent of marrying Sigurd to Brunhild (p. 18). On Gunther's order, Kriemhild enters, and Siegfried decides to remain in Worms (p. 26). However, to show that Volker's embellishment was indeed pure invention, he must now help Gunther to win Brunhild. In Isenstein, Volker and Hagen are present, but do not contribute to the action. Gernot later expresses disbelief in Gunther's having conquered Brunhild, and Volker fears he will express this opinion in public, turning the population against Gunther, but Hagen vows to stop Gernot by whatever means may be necessary (p. 72).

As the play ends, Volker, before his death, looks into



the future and sees the tale being handed down from generation to generation "Und menschlich nachempfinden wird man einst, / Was menschlich wir gefehlt hier und geduldet" (p. 104). Duboc's Volker is the "Spielmann" of the nineteenth century, full of tales and not above embellishing them to suit the taste of his audience--the marriage of Brunhild and Siegfried had been a happy ending designed to please Gieselher and Kriemhild--the minstrel, who works on the basic structure, adapting it to suit his personality but not altering the basic outline, and passing this tradition on to posterity. He expresses concern for the stability of Gunther's throne as the loyal subject would, and alludes to the fault of the Burgundians, attributing it to their fallible humanity.

Wilhelm Hosäus' Kriemhild<sup>199</sup> was successfully produced at the court theater in Dessau,<sup>200</sup> where Hosäus was tutor to the sons of the Prince of Anhalt.<sup>201</sup> The play begins with the arrival of the Burgundians in Etzel's castle: Volker is the "lust'ge Spielmann" (p. 11), whom Pater Felix, Kriemhild's confessor and Ortlieb's tutor, points out to Kriemhild as "den wunderlichen Alten . . . Allzeit den Mund voll Scherz . . . Und in der Schlacht, den Besten gleich zu zählen" (p. 12). Rüdiger reconfirms this description, adding that Volker had played many a merry tune for his daughter's engagement and is planning more for the wedding (p. 13). At Kriemhild's request, Volker recounts the trip from Worms. In forty-two rhymed couplets he tells the trip along the Main, the crossing of the Danube, the fight with Gelphrat, and then the stay at Bechlar, including the detail that Rüdiger's wife and daughter had received them with a German kiss. Then he relates how Dietrich accompanied them until the trumpets announced their arrival (pp. 14-16). Kriemhild is fond of Volker, calling him "der wack're lust'ge Spielmann . . . Der . . . uns . . . mit Witz . . . und Lied so hoch erfreut" (p. 14).

Act II, scene one, shows Dietrich and Hagen, and Volker and Giselher strolling in pairs. The latter are discussing the coming wedding and the quality of Etzel's horses, while Dietrich warns Hagen that Kriemhild is still mourning for Siegfried (p. 21). The purpose of this brief scene is to underline Volker's innocence by associating him with Giselher, and to emphasize Volker's amiable qualities, contrasted with the forebodings of Hagen and Dietrich. When Hagen relates Dietrich's warning and the mermaids' prophecy to Volker, the minstrel is skeptical, and only when Hagen points out that the chaplain had escaped drowning, does Volker believe they are doomed. Hagen is afraid to die alone and wishes to secure Volker as his comrade, but Volker, who knows that everyone must die, reassures Hagen of his loyalty (pp. 28-32). Ortlieb enters, and Volker observes that the boy resembles Siegfried, probably because his mother carries Siegfried more than Etzel in her heart. During the scene with Ortlieb, the two heroes sit down on a bench, thus being in position for the confrontation with Kriemhild. Volker urges Hagen to rise before the Queen, but Hagen refuses, to which Volker answers: "Laß gut sein, Hagen, thue wie du denkst, / Trotz allen Unterschieds bin ich dein Freund." During the confrontation, Volker's jolly mood vanishes and when the Kings, Etzel, and Dietrich enter, they find Volker "aufgeregt und finster," but the noble minstrel is apprehensive for others, not for himself (pp. 35-39).

In Act III, the "lust'ge Spielmann" is playing while the Huns are dancing (p. 56). Then Etzel asks Hagen and Volker to stand honor guard at the entrance to the church, as Kriemhild and Ortlieb enter. Hagen is reminded of how the Queens quarreled before a church, and Volker adds: "Das war der Anfang von dem blut'gen Ende, / Und kommen wird, was sich nicht ändern läßt" (p. 58). The battle breaks out in the middle of Act IV: after Hagen slays Ortlieb, Gunther wishes to atone with Hagen alone for their misdeeds, but

Volker answers: "Ich steh zu Hagen, also auch zu Euch" (p. 71). The rest join Volker, who raises his fiddle once more to show their enemies "daß wir fröhlich sterben, / Und Mut und Treue bis zuletzt bewahren!" (p. 73). After the battle in the hall, Volker appears at the portal, plucking his fiddle (p. 81). He even tells Gunther, who is in no humor for music: "Geht's jetzt an's Sterben, laßt uns fröhlich sterben" (p. 83). Finally, when Volker refuses to hand Rüdiger's body over to the Amelungs, Hildebrand threatens to knock his fiddle out of tune (p. 96), and Volker calls him "alter Lump," whereupon Hildebrand slays him as "der Lohn für deine freche Rede" (p. 101).

Volker's fidelity to the Kings stems for the first time from his loyalty to Hagen, a loyalty which he maintains in spite of the differences between them. By interpreting Siegfried's death and the ensuing catastrophe as inevitable, and by happily accepting his fate, Volker sounds a note which we have heard before and will hear in the future even more loudly and clearly, the fatalistic affirmation of his own heroic downfall. In the tradition bearer at the beginning, recounting the journey to Hungary, and in the minstrel-prophet at the end, proclaiming that posterity will praise their names: "noch / In spätesten Zeiten" (p. 84), Hosäus presents Volker as the Germanisten saw him; by combining in the figure his own poetry with his interpretation of the action, the author remains faithful to the popular reception of the N1 in the nineteenth century.

Friedrich Arnd published Kriemhild<sup>202</sup> under the pseudonym Arnd-Kürenberg in 1874; in the same year on 30 December, it was produced in Weimar, and there was a repeat performance on 10 February 1875.<sup>203</sup> The action begins after Siegfried's death; Geiselher is persuading his sister to remain in Worms rather than returning to Niederland. He and Volker are good friends, for the innocent boy finds the kindhearted minstrel

congenial, plays in his armor (p. 6), and enjoys listening to his stories (p. 7). In scene five, a page announces "Volker von Alzei," who enters saying: "O grüßt mich freundlich, hohe Herrin," to announce the arrival of Rüdiger with Etzel's proposal of marriage (p. 51).

Act II shows the Nibelungen at the Danube, near Bechlaren: the mermaids have foretold the coming doom to Hagen, including Volker's death at Iring's hand (p. 30), but Hagen tells his "Freund Volker" (p. 32) only in general terms that they are in danger. Before they arrive in Bechlaren, however, Hagen tells the Nibelungen of his encounter with the mermaids and with Eckewart, whereupon Gunther wishes to verify the loyalty of his men, but when it comes to Hagen, Volker interjects: "O König, Treue will von Treu erkannt sein! / Und dieser trägt ein leuchtend Mal der Treue!" (p. 47).

At the end of Act III, Hagen and Volker stand the night watch. The act ends with Volker's song, "Von des Rheines grünen Wogen," (p. 83) in three four-line stanzas, expressing the yearning for their homeland, with its houses and treasures, which the "Recken" have left to find death in a desolate steppe. In Act IV, when the Nibelungen enter the banquet hall, Etzel is puzzled by their armor; he had thought they would bring famous minstrels instead. This is Volker's cue. He explains: "Wir sind zu Spiel und Kampf gleich gut bereit" (p. 93), for he and the rest of the Nibelungen live every moment as though it were their last, not afraid of death but embracing life and enjoying it to the fullest. Volker is truly alive when others respond to his music, for he is a minstrel and proud to be one. Thus he wants to die, in full awareness of his power, his soul free of all burdens, a song on his lips and a sword in his hand: "Und tiefer ist die Liebe, tiefer unser Haß, / Es mag des Blutes übermächtige Gewalt . . ." (p. 95). Volker's speech is interrupted by Dankwart; the battle begins and Iring kills Volker as the mermaids had foretold.

Volker falls as the heroic minstrel and Hagen's faithful comrade, but before he dies he gives a picture of himself and the Nibelungen, in the "edlen und kraftvollen Sprache," which Nover admires in Arnd's tragedy.<sup>204</sup> Volker's allegiance to Hagen has taken on a new dimension: he is indignant that Gunther should even ask about Hagen's loyalty. Also, for the first time, we see a glowing description of the Nibelungen, designed to show their foes the cause of their warlike greatness. All of this is the more effective, as Volker was innocent of the cause of Kriemhild's revenge, which Arnd, like Hosäus, demonstrates by associating the minstrel with the innocent Geiselher.

In Markgraf Rüdiger von Bechelaren, Felix Dahn<sup>205</sup> portrays Volker as a jolly fellow who comes to Bechelaren ahead of the others, dressed as a messenger in a long riding cloak with a slouch hat pulled down over his face (p. 23). In a disguised voice he reports that the Burgundians are approaching, but Volker von Alzei is not among them. Rüdiger answers that in that case they should all turn back; at the question why Volker is not with them, the minstrel, throwing off his hat and cloak, cries: "Weil er schon hier ist, hier an deinem Herzen!" Rüdiger is relieved and Gotelind calls this "Ein ächter Fiedlerstreich!" (p. 23). Volker sees in Dietlind her mother as she was twenty years ago, then asks for "einen Becher Wein, / Scharf war der Ritt." "Und durstig sind die Sänger! / Sagt meine Mutter" (p. 25), answers Rüdiger's daughter. The "Sänger" assures Dietlind that he has brought her "was Schönes." She wonders if it is "ein rheinisch Vögelein?" but he is actually preparing her to meet Giselher. Then Volker is introduced to Meister Konrad, a minstrel and Dietlind's tutor, who had withdrawn from the world at the news of Siegfried's murder in order to compose a poem recounting Siegfried's life and deeds. He is now awaiting a suitable ending to his tale, which will be the

avenging of the murder (p. 22). Towards evening the rest of the Burgundians arrive, and on the morning of the next day, Giselher begins to court Dietlind. Volker, Rüdiger, and Gotelind are hiding behind a rosebush, and when the match seems threatened by shyness on both sides, Volker plays and sings the first line of "Sah ein Knab' ein Röslein stehn" (p. 46), whereupon the engagement is solemnized.

When the Burgundians arrive in Hunnenland, the mood changes. At first sight of the Huns, Volker remarks: "Sie wimmeln wie die Ratten" (p. 57). Later, after he has surprised some of them trying to lame the Burgundian horses, he chases them away with drawn sword, calling them "Schlitz-äugiges Gesindel" (p. 105), and "Aus gelbem Krummholz dächt' ich sie geschnitzt" (p. 107). However, when he remarks disdainfully that the Huns obey like well-trained animals, Etzel, who overhears this, counters that thus it was possible for them to conquer the world. Volker despises the Huns, in fact, it is his disdain for them combined with his loyalty to the King which finally causes Volker to stand by Hagen. After all of the Burgundians save Gunther, Hagen, Giselher, and Volker have been slain, Gunther asks safe-conduct home for the latter two, since they were innocent of Siegfried's death. Volker interrupts:

Herr König, mit Verlaub, ich sterbe mit!

Ich theilte keinen Becher mehr mit Hagen

Seit Siegfrieds Jagd: doch jetzt, bei dieser Jagd,

Die uns Frau Krimhild hält mit Heunenmeute,

Gehört all' rheinisch Edelmild zusammen. (pp. 134-35)

Volker had disapproved so strongly of Siegfried's murder that he would not even drink with Hagen; now, however, that they are being attacked by the contemptible Huns, the minstrel joins his Kings and Hagen to fight to the death.

Towards the end, as Volker is dying, he turns his harp (or fiddle as Dahn called it in the stage direction) over

to Rüdiger, who shall leave it to "'Meister Konrad! er soll singen / Die größte Mär, die je geschah zur Welt'" (p. 147), thus passing on the tradition to a fellow minstrel. In Markgraf Rüdiger, Volker von Alzei is forty years old, Dahn's age at the time he was writing the drama.<sup>206</sup> A few years later, in answer to a letter sent to him in Rome by two schoolgirls, he wrote a poem called "Von Rom, nach Alzei,"<sup>207</sup> in which he calls himself the German minstrel, and signs himself "Volker von Alzei." It is certain that Dahn expressed his own attitudes through Volker, and secondarily through Meister Konrad, the attitude of contempt for the Huns, of rejection of Siegfried's murder, but of making common cause with Hagen when it was in the interest of the nation as determined by the monarch.

Two years prior to the publication of Markgraf Rüdiger, Dahn published three poems based on the medieval N1, "Lied Siegfrieds," "Krimhilde," and "Hagens Sterbelied."<sup>208</sup> In the first, Siegfried and the Burgundians are returning from the war with the Saxons; Hagen is manning the tiller, "Und Volker soll uns von Alzei / Dazu die Harfe schlagen." In the second, Volker is not mentioned, and in the third, Volker has passed his fiddle on to Hagen, who plucks it as he sings his last song. Hagen's song is a curse on women, mores, justice, and repentance, and were he to come to earth again, and were another Siegfried to cross his path, he would thrust another spear through his back. At this, the strings on Volker's fiddle break: the relationship between Volker and Hagen shows the same ambivalence as in the later Markgraf Rüdiger. Volker is loyal to Hagen, but his heart belongs to Siegfried; he has died defending Hagen, as a loyal Burgundian, even though he condemns Siegfried's murder.

Adolf Wilbrandt's Kriemhild<sup>209</sup> opens with a hunting scene, at which the Burgundian Kings, Hagen and Volker, Etzel, Rüdiger, and Kriemhild are all present. Brunhild is missing; which gives occasion to Etzel, who has taken too much wine, to remark that all is not well in Gunther's marriage (p. 13). Gunther tries unsuccessfully to change the subject, but finally Rüdiger has to ask Volker to sing "ein Lied zum Abschied" (p. 18). Volker wants to sing of Hagen's battles with the Hessians, but Etzel will have nothing but a song about Siegfried. Volker begins most unwillingly and plays until two strings have broken, when he stops, declaring: "Die Fiedel will nicht" (p. 19). Rüdiger does not seem to believe him, and it almost comes to an altercation between the two, which is avoided only by Etzel's order to return home (p. 20). Once the Burgundians are alone, they discuss freely the situation in Worms: Brunhild has demanded Siegfried's death. Volker believes that she loves Siegfried but cannot have him, which increases Hagen's and Volker's dislike of him (p. 22). Hagen would be glad of an excuse for the murder, and Volker agrees, for, as the minstrel explains, in life one is either a hammer or an anvil, therefore "Laßt uns denn Hammer sein in Gottes Namen" (p. 28).

Volker does not appear again until Act III, when Kriemhild is awaiting the Burgundians in Etzelburg. Hagen and his "Freund Volker" (p. 89) are with them; later (p. 98) Volker has occasion to remark on the language of the Huns, which he does not understand, and compares to various birds: the turtledove, the ringdove, and the wood pigeon, whereupon Gerenot relates a dream of "Kostbar geschmückten, todtensfarb'nen Weibern," which Volker interprets as the dead summoning the Burgundians to the nether world (p. 100). The others disperse, and Volker and Hagen are alone on stage. They sit down on a stone bench, where Hagen tells Volker of his anxieties, to which Volker asks why he did not remain in Worms (p. 101). Hagen explains that in this, as in all of



his actions, he has asked himself what Siegfried would do in his place, since his one goal in life is not to be less of a man than Siegfried was. Then he asks Volker to play "ein derbes Schelmenlied" (p. 102) in order to taunt Kriemhild. Volker, however, plays a song which has been running through his head all day, "Vom fernen Rhein, von deutscher Maienluft." When Kriemhild hears the tune, she is reminded of Worms and of Siegfried's death, and weeps. In the next scene she enters with Blödel to accuse Hagen, who remains seated, while Volker rises before her, and presumably remains standing during the confrontation (pp. 105-06). The final battle, and Volker's death take place off-stage.

There are two innovations in Wilbrandt's treatment of the Volker figure: he approves of Siegfried's murder and he rises before Kriemhild. The latter shows Volker's adherence to the rules of etiquette and emphasizes Hagen's bad manners. Volker's willingness to see Siegfried murdered does not stem from jealousy, as is the case with Hagen, but from political considerations: Siegfried is a threat to the local power structure and must therefore be neutralized. Either the Burgundians will be the anvil to Siegfried's hammer, or vice versa, as Volker expresses it. The power of the Burgundian Kings must be maintained at all costs.

In Rüdiger von Bechlaren,<sup>210</sup> Jacobus Prott begins his tragedy by having Hildebrand and Dietrich warn Rüdiger that he may have to fight the Burgundians. The drama is long (263 pages) and analyzes in great detail the attitudes and motives behind the actions of the principal characters. When Rüdiger comes to fight the Burgundians for example, Gunther and Gernot accuse him of disloyalty, while Hagen, Giselher, and Volker defend him. There are long speeches on all sides, as Dietrich and Hildebrand have accompanied Rüdiger for the purpose of explaining Rüdiger's predicament and the reasons behind his decision, and everyone must express his opinion.

Volker personifies optimism and courage, even in the face of certain doom, telling the Burgundians that God is on their side and will care for them, since He has always nurtured their strength (p. 127). Hagen praises his "werther Kampfgenosse von Alzei;" his only regret is that he realized his value too late in life. Hagen attributes Volker's inner strength to his music, which he has recently learned from shepherds in the mountains, and which gives him "Hoffnung und Beständigkeit" like the fir tree, whose sap resists the wintry blasts.

Unlike Gunther, Gernot, and Giselher, the two friends never express the wish or the hope for a safe return to Worms; they realize the inevitability of their situation and counsel the others to bravery. After all, as Volker points out twice (pp. 111, 134) they were warned, and lamenting does not help in the face of death (p. 214). All that the Burgundians can look for at this point is consolation, and the best consolation is woman's love, as exemplified in Dietlinde (p. 130), whose faithfulness to Giselher reminds Volker that all of these heroes owe their life, and the first nourishment of their strength, to woman.

When Kriemhild appears to relent in Act IV, Gernot uses Volker's music to exemplify the peaceful joys of home. His instrument is the harp, on which he accompanies the "geselliger Gesang" (p. 159) of the Burgundians. This singing will dispel the last cruel memories of the battles in Etzel's castle (p. 160). The drama ends with Rüdiger's death. Volker makes the last speech of the Burgundians, summing up the insights they have gained out of the Rüdiger experience: all are reconciled with Rüdiger, while understanding that it is necessary to fight him, and that he is right in fighting them. Rüdiger is their best friend: they have learned to know him better than anyone else on earth and will love him even while fighting him to the death (p. 255).

In almost all of his attitudes, Volker follows Hagen's

lead. Not until Hagen expresses faith in Rüdiger's fidelity does Volker do the same. When Hagen condemns (unjustly as it turns out) Eckewart for assisting Kriemhild in setting a trap for the Burgundians, Volker also joins in (pp. 142-43) and when Hagen offers to give himself up, alone to Kriemhild's revenge, Volker is willing to agree to it for Hagen can never be in the wrong (p. 230). Yet Volker is the only one of the Burgundians to express contempt for the Huns: he calls them "Gesindel" (p. 237) and is confident that, if they are Etzel's only warriors, he will be able to dance "spielend noch und singend, / Vor diesen her bis an den Rhein!" (p. 208).

Irmin von Veihel-Müller's Nibelunge is a dramatic adaptation, not of the N1, but of part of the nineteenth-century epic of the same name by Wilhelm Jordan. Veihel-Müller's cycle of two dramas is therefore an adaptation of an adaptation, a "grandchild" of the original work. In the first drama, which tells the story of Sigfrid and Brünhilt, Volker does not appear; in the second, Sigfrid,<sup>211</sup> he is a minstrel and friend of Sigfrid, not of Hagen to whom he never speaks. In Act II Volker is discussed in connection with the preparations for the annual Balder pageant: Gunther finds Volker too old to play the sun god this year and during the further planning of the pageant, when Dankwart suggests Volker as director, Gunther again rejects him, this time because Volker, who does well when he works alone, or as a member of a group, lacks the necessary "Geduld und Ruhe" to lead others (p. 38).

Sigfrid arrives just as these deliberations are concluding; Gunther introduces Volker as "unser edler Säng'er, / Der Tonkunst Meister" (p. 40). Then Sigfrid relates his adventures including the detail that Brünhilt has rejected him as a suitor because he is not a king, which means that Gunther, who has heard of her famous beauty, is free to woo the "Hünin," as Sigfrid disparagingly calls her. Volker confirms Sigfrid's description, for he has heard just recently

the same account of Brünhilt's arrogance (p. 45).

By the time the pageant takes place, in Act III, Volker has become friendly with Sigfrid, and as both are in the audience, Volker points out Bragi, the god of music, carrying his attribute, the golden harp, while Hagen points out Valant, who ultimately will kill Balder, thus anticipating his own role. Volker is innocent of any complicity in Sigfrid's murder and proves this at his bier by touching the wound with thumb and forefinger (p. 152). After Hagen has confessed his guilt, Gisler, Gernot, and Volker ask Gunther's permission to bathe the body in preparation for burial (p. 153). This is granted, and they erect the funeral pyre under Volker's direction. Volker's role can best be described as that of an innocent bystander. He expresses the author's sympathy for Sigfrid, principally by ignoring Hagen completely. To be sure, Volker never condemns Hagen, even though he witnesses the murder, nor does he lament his friend, yet his protestations of innocence together with his officiating at the obsequies show clearly where his sympathies lie.

Georg Siegert's Siegfrieds Tod<sup>212</sup> begins with the return of Siegfried and Kriemhild to Worms and recounts the events leading to Siegfried's murder, based on the Nl. Volker is the "Fiedler" (p. 5), to whom Hagen reveals the true account of the contest between Gunther and Brunhild. Volker is shocked to learn of Siegfried's deception of Brunhild, but is inclined to excuse it, calling it "Der übermüth'gen Jugend kecke That!" (p. 11). He is not surprised when Hagen explains that Siegfried did this out of love for Kriemhild, for Volker knows the compelling force of love, "Die Heldensinn verrückt!" (p. 12). Brunhild knows that she has been betrayed, as well as the reason; thus there is already bad blood between the two couples. Volker hopes that time will heal the wound (p. 14), but Hagen is not optimistic, pointing to Brunhild's depressed countenance.

Volker does not return to the scene until after the murder: Hagen is ordering the bearers to place the body before Kriemhild's door. Volker disapproves of this and of Gunther for allowing it: "Wenn auch der Bruder nicht der Schwester schont, / Ich bleibe nicht, um dies mit anzuseh'n!" (p. 78). Hagen attempts to implicate all of the court in the murder, pointing out that no one had disapproved when it was decided, and insisting that all stay and share the consequences. Volker, however, washes his hands of the deed (p. 79) and is joined by Dankwart, Ortwein, and the rest of Gunther's vassals. After the funeral, Volker exclaims angrily to the Kings: "Kommt, laßt uns geh'n / Und trauern um den toden Heldenfreund" (p. 96). Volker disapproves of Siegfried's murder, but realizes that it was wrong to deceive Brunhild. His attempts to excuse Siegfried place Volker in the role of an indulgent uncle, with whom contemporary audiences, and no doubt the author, could readily identify.

## 2. The verse adaptations

Jordan	Siemssen	Stecher
Naumann	Feddersen	Schröter
Wegener		

In his Berlin lectures on ancient epic poetry, August Wilhelm Schlegel compared the Nl favorably with the Greek epics, citing Johannes Müller, who had called the Nl "die Ilias des Nordens."<sup>213</sup> On this occasion, Schlegel called for a renewal of the Nl, in modern, readable form: "um es lesbar und besonders poetisch genießbar zu machen, muß man es erneuern."<sup>214</sup> He would allow considerable latitude in form, but since the heroic spirit of the Nl has more in common with the Homeric world than with the Middle Ages, Schlegel believes "Daß man sich dem alten epischen Styl möglichst anschließen dürfte, um so mehr, da die Form, worin wir das

Werk haben, doch nicht die ursprüngliche ist."<sup>215</sup>

For his Nibelunge,<sup>216</sup> Wilhelm Jordan chose the Germanic alliterative verse. The first part of this epic, Sigfridsage, appeared in 1866;<sup>217</sup> the second, Hildebrants Heimkehr, in 1874. By 1900, over 100,000 copies of this epic had been sold,<sup>218</sup> making it the most widely bought, if not most widely read, of the literary adaptations of the Nibelungen saga. The total epic consists of 32,476<sup>219</sup> verses; it is a combination of German and Norse sources together with some of Jordan's own inventions.

In the Sigfridsage, Volker is "der Fiedler von Alzey" (p. 25) at the Burgundian court in Worms, to whom has been given the task of searching for a suitable wife for Gunther. In his travels he comes to the sacred grove in Holmgard, where Oda the priestess casts the runes for Volker, "den Helden und Fiedler" (p. 19). Wotan influences their falling, and Oda deciphers the following:

Die Brautschaft ist gebrochen.  
Durch die brausende Brandung  
Bringt der Bravste  
Den Bruder der Braut  
Zur stolzen Brunhild (pp. 62-63),

which Volker brings to Gunther, who can make nothing of it, as he has never heard of Brunhild. Volker resumes his journeys and finally another minstrel tells him of Brunhild, who dwells on the "sich einsam erhebende Eiland Helgis" (p. 100). This Brunhild is a proud warrior maiden, whose beauty lures suitors to contests of "Wettspiel und Witz" (p. 101), trying to win her hand. The minstrel then gives Volker a picture of Brunhild, in exchange for all of the golden gifts which Volker had received for his playing. Volker carries the picture to Gunther, who rewards him by giving him a golden cup and as many gold coins as it will hold, out of gratitude for his service.

When Sigfrid comes to Worms, he confirms Volker's account and solves the riddle by asking for Krimhild's hand; thus Gunther becomes the brother of Sigfrid's betrothed, and Brunhild emerges as his predestined bride. Hagen, Dankwart, and Volker accompany Sigfrid and Gunther to Bralund, Brunhild's home. There Gunther must not only compete in contests of strength, but then solve three riddles: Sigfrid whispers the solutions to Gunther, while Volker plays his fiddle in order to distract the others. This fiddle was built by Wielant; with its enchanted strings and the soul of the nightingale in its base, it has the power of making its hearers oblivious to time and space, making past, present, and future one. Volker, who is its seventh owner, won it in a contest from the King of Seeland during one of his journeys. As Volker plays, Brunhild sees Sigfrid slaying the dragon and gaining the ring of the Nibelung, which he gives to her as a pledge of his love. Sigfrid, however, looks at Brunhild but sees "Krimhild, die Blonde / Die minniglich Milde verdunkelte das Mannweib." Thus enraptured by Volker's music he even forgets to give Gunther his answers until it is almost too late, when he supplies them "mit leisem Lispeln" (Pt. II, pp. 50-53). Thus ends Volker's action in the Sigfridsage.

Hildebrants Heimkehr relates the return of Dietrich's armorer to his homeland after the catastrophe in Etzelburg. In the course of his adventures, which Jordan patterned after the Odyssey, he comes to the court of King Jörmunrek of Norway, where he relates the fall of the Burgundians. He tells how Volker was disgusted at the antics of the Hunnish minstrels, who distort the true sense of the traditional sagas by interpolating "Schwindelmären" and "Gruselgeschichten;" thus the noble minstrel, the "edler Spielmann," looks down upon the lower sort, the popularizers of the tradition. These particular minstrels are Schwämmel and Werbel, and the

Germans in Etzelburg pay no attention to them; Volker composes such a biting parody of one of Schwämmel's songs, that even he is shamed to the extent that he runs from the hall (p. 41). Schwämmel, however, resolves to take revenge on Volker and on Hagen, at whose behest Volker had sung his mocking song (p. 46), and this revenge leads directly to the destruction of the Huns and the Burgundians.

At the banquet, Hagen and Volker sit near the door: Hagen expresses his distrust of Krimhild and his concern over Dankwart and the retinue. Dankwart bursts in covered with blood, the battle begins, but Ortlieb is not killed. Immediately after the battle, Jordan places the night watch combined with the scene "how they did not rise before the Queen" (pp. 68-103). Volker and Hagen take up their position before the hall, Volker with his fiddle, Hagen with Sigfrid's sword. As the Huns approach, Volker is about to awaken the Burgundians, but Hagen restrains him, as he knows that the battle will not begin yet (p. 74).

After Krimhild's retreat, the scene shifts to her apartments, where her son Ortlieb is alone. Schwämmel has told him that the ring of the Nibelungen can paralyze any evildoer, if worn by an innocent person; Ortlieb resolves to take the ring and use it to paralyze and kill Hagen and Volker. Jordan makes it clear that this is all a "Lüge" of the type told by people like Schwämmel; it is the Hunnish minstrel, therefore, not Krimhild, who sacrifices Etzel's son in order to effect Hagen's and Volker's destruction.

As the boy slips the ring onto his finger, the scene shifts back to Hagen and Volker. It is midnight and Volker has just replenished the fire in the stove which Etzel has provided, so that the Burgundians may keep watch and ward off any attackers. Hagen begins to reminisce, looking back over his warlike life and wondering if all might not have been different. If he had not lost one eye in the battle with Walter, if the smallpox had not so disfigured his face, and



if Jördis (Sigfrid's mother) had not rejected him because of his ugliness, "wer weiß . . . / Ob nicht Hagen auch hätte was man Herz nennt / Oder mildes Gemüth!" (p. 90).

"Und möchtest du das? frug müde lächelnd / Der Spielmann von Alzey." He compares Hagen with the sparrow hawk, who could never wish to change places with the lark, for just as Volker begins a tune with one basic note, which he varies and modulates a thousandfold, so nature begins with the basic stuff of humanity and creates from it an infinity of types, each with its place and each with its calling. Eons ago this process began, which resulted in the multiplicity of individuals on earth today, whose essence was determined before they came to be, and whose goal must be to realize this essence. As each note has its place in a piece of music, so each individual has his place in the universe. "Doch was grübeln wir . . . / Laß uns sein was wir sind; denn der Sorge, ob's recht ist, / Überhebt man uns bald" (p. 92).

Hagen, however, still yearns for the life of an ordinary human being, or at least part of that life. He wonders whether, if Jördis had accepted him, instead of a sparrow hawk he might have become a shrike, which, although terrible to its pray, nevertheless sings sweet songs to its mate. A bit of humanity has survived even in Hagen, for he has always been a faithful friend to Volker, sharing with him his last coin or the last drop in his cup. When the enemy surrounded them and they fought back to back, that was the only happiness Hagen has ever known. He is grateful for having had Volker for a friend, and the fact that he can feel this gratitude gives Hagen cause to believe that, had fate been kinder to him, "ein glimpfes Herze / Der Tronjer sogar in der Brust nun trüge" (p. 94).

Ortlieb appears, the ring does not have the promised effect, and Hagen cuts the boy's head off. Etzel summons his men to battle, while Volker, as day is breaking, replenishes the watch fire once more, and strikes up on his fiddle

"des stolzen Germanen Sterbegesang." It is a song of Val-kyries, Wotan's wolves, and Valhalla, the destiny of the Teutonic hero, where war is play and memory will assuage their wounds: "Da schildert ihr scherzend / Der Niblunge Noth" (pp. 101-03). This is the end of Volker's role; the Germanic minstrel brings out the humanity that is present even in Hagen, Jordan's archvillain, and bears the greatness of the Germanic tradition to Valhalla.

At this point a word about Jordan's own career is relevant: born in 1819 to a Lutheran pastor in eastern Germany, he became a public schoolteacher<sup>220</sup> and, in 1848, a member of the Frankfurt National Assembly where he belonged first to the extreme left, later to the more moderate party which desired to establish a constitutional monarchy with the King of Prussia as hereditary Emperor.<sup>221</sup> In 1849, after the failure of the Frankfurt Parliament, Jordan withdrew from public life and devoted himself to literature, not only writing books, but also giving public recitations of his own poetry, accompanying himself on a stringed instrument,<sup>222</sup> and naturally accepting payment for his performances.

His Nibelunge, like its predecessors and successors, is an attempt at bringing the German national tradition to the German people in a form which they would find comprehensible, enjoyable, and edifying, for Jordan never forgot that he had been a schoolteacher. Volker von Alzey is the minstrel who goes on errands for his lord, maintaining himself along the way by accepting money for his music. To be sure, if his lord's interest requires it Volker will give away everything he has earned for this is the duty of a loyal subject and he knows that his lord will more than make it up to him when his mission is completed. When he plays in the service of his lord, his music acquires a magical quality reminiscent of Horand's playing in the Kudrun epic. Thus Volker appears in the Sigfridsaga; Hilde-

brants Heimkehr returns him to his traditional role of Hagen's comrade-in-arms.

It is to Volker that Hagen reveals his innermost thoughts, and it is Volker who understands him more completely than anyone else on earth. Volker also brings out the only good in him. Hagen is not the most powerful figure in the poem, for he is evil, and good must triumph over him, yet he is one of the moving forces in the poem, the evil out of which ultimate good results, for according to Jordan, Krimhild's daughter Schwanhild was entrusted to Hildebrant, who brought her home to Swabia and married her to his son Haudubrant; the young couple became the ancestors of the Hohenzollern. This would have been impossible save for the catastrophe caused by Hagen, and Volker emerges as the one person who can understand him, and interpret him to the world.

Ferdinand Naumann chose a popular contemporary verse form for his Nibelungenlied in Romanzen,<sup>223</sup> an abbreviated retelling of the Nl in eight-line stanzas. Naumann wished to find a form through which the general public could become acquainted with the German national epic, and eventually be drawn to the study of the original. He chose "Romanzen" on account of the "Schwäche unseres Zeitalters," because his contemporaries could appreciate beauty only in an attenuated form (pp. 2-3). As the Nibelungen depart for Hungary, Volker joins them with thirty of his men (p. 197). In Bechlaren, he receives a kiss from Rüdiger's daughter and paves the way for her engagement to Giselher (pp. 216-17). He does not play his fiddle during the night watch, but insults the retreating Huns with:

"Wollt ihr zu morden reiten,  
So wartet, wir sind wach,  
Und nehmt uns mit zur Reise,  
Ihr Memmen, die ihr seid;  
Im Schläfe uns zu tödten,  
Dazu seid ihr bereit!" (p. 236)

After the fighting breaks out, Volker's "Fiedelbogen / Von scharfem Stahl klang hell" (p. 258) and he guards the door with Dankwart (p. 259). Etzel laments the heroes he is killing (p. 263), and finally, it is Volker's baiting of Wolfhart which causes the battle with Dietrich's men. Thus Volker loses all of his "ignoble traits," while retaining a healthy disdain for the Huns. Significant is also that Volker is nowhere mentioned as Hagen's loyal partner, but only as a valiant Burgundian fighter. The Deutscher Dichtergarten recommended the book to the ladies, of whom few are able to read MHG, while the Deutsche Turn-Zeitung recommended it to all "Turnern . . . so wie jedem Turnvereine" (quoted from the back flyleaf). Naumann lived in Hameln and was the 'Vorsitzende der Turnvereine im Mittelweserkreis' (quoted from the flyleaf).

Wilhelm Wegener's epic poem combines Scandinavian and German sources into 1,500 Nibelungen stanzas.<sup>224</sup> Wegener claims for himself the same privilege as the medieval poet enjoyed, of independently forming the Nibelungen material, particularly since research has unearthed new material, and since the literatures of other peoples have become common property to the extent that we have been able to learn from the best of the old masters (p. ii). Volker carries the standard in the Saxon war; at the fateful hunt in the Odenwald he is also present, and condemns Siegfried's murder: "Das ist Unrecht gethan" (p. 148; emphasized in the text). After the crossing of the Danube in Part II, Volker helps Hagen destroy the ship; in Bechlaren, his remarks prompt the engagement of Giselher and Dietlind, and he sings for Gotelind at their departure, receiving two arm rings as his reward. On the way to Hunnenland he tells Hagen: "Wir reiten dieser Straßen in Nacht gewitterschwer; / Schon hör' ich dumpf es rollen, wir reiten in den Tod" (p. 227), foretelling, before Dietrich's warning, the trouble that lies ahead.

Upon their arrival in Hunnenland, he says of Chriemhild: "In Wahrheit, schön ist das wolfherz'ge Weib" (p. 233), the first such observation to be made by a Volker figure. During the night watch, he plays his fiddle so long and so beautifully that Hagen must ask him kindly to stop, "denn hier braucht es zorn'gen Muth" (p. 249). As they go to Mass the next day, Volker has another occasion to observe Chriemhild and says to Hagen that she is carrying her hatred into the church and out again (p. 252). In the jousting which follows, the Hunnish warrior insults Hagen and Volker, as well as provoking them by his gaudy dress, which justifies somewhat Volker's killing him (p. 253). After this, everything follows as in the N1, only that it is Hagen, not Volker, who rather rudely corrects Chriemhild regarding Rüdiger's conduct.

Wegener's Volker condemns both the murder and Chriemhild's revenge; he does not express any reasons for standing by Hagen and the Burgundian Kings; it is part of his character to do so. His killing of the Hun is better motivated than in the N1, and while he clearly disapproves of Chriemhild, he does not even seem to insult her. Also, as in all of the works we have examined so far, Volker does not kill the Hun who is trying to aid his relative. The Volker picture is nobler, more exemplary than in the N1, with a keener sense of honor and of right and wrong.

Julius Siemssen wrote his new Lied der Nibelungen<sup>225</sup> with the express purpose of welcoming the new Reich, and giving it the N1, "zeitgemäß gestaltet," as an example of "deutscher Treue," as in Siemssen's opinion, it was found in the old Reich (prologue on front flyleaf). It is a much shortened version, preserving only what Siemssen considered the essential elements in the epic, using a modified Nibelungen stanza. In the war with the Saxons and the Danes, we first meet "Volker von Alzei, / Der wußt' das Schwert zu

führen, doch auch durch Geigenspiel, / Der Hörer Herz zu rühren" (p. 9). On the journey to Etzelburg, he is the standard-bearer and his role in Bechlaren is the same as in the Nl. When the Burgundians arrive in Etzelburg and the danger becomes apparent, Volker tells Hagen that now he will no longer think of Hagen's crime, which he could not prevent since he was not in Worms. He considers himself bound to stand by Hagen now because "Die Hunnen sollen seh'n, / Daß alle wir Burgunden treu für einander steh'n" (p. 49).

Volker's killing of the foppish Hun is truly unintentional; during the night watch, he sings of the German Rhine, its wine, its castles, and its women, especially the Loreley (p. 60). The rest of the tale is told in some thirty stanzas; Iring kills Volker, who thus must die "Im Blutbad," not "unter blüh'nden Rosen . . . nicht in des Westwinds Kosen" (p. 64). Volker is clearly Siemssen's favorite figure, his death distresses him more than that of any other of the Burgundians. Volker would have opposed Hagen, had he been in Worms, but now, as Burgundians, they must stick together in opposition to the common foe.

Friedrich August Feddersen retells the entire Nl in twenty-four ballads and poems.<sup>226</sup> The account of the Saxon war does not mention Volker, nor is he the standard-bearer on the journey to Etzel's court. He first appears in Bechlaren, where he praises Gotelind and Rüdiger's daughter as "Ohne Falsch und sonder Flecken / Gleich dem allerreinsten Gold" (p. 52). Volker himself is called "der ritterliche Sänger," "ein tapfrer Degen, / Aller Sänger Stern und Preis" (pp. 52-53). Hagen is alone when he refuses to rise before Chriemhilde, but Volker joins him for the night watch, where his song is described in nine four-line stanzas. He sings of joy, love and minnesang:

Er sang von deutscher Treue,  
Und sang von deutschem Muth;

Er sang vom deutschen Rheine  
Mit seiner gold'nen Fluth. (p. 61)

He does not forget the castles nor the towns with their spired cathedrals and their bells. Then he sings of falsehood and betrayal, of death struggles, and of God who rules over all. Chriemhilde's men, hearing Volker's song, steal away in fear (p. 63). In the tournament, he kills the Hun deliberately but Etzel smooths it over as in the N1. Volker fights at Hagen's side in the banquet hall (p. 74), but Hagen, not Volker, provokes the fight with the Amelungs. Volker continues to be the vehicle for expressing the author's patriotic sentiments and his ideas on the appropriate behavior of a German warrior. The Rhine, the homeland of the Burgundians, is beginning to occupy an important place in his poetry as a symbol of German patriotism and anti-French sentiment.

Christian Stecher, S. J. wrote his Nibelungen-Lied umgedichtet<sup>227</sup> in ca 2,600 Nibelungen stanzas. Volker is mentioned more often than in the N1, but usually, together with Hagen, only as one of those present; his role is substantially the same as in the N1. Stecher adds the following to the Volker figure: he and Hagen are worried over the outcome of Gunther's having brought Brunhilde to Worms (p. 136); Hagen tells him to destroy his fiddle, as there will be nothing but fighting in Ofen (p. 316). Volker will be jolly until events force him to be otherwise and he plays war songs en route to Ofen (p. 317). He receives a gold chain from Gotlinde and kisses her hand (p. 336). He sings the medieval "Hildebrandslied," with its happy ending, in Ofen (pp. 345-47). His loyalty to Hagen is emphasized as Krimhild and her men approach:

Daß ungerächt nicht sterben die Helden von dem Rhein,  
Das soll das Werk der Klinge von Hagen und von Volker  
sein!





vehement than in the Nl: "Frau Kriemhild, eine schöne Lügnerin!" (p. 228). Schröter also does not forget how Volker kills the Hun as he is trying to help his wounded relative, so that his Volker has all the traits of the medieval figure, with more emphasis on his music and, a hint of religion not found in the original.

### 3. The retellings in prose

Bacmeister

Wagner

Adolf Bacmeister's intention in his prose retelling of the Nl<sup>229</sup> was to give an account which "alles Unwesentliche und Störende ausscheidet" (preface), whereby the author decided what was irrelevant or disturbing. Bacmeister tells the whole Nl. Volker, however, is not mentioned until the Burgundians arrive in Bechlaren, where his role is described as in the Nl. Volker's violence is omitted to a great extent: his reproach to the Huns before the night watch is not mentioned, nor is his blocking the door to the minster. Bacmeister also omits the following: that Volker suggests the tournament and kills one of the Huns; that he kills the Hun who tries to slip out with Etzel; that he kills the Hun as he tries to help his relative and drives the rest away with a spear; and his mockery of the Huns. Otherwise, Bacmeister, a teacher of the lower grades at the Gymnasium in Reutlingen (cited from the title page), has given an account of Volker as he appears in the Nl. The omissions are clearly intended to ennoble Volker, to make him into a more exemplary figure for the youth of Germany.

Wilhelm Wagner retells the Nl in "Nibelungen nach deutscher Dichtung," a chapter in a larger work.<sup>230</sup> Among the members of the Burgundian court is "Volker von Alzeyen" the loyal minstrel (p. 74). He accompanies the army on the

campaign against the Saxons, where at one point he, Sindolt, Hunolt, and Hagen protect Siegfried against possible injury from the rear (p. 80). After the double wedding, as Siegfried and Kriemhild are preparing to depart for Xanten, Wagner shows the Burgundians and the Xantner gathered for a farewell banquet. Volker and other minstrels sing of the hills and vineyards along the Rhine, but Hagen remarks to Volker that all these demonstrations of friendship could easily turn into murderous combat, and he and Volker would join in, if the Norns decreed it so. Volker replies by affirming that he will always be loyal to Hagen: "Gesell ich schwore, / Dir Treue sonder Trug" (pp. 99-100). However, when Hagen resolves to kill Siegfried, and tells Volker that he shall be his "Geselle," Volker refuses: to be sure, when they fought together in "Mohrenland," Volker had sworn to be Hagen's "Geselle in allen rechten Dingen," but for "Maucheldienst" Hagen must seek another companion. Hagen does not answer, but chooses Ortwin as his accomplice (p. 116).

In Bechlaren, it is a song sung by Rudiger's daughter, which awakens Gieselher's interest in her (p. 125), but as the Burgundians are leaving, Volker sings to Gotelinde, praising Frau Minne, who has sheltered the Burgundians and all the worthy inhabitants of the castle. He asks God to protect them from sorrow, for he sees blood flowing and can hear the clashing of swords, weeping, and lamentation (p. 129). Volker blames a "Hollengeist" for inspiring this song, and tears the strings from his fiddle. Immediately, however, he recaptures his composure and sings of love and heroism, dispelling the dark mood he has caused.

When Dietrich warns the Burgundians, Volker does not react; when Hagen remarks that at least he can rely upon Dietrich as his friend, Volker then answers that in "Streitenothe" he will prove himself Hagen's faithful companion (treuer Geselle, p. 130). His role from now on follows the N1, with the following exceptions: several Huns try to slip out of the

banquet hall with Etzel, and Volker kills them all; finally Wagner, like the majority of his predecessors, omits Volker's killing the Hun who tries to help his wounded kinsman.

#### 4. Summary

We have examined a total of twenty-six representations of the Volker figure between the years 1849 and 1887. In all but one (Geibel's drama) he is a musician, called variously "Sanger" or "Fiedler" (Siegert). Behind all of these Volker figures lies the nineteenth-century concept of the "Sanger" or "Spielmann." The Grimm brothers saw him as guardian of the authenticity of Germanic saga, while Uhland saw in him the creative, productive side, the poet. The second edition of Gervinius' Geschichte der poetischen Nationalliteratur (1840-1842) distinguished between the "Sanger" and the "Spielmann," the latter being the wandering minstrel, juggler, news bearer, while the former retained the dignity of custodian of the Germanic tradition. The two concepts, however, never became clearly separated, and the nineteenth century retained the idea that there had existed in the Middle Ages a class of people, called "Spielleute," who were musically talented, and also wrote epic poetry, but stood in an ambivalent relationship to medieval society on account of their wandering life.<sup>231</sup> Volker von Alzey, as the nineteenth century saw him, was variously "Sanger" or "Spielmann," but usually a member of the Burgundian aristocracy. All of these aspects, especially news bearer, poet, and tradition bearer, are associated with Volker as he appears in the popular reception of the NI, since this reception was influenced by the teaching of the secondary-school and university Germanisten.

Volker has acted as news bearer in Hebbel and Jordan, bringing the news of Brunhild to Worms, while in Duboc he embellished the tradition as the "Spielleute" were supposed

to do. As a poet, he was the vehicle for the poetic aspirations of Osterwald, Geibel, Hosäus, Arnd, Jordan, Stecher, and Wagner, while the verse adaptations described the content of his songs. Others used his artistry as a basis for psychological reflections. According to Osterwald and Prott, Volker's musical nature made him optimistic, while in Glaser it caused his pessimism. Hosäus and Dahn saw the jolly minstrel, while Wilbrandt presented a slightly temperamental artist. Finally, Volker the tradition bearer foresees the development in Duboc, relates the story of the hoard in Hebbel, and passes his instrument as symbol of the tradition on to Meister Konrad. In Wegener and Wagner, he is the prophet, who foresees the coming catastrophe.

As we have noted in the summary to the previous chapter, the tendency, already present in the Middle Ages, of the poet to project himself into the Volker figure, continued into the nineteenth century. In this chapter, we have seen Dahn styling himself Volker von Alzey, while Jordan adopted the life style of the minstrel. Hebbel used the Volker figure to present what he considered to be the mythological basis of the NI, and in the other plays, poems, and retellings of the period, Volker, and only Volker, gives an interpretive commentary on the action as a whole or in part. Osterwald's Volker sings of joy which ends in sorrow; in Glaser, Geibel, Duboc, Hosäus, Veihel-Müller, Siegert, Wegener, Siemssen, and Wagner, Volker is opposed to some degree to Siegfried's murder, yet most authors, particularly beginning with Hosäus, emphasize that in spite of the differences between them, he will stand by Hagen when he is in danger. The exceptions are Veihel-Müller, who did not write a second part, and Siegert, whose Volker is mute in Part II, but does not desert Hagen. Wilbrandt's Volker favors the murder for reasons of state, while in the others he does not express himself on the subject.

Not only are the authors' views on Germany's past re-

flected in their treatment of the Volker figure, but their reactions to contemporary events as well. In the previous section we mentioned the apolitical character of most authors, or in the case of Wurm, his irony, as typical for the frustration of the middle class, since there was little reason to anticipate a united, republican German state in the immediate future, but only the division and accompanying weakness of many small or middle-sized states. The revolution of 1848 and the National Assembly replaced the apathy of the pre-March days with hope for a better future. The Frankfurt Parliament, even though it failed, had been national in its character, and the aspirations it had raised were not lightly forgotten.<sup>232</sup> Politics never completely receded from the minds of the educated middle class, and politics meant the unification of Germany.

August Wilhelm Schlegel and others had already called the N1 the German national epic: Volker referred to the Burgundians as Germans, and urged them to stop quarreling among themselves in Müller's Chriemhilds Rache, and Vilmar referred to Hagen and Volker as the two German heroes. In the period from 1849 to 1888, however, there occur frequent references to the Burgundians as Germans: Gerber, Hosäus, Jordan, Siemssen, Feddersen, and Stecher's "Franken." When the poet identifies with the Volker figure, therefore, he is identifying with the German minstrel, and it is this increased national identification which distinguishes these Volker figures from those of the pre-March era. Volker's identification with the German nation, implicit in the pre-March era, has become more explicit during the period of the founding and consolidation of the Reich.

By 1850 it had become clear that there was<sup>3</sup> going to be a struggle between Austria and Prussia for leadership in Germany,<sup>233</sup> meaning that in the thirty-nine states, which composed the German Confederation, there had developed a sense of national awareness. In 1853, in Gerber's opera, we

see the first Volker song, which is not only an interpretation of the N1, but also a praise of the beauty of the German landscape and the virtue of the German people. In 1874, after the founding of the Bismarck Reich, Arnd has Volker give a lyric account of the nature of the Nibelungen, i.e. Germans. We noted also in Naumann, Wegener, Siemssen, Feddersen, Stecher, and Schröter, how Volker sings of the German Rhine, its wine, women, song, and the "Treue" of its people, in obvious reference to the second stanza of Hoffmann von Fallersleben's "Lied der Deutschen." By a fortunate coincidence, Worms, the center of Burgundy and Gunther's capital, is on the Rhine, which early became identified with German national hopes and hostility to France, as in Nikolaus Becker's "Sie sollen ihn nicht haben, / den freien deutschen Rhein," and Max Schneckenburger's "Wacht am Rhein." Thus Volker can sing of the Rhine and of its heroes and be understood by his hearers as singing of Germany and the Germans.

Not only does the action of the N1 center on Germany's river, the N1 also contains the figure of Germany's national hero, Siegfried.<sup>234</sup> Adolf Glaser gives us the picture of Siegfried, as the nineteenth century generally saw him:

Er ist an edlem Muth

An königlichem Sinn und Adel reich,  
Klug, tapfer, seinen Untergeb'nen mild;  
Sanft wie ein Kind, und wie ein Löwe stark;  
Niemandes Feind, und jedes Guten Freund;  
Ein Schutz im Unglück, felsenfest in Treue! (p. 39)

It is natural therefore that Volker should be sympathetic to him, even, as we have seen, to the extent of condemning his murder by Hagen, whether mildly protesting as in Glaser or strongly denouncing it as in Siemssen. The bearer of the German national tradition must, in this period of rising national sentiment, take a stand on the murder of the German national hero.

Yet life goes on after Siegfried's murder: there is a

second part to the N1. One of Siegfried's virtues as enumerated by Glaser is his "Treue," and this same "Treue" motivates Volker as he stands by Hagen and the Burgundian Kings. Gerber has Gunther and Volker sing in unison of "Treue bis in den Tod." Geibel's Volker stands watch over his Kings and greets the new day, even if it should bring his death. Hosäus, writing in Dessau in 1866, is the first, however, to be explicit about Volker's attitude towards Hagen, who after all is the real center of power, and the moving force in the drama: in spite of the differences between the two, Volker proclaims himself Hagen's friend. Given the political implications of the N1 reception, it is significant that of those states which supported Prussia's initiative to form a federation upon the collapse of the German Confederation, a move which was tantamount to declaring war on Austria, one was Anhalt-Dessau, where Hosäus was tutor to the royal children. The Prussian representative who presented this motion to the Federal Diet in Frankfurt was Otto von Bismarck-Schönhausen.<sup>235</sup> In view of the fact that Anhalt was completely surrounded by Prussia, it is difficult to assess Hosäus' motives or to ascertain whether he wished to emphasize the differences or the friendship between the two. However, when we consider that Hagen tells Volker his innermost sentiments, including his anxiety about the forthcoming confrontation with Kriemhild and the Huns, the scale tips in favor of the friendship theme and we see Hosäus taking a stand on the side of Prussia in the War of 1866.

Naumann's poetic version of the N1 appeared in the same year. He was the head of the regional "Turnverein," and these athletic clubs, along with the rifle clubs and choral societies were centers for the propagation of strivings toward national unity.<sup>236</sup> His Volker is as we have seen, an idealized German warrior, whose less noble acts have been deleted from the story. Wegener's Volker condemns Siegfried's murder again, but stands by his countrymen: these poets most likely dis-

approved of the War of 1866, but maintained their loyalty to Germany which they saw embodied in the "Kleindeutsch" solution proposed by Prussia.

Five years later, this solution became reality: the Germans not living in Austria or Switzerland were united under Prussian domination. The Germans had their country, and most of them had the country they wanted, for as Dahlmann expressed it in 1849: "The winning of power alone will fully satisfy the seething desire for freedom; for it is not only freedom that the Germans have in mind, but they are primarily craving for power, which has been denied to them until now."<sup>237</sup> The financial advantages of belonging to the customs union, the 300,000 marks paid annually to Ludwig II of Bavaria, the exemption of the South German states from the beer and liquor tax, all of these factors together with the magnetism exerted by the names "Kaiser" and "Reich" induced the diets of the various states to act favorably on the treaties which enabled the Reich to come into existence.<sup>238</sup>

We have already noted Siemssen's welcome to the new Reich, and recall that it was his Volker who referred to Siegfried's murder as a crime, pointing out that he was not in Worms at the time. Now, however, the Burgundians must stand together, and he will stand by Hagen. Dahn's Volker left his fiddle to his friend (in the ballad) in one last gesture of loyalty: even though the strings refuse to accompany Hagen's words, Volker stood by Hagen, and in the play, Volker points out to Gunther, that the Rhenish "Edelwild" belongs together, now that they are being hunted by a pack of Huns. Wilbrandt's Volker even goes to the extent of approving of Siegfried's murder, as a move in power politics. Prott has Volker support Hagen's attitudes, even when they are at variance with those of the Kings, and do his best to elevate the spirits of the Burgundians. Siegert and Veihel-Müller make Volker into Siegfried's admiring friend, who has no relationship to Hagen at all. Siegfried is still the German



national hero to them; yet even in these plays, Volker does not reproach Hagen, he merely ignores him. Volker remains loyal to the visible expression of German power.

The same is true of the retellings in verse and prose which, by their nature, do not allow for as much variation in characterization or motivation as do the dramas. The poets here emphasize or omit, but usually do not make additions or innovations; they omit the "ignoble actions," especially Volker's killing the Hun who is trying to help a wounded relative, and emphasize his music and his loyalty to Germany by interpolating extended descriptions of the contents of his usually patriotic songs into the night watch scene. Stecher highlights the minstrel as bearer of tradition by having him sing the medieval version of the "Hildebrandslied," which probably appeared more Christian than the OHG version, while emphasizing his friendship with Hagen. In prose, Bacmeister gave us an idealized Volker, suitable for young boys, and Wagner has Volker point out that he will be Hagen's friend as long as he does what is right, and will stand by him when it is a matter of life or death, but will not be a party to any dishonorable action.

We have deliberately saved Jordan for the last. Just as his Nibelunge is the most monumental adaptation of the Nibelungen saga, so it is the most significant from the point of view of its politics. The first part, Sigfridsage, published in 1866, shows Volker as the loyal vassal and Gunther as the generous lord, an indication of Jordan's monarchistic sentiments, while Hildebrants Heimkehr affords Volker the opportunity of developing his relationship to Hagen, and of being contrasted with other, foreign elements. In the nineteenth century, Volker bases his contempt for the Huns on the fact that they are non-German in their appearance, customs, and mores. This is very likely an aspect of the proclivity on the part of German liberals and democrats to slight other nations and nationalities, particularly when

their interests ran counter to the claims of Germany. Jordan is an outstanding example of this attitude: in regard to the problem of the Poles living in the eastern Prussian province of Posnan, Jordan appealed to "The preponderance of the German race over most Slav races" and denied that the rule of law was applicable to the fate of nations.<sup>239</sup> His Volker is contrasted with the subhuman degeneracy of the Hunnish minstrels, one of whom, Schwämmel, must take on the onus of causing the death of Krimhild's innocent child, and thus setting the final catastrophe in motion. In this respect, too, Jordan goes a step beyond previous authors.

Likewise in the Hagen-Volker relationship: Osterwald, Glaser, and Prott showed its closeness by having Hagen elucidate Volker's psychology. Arnd has Volker characterize, with rhetorical eloquence, the Nibelungen for Etzel's benefit. Jordan's Volker, however, characterizes and interprets Hagen, making even this representative of the principle of evil seem, at least temporarily, human. Hagen is not the hero of the piece; Sigfrid and Hildebrant exemplify the virtues which Jordan would like to instill in the youth of the country, and which he believes characterize the Germans and make them superior to the barbarous East or the decadent West. Yet Hagen represents power, and it is to this power that Volker is drawn, it is this power which he interprets to the world.

Tonnelat has stated that often, when Jordan writes "Sigfrid" or "Hildebrant" he is thinking Bismarck.<sup>240</sup> Whether this was true of the Sigfridsage or not is difficult to prove. Certainly Jordan recognized in Bismarck the loyal supporter of the Prussian monarchy, which was the reason for his becoming chancellor, and in the Danish war Bismarck showed that Prussia was going to pursue its interests at all costs. Sigfrid's assistance to Gunther may perhaps be interpreted as reflecting Bismarck's support of Wilhelm I. In Hildebrants Heimkehr, however, the character of Hildebrant as Schwanhild's

preceptor, as the man who by his words, attitudes, and actions was to make her into the model of virtue in all senses of the word, does not call to mind Bismarck as history remembers him, nor Bismarck as perceived by his contemporaries, especially by the liberals, among whom Jordan must be numbered. These liberals saw in Bismarck at first the "shallow Junker,"<sup>241</sup> and deplored his autocratic ways; only when he achieved German unification, which meant to the liberals power for Germany, with whom they wished to identify, and economic prosperity for the bourgeoisie, did some of the liberals support Bismarck and his policies. It was the unification, not the man, whom they hailed.<sup>242</sup> Seen in this light, we cannot agree that Hildebrant could have represented Bismarck; the German view of him has never been so simple.

There is, however, truth in Tonnelat's contention that Jordan's Nibelunge represents Jordan's reaction to contemporary events, particularly to the unification of Germany. One indication of this belongs, albeit peripherally, to his delineation of the Volker figure: when Volker and Hagen take up their post for the night watch, they relieve "Luther von Lörrach und Nenntwig von Zabern" (Pt. II, p. 68). Luther signifies Jordan's Protestantism, while Lörrach is his tribute to Baden, the first South German state to begin active military cooperation with Prussia, by adopting in 1867 the needle gun, which meant adoption of the Prussian manual-of-arms and the importation, at first at least, of Prussian drill instructors.<sup>243</sup> Zabern is the Alsatian town of Saverne. In the figures of Luther von Lörrach and Nenntwig von Zabern, Jordan is welcoming southern Germany and Alsace-Lorraine into the Reich, little realizing that, for a brief time at least, Saverne would become a symbol of Prussian tyranny and Alsatian hostility to it.

Looking for a portrait of Bismarck in the Nibelunge, we can find it to a great extent in the figure of Hagen. In the Sigfridsage, Hagen and his sister Guta, the mother of

Gunther and Krimhild, had killed Sigmund and exposed the baby Sigfrid, the legal heir to the throne, in order to gain the kingdom of Burgundy for Guta and her children. Sigfrid's survival and appearance in Worms place all of this in jeopardy, and so Hagen kills Sigfrid out of loyalty to his sister and to her royal family. Hildebrants Heimkehr gives a kinder picture of Hagen, the loyal vassal, who in the night watch becomes even human and likeable. After Hagen has thanked Volker for his friendship, the minstrel is speechless; he can only grasp Hagen's hand in a mute gesture of friendship (Pt. II, p. 95). As Volker understands Hagen, so Jordan, after initial opposition, has come to understand Bismarck.

The same is true, though less explicitly developed, in the other Volker figures of this period: Volker, when he opposes or regrets Siegfried's murder, is taking a stand similar to that of most educated Germans during the establishment and consolidation of the German Reich, that of opposition to Bismarck and his autocratic, often ruthless ways. Yet, when the Reich is threatened, whether by France from without or by Social Democracy from within, these same men rally around their endangered country and Bismarck, its symbol. The title of Sybel's book to the contrary notwithstanding, Bismarck was regarded as the founder of German unity.

Of the fifteen authors of this period for whom biographical material could be found, seven may be classified as poets or writers, i.e. men whose principal occupation was writing and who produced a sizable body of work. These seven: Glaser, Geibel, Hebbel, Duboc, Dahn, Wilbrandt, and Jordan, with Siegert, whose tragedy Klytaemnestra achieved some notice, as an eighth, all use the Volker figure to give an interpretation of the NI and, in the cases of Dahn, Wilbrandt, and Jordan, to relate the NI to contemporary Germany. Four of the authors are teachers and those authors about whom no biographical material could be found, exhibit in

their work the tone and style of the secondary schoolteacher, especially Wagner, Siemssen, and Naumann. Three of the authors are clergymen, whose vocation would have brought them into the classroom.

The Volker-Hagen relationship mirrors the attitudes of these writers and teachers to the sources of power and authority during this period of the nineteenth century. The source of these attitudes was doubtless the classroom, where the NI was being used as a paradigm for the national ideology, with Volker as the loyal comrade to Hagen, a model for the loyalty which the nationally-minded pedagogues wished to develop. This loyalty to Hagen increased in intensity in direct proportion to the development of national feeling in Germany. From Osterwald in 1849, whose Hagen explains Volker's psychology, to Hosaus in 1866, whose Volker remains loyal to Hagen "trotz allen Unterschieds," and finally to Jordan in 1874, Volker's intimacy with Hagen has increased to the point that their friendship has become one of the high points in the tradition, the example par excellence of German loyalty.

Volker realizes that he is riding to his doom, and this realization makes his loyalty all the more significant. The authors of this period, with few exceptions, emphasize this in one way or another, either by having Hagen reveal the mermaids' prophecy to Volker alone, or by having Volker, in his character of prophetic minstrel, foretell the catastrophe. It is after these revelations that Volker affirms his loyalty to Hagen, giving as the reason the fact that Germans must stand together against the alien foe.

Volker's innocence of any complicity in Siegfried's murder further underlines his striking loyalty. Particularly after 1871 do the authors emphasize this, as Siemssen's Volker calls it a crime, Dahn's Volker points out that he had not drunk with Hagen since the murder, and Wagner's Volker refuses to be Hagen's accomplice in the act. Yet all

of these figures have accompanied Gunther and Hagen to Etzelnburg, and all remain loyal to Hagen, pointing out that they do so out of loyalty to their nation or to the monarchy which represents it. Volker's innocence, underlined by the removal of his ignoble acts, the knowledge that he is riding to his doom, and the character of the "lustiger Spielmann" combine to make Volker the ideal spokesman for the new emphasis which most authors of this period introduced into their adaptations of the N1, the joyful acceptance of a hero's death, combined with the fatalism which could make this acceptable even to the innocent. This was the popular interpretation of the N1, the interpretation which I heard in 1958 from a professor who had emigrated in the early thirties: if fate wills it, the innocent will be destroyed, and it is their duty to sacrifice themselves in the interest of the nation. Volker von Alzey, through his role in the popular reception of the N1, became during this period the ideal vehicle for the propagation of this national ideology.

III. 1889-1918

1. The dramas

Hauptmann	Lublinski	Bächtiger
Oliven	Bergmann	Ernst
Strobl	Sadil	

In 1899, Gerhart Hauptmann wrote the "Vorspiel" to his proposed Nibelungen trilogy, of which only the outline exists.<sup>244</sup> In 1933 he revised this "Vorspiel," which is set in the "Nibelungenfeste in der Mark zu Norweg," where Siegfried and Kriemhild reside. When Gere and a deputation of Burgundian knights deliver Gunther's invitation, Kriemhild is delighted to hear her native speech again. When they speak, she exclaims, it sounds like Volker's song, which leads her to inquire: "Was macht der königliche Spielmann, spricht, / der Fürst der Sänger." This description of Volker may belong to the revision of 1933; if so, there is a peculiar poignancy in it. In 1899 Hauptmann stood at the peak of his creativity: his Vor Sonnenaufgang had assured the success of naturalism on the "free" (not state-supported) stages of Germany;<sup>245</sup> he had successfully depicted the misery of the individual in Einsame Menschen, of the family in Das Friedensfest, of society in Die Weber, and of the nation in Florian Geyer. His concern, however, was human, not political<sup>246</sup> and he soon turned from social dramas to neoromanticism in Hannele and Die versunkene Glocke, all of which were written and staged before 1899. Yet Hauptmann cannot deal successfully with the Nl. By 1933, he had become virtually silent, after having lived through the Reich and the Weimar Republic, in which he came into his own in popularity. Now, at the end of the Republic, the prince of poets turns again to the Nl. In answer to Kriemhild's inquiry about Volker, two of the Burgundians answer: "Dank! es geht ihm wohl!" a noncommittal

response equivalent to the American, "Thanks, he's doin' all right," signifying that Volker is enjoying some prosperity, yet the spark which had animated the young poet has gone out. This brief exchange, in a fragment of a drama, has demonstrated once more the extent to which the poet's experiences and emotions are expressed through the Volker figure.

Under the pseudonym Rideamus, Fritz Oliven published his comic operetta Die lustigen Nibelungen;<sup>247</sup> Siegfried is a carefree young man, who still loves Brunhild even while he is subduing her for Gunther. Kriemhild and Brunhild both love Siegfried, and both agree to his murder. Siegfried, however, suggests that they agree instead on "50 Prozent / Denn so verliert ihr mich gänzlich / Und so zur Hälfte doch blos." The chorus hails the happy ending of the Nibelungen operetta. Volker is one of Gunther's brothers: he joins in on the morning after the wedding feast, when they sing of how much they have eaten and drunk, and what a glorious brawl ended the celebration. Volker completes Giselher's lines: G: "Hagen aß ein ganzes Schwein." V: "Und 'ne Blutwurst hinterdrein!" (p. 28), and so on in this vein. As they are planning the murder, Volker sings: "Der gute Onkel Hagen" / Gunther: "Soll ihn nach Tisch erschlagen!" (p. 35), while later Ute sings: "Wir schreiben auf seinem Leichensteine:" / V: "Hier ruh'n vom Herrn Siegfried, die Herrn Gebeine!" It is all in good fun, and the piece must have made an entertaining evening. We see some significance in Volker's suggesting that Hagen commit the murder, and in his allusion to Siegfried's guilt. When Dankwart exclaims that they will all rejoice, Volker adds: "Wenn er sanft entschlafen ist und still!" (p. 36). Even in comedy, Volker retains his relationship to Hagen, justifies him, and gives an interpretation of the Nl.

Karl Hans Strobl's pageant play, the first Nl drama in prose,<sup>248</sup> was written for the "Nibelungen Denkmal und Volks-



schauspiel-Verein 'Bechelaren.'" The first act contains Kriemhilde's stay at Bechelaren, where she is met by Etzel. The Kürnberger, a young poet living in Bechelaren, speaks abusively to Kriemhilde for bringing the curse of discord, which hangs over her, into the land. Rüdiger sends the Kürnberger into exile for a period of seven years.

Act II shows the Nibelungen arriving in Bechelaren. After the general greetings, Volker relates how he and Hagen in the rear guard killed Else and Gelfrat (p. 50), and when Gunther reprimands Hagen for throwing the chaplain overboard, saying that of all of his deeds, none had been more foolish, Volker interjects that it may have been his wisest, depending on what it was that the mermaids told him, thus demonstrating his confidence in Hagen's judgment.

After the evening meal, Hagen reminds the company of Volker's musical ability, saying that Volker's songs are the only ones he likes, for sometimes blood runs out of their lines. Volker's harp has been stored with the weapons: it is his best friend, he says, for "Alles, was ich kann, beruht in ihr" (p. 64). Hagen asks whether Volker has forgotten him, since he calls the harp his best friend, to which Volker replies that he cannot believe this offering of friendship, since Hagen has always kept his distance up to now. Hagen then reveals that they are approaching grave danger, to which Volker responds with a promise of his friendship and support. Hagen has chosen Volker as his comrade, and the minstrel has responded with gratitude as if he had been hoping for this honor.

Volker's song begins: "Unter der Linde im Odenwald . . . ," which Gunther interrupts, demanding another. The next song begins: "Es war eine junge Königin / Gesessen über der See . . ." (p. 64), which Volker himself interrupts, saying: "das ist ein neues Lied, das mir die Harfe flüstert" (p. 65), as though he had not heard it before and the harp were telling it to him. His song is in three six-line stanzas. In the first

stanza he says that he does not trust women, in order that no harm may come to him; in the second, he tells his vision of a rose, whose fragrance killed the heroes who had nurtured it, and in the third he affirms his loyalty to his comrades in battle, to his fiddle and sword, and his distrust of all women, "Damit mir nicht ein Leid von ihr gescheh'." Rüdiger says of Volker's song: "Es füllt den Raum und schlägt wie Flügel an die Wände" (p. 65). Volker, like his fellow minstrel, sees Kriemhilde as the cause of the N1 tragedy.

Volker's relationship to Hagen has grown out of trust on Hagen's side and admiration on the part of Volker; by the end of the stay in Bechelaren, it has developed to the extent that Volker can even question Hagen's actions: when Hagen announces to Volker the match he has made between Giselher and Dietlinde, Volker asks: "Hagen, war dies recht von dir?" (p. 78). Hagen's answer is that, right or not, it was "klug" and had to be. In Etzel's castle, Hagen describes Volker to Kriemhilde as a second Hagen (p. 89), with Balmung as the third, so that Hagen has come "Selbdritt" to Etzel's court. Volker and Hagen have become firm friends in the face of death: only on religion do they disagree, for Hagen is a freethinker, while Volker is a believer.

After Mass, Volker tells Hagen that Kriemhilde did not make the sign of the cross at the appropriate places, and that she shuddered during the transubstantiation, for "In diesem Augenblick, der aller Sünden frei uns finden soll, verharrte sie in ihrer Sünde." Hagen's reaction is an emphatic "Geschwätz!" to which Volker patiently explains that this is the meaning of the sacrifice, a perpetuation of Christ's salvation. Hagen replies that Kriemhilde has her mind on other Masses, in which wine will not replace the blood, to which Volker answers nothing (p. 101). Later, he alludes again to Hagen's lack of religion when Rüdiger approaches to do battle with the Nibelungen, and Hagen, not realizing his true intentions, cries: "So sei Gott gelobt!" (p. 134). Volker calls

it a miracle that Hagen has pronounced the name of God. The difference in religious faith, does not, however, diminish the intensity of their friendship, nor of Volker's determination to stand by Hagen to the end.

The last words of the play are spoken by the Kürnberger, to whom Rüdiger had entrusted the care of his wife and daughter. He picks up Volker's instrument, regards it, and asks: "Welch ungeheures Lied in diesen Saiten schläft? Ich nehme sie an mich als Erbe und will sie lauschen. Vielleicht daß ich erfasse, was sie durch Volker nicht mehr sagen kann. Ein Lied vom Kampf der Nibelungen und ihrem Ende?" (p. 150). Strobl shows us the Kürnberger, his Nl author, taking up Volker's instrument, his spirit as it were, and learning from it the tale of the Nibelungen. Thus Strobl shows Volker as the tradition bearer, through whom he expresses his own view of the Nl tradition.

In Gunther und Brunhild, Samuel Lublinski<sup>249</sup> shows the Burgundians and Romans living in Worms, with Gunther surrounded by Gothic bodyguards, the only men in Burgundy allowed to bear arms. There is no Hagen figure in the drama. "Volkmar, ein Sänger," is not a positive character: in scene one, Gunther says to Rumolt, his armorer, who is bringing him some news: "Du bist kein Spielmann, sag mir keine Märe / Nach Volkmar's Art, des schlimmen Wühlers" (p. 3). The minstrel as agitator, as conspirator, is a new note in the Nl adaptations. In Act III, scene nine, Maurus, a Roman merchant, is standing in the square before the cathedral, talking with Othmar and Heinrich, two Burgundian knights. Maurus observes that Volkmar is approaching, to which Heinrich adds: "Und angefüllt zum Platzen scheint sein Sack. / Ich hasse dieses Wiesel," but Othmar says: "Er ist klug" (p. 58). Volkmar is an agitator, a talebearer, and a weasel, but intelligent. He enters with "Ich weiß ein klingend Lied für Ritterohren, / Doch in Burgund hält man die Ohren zu," to which Heinrich retorts that he should spare them his song,

but, encouraged by Othmar, Volkmar sings. His first theme is the "Gottesschwert des Königs Etzel," which had lain buried for a thousand years since the old god of war left it and retired to the regions of the blessed, leaving his sword to whomever should find it, and with it conquer the world. Maurus calls the song barbarous, but Othmar asks whether Attila has found it. Volkmar answers affirmatively, while Maurus insists that this sword was really a Roman sword, left in the Asian steppe beside a buried soldier. Volkmar calls this a lie, like the lies of Vergil "des falschen, feigen Sängers" (p. 61). To Othmar's "Dann kommt der Etzel über uns," Volkmar replies: "Er kommt / Er kommt zu uns ihr Helden;--wir zu ihm." At the suggestion that Attila is coming and the Burgundians will join forces with him, Heinrich is shocked. When Volkmar insists that Attila is all powerful, that it would be folly to resist him, Heinrich accuses him of being a spy. Volkmar counters with "Burgund ist erntereif; ich geh zum Etzel" (p. 62), where heroes are honored, instead of being disarmed, as they are in Burgundy. Heinrich continues to insist that Volkmar is lying, and to Othmar's suggestion that he might be telling the truth, Heinrich reminds his comrade to hold fast to honor.

This occasions Volkmar's second song, a mockery of Heinrich's "Treue," which he compares to that of a dog, who slavishly follows his master, licking his hand even when he kicks him. Heinrich calls Volkmar "ein Hund, ein räudiger" (p. 64), threatens to kick him, but Volkmar merely mocks him, saying: "Wage es, / Ich fürchte mich vor keinem treuen Kettenhund," whereupon Othmar requests a third song.

Volkmar's third song is "ein Todeslied" about two queens, who have quarreled--Heinrich interrupts again, warning Volkmar not to tell any lies. Once again the singer must tell Heinrich that he is only deceiving himself, by refusing to believe what will shortly take place before his eyes, when Kriemhild approaches from the right and Brunhild from

the left, each with her retinue, demanding precedence. Heinrich persists: "Ich hör' nicht, Unke" (p. 65), but Volkmar continues: "Der Untergang, / Ich künde frei, des Reiches steht bevor." Women's hatred has forced men to resort to arms in civil war, and Attila, who is even now approaching, will reap the harvest, riding over the bones of the Burgundians. Heinrich and Othmar resign themselves to death, Maurus prays for deliverance, but Volkmar exits, calling: "Der Römer freilich betet; wir sind Ritter. / Folgt mir zum Attila" (p. 67). Heinrich sends an impotent "Hätt' ich ein Eisen, so hätt' ich dich getötet," after the departing minstrel.

Everything that we have learned to expect from the Volker figure appears to be missing from Volkmar: his bravery in the face of death and above all his loyalty to Burgundy and to its King. The explanation for this apparent inconsistency lies in the fact that there is no Hagen in the play, and therefore no center of power to which Volkmar can gravitate. Neither is there any courage: Heinrich refuses to listen when Volkmar speaks the truth, while Othmar desires entertainment without attending to the meaning of Volkmar's news. Maurus prays, not to the Christian God, but "zum ewig Thronenden, / Der in den Händen hält die hohe Ordnung," while being unwilling and unable to act. Volkmar, realizing the futility of the situation in Burgundy, does the only sensible thing in his view, which is to go over to Etzel. Once again, the minstrel allies himself with power.

Hagen's absence and the weakness of the monarchy together with a general sense of frustration suggest that the author has contemporary Germany in mind, particularly the lack of Bismarck's strong personality. During his career, Bismarck had been disliked and opposed by most of the German people. Now, after his dismissal and especially after his death, he became the subject of a cult which saw in him the embodiment of everything desirable to the German nation:

strength, diplomacy, international prestige, peace, even good manners, everything which was lacking in contemporary reality, had been lost because of Bismarck's untimely dismissal and death.<sup>250</sup> In this situation, patriotism and religion degenerate into cant, as we see in the persons of Heinrich and Maurus, while intelligence must suffer the odium of being termed agitation and the truths it tells are "Unkenrufe," to which the masses stop their ears.


Hagen is the title hero of Conrad Arnold Bergmann's drama, which appeared in 1914.<sup>251</sup> As the play opens, Rüdiger is bringing Etzel's proposal of marriage to Siegfried's widow. Krimhilde is quarrelsome and sulky, while Gunther is a vacillating King. Gerenot is a coarse fellow, who makes bad jokes about Krimhilde's age, but Giselher feels sorry for his sister. Gunther, Gerenot, and Brunhilde would like to be rid of the querulous widow, but Hagen, the faithful vassal, warns against allowing her to acquire enough power to become dangerous. When Gunther orders Hagen to deliver up Siegfried's hoard, without which Krimhilde has refused to leave Worms, Hagen replies: "Wir zahlen gut nur mit dem Eisen in der Faust. Mit Blut und Eisen" (p. 34), and informs Gunther that only the fish in the Rhine know the whereabouts of Siegfried's gold.

Volker von Alzey is Hagen's companion: when Gunther summons Hagen, both appear, much to the dismay of the chaplain, who breaks off his conversation with Gerenot and Giselher and disappears upon their approach. Hagen and Volker are not Christians, for Volker refers to the priest as "eine Ratte." When Hagen learns that Gunther has promised to restore Siegfried's gold to Krimhilde, he motions to Volker to leave, telling Gerenot that they will return at midnight. When Giselher asks whether they are offended, Volker replies as he and Hagen are departing: "Nein, doch kenn ich seine Gründe nicht." Volker shares Hagen's views

on religion, and does Hagen's bidding even though he does not know his reasons as yet (pp. 19-21).

At midnight, Hagen and Volker return to Worms, where, looking into the cathedral, they see Rüdiger swearing loyalty to Krimhilde over Siegfried's grave. Hagen mockingly suggests that Volker play a farewell tune on his fiddle, but Volker, who feels uncomfortable around a church, answers: "Komm, laß das arme Weib." He then chides Hagen, saying it was not wise of him to sink the gold into the Rhine, since through it, he and Krimhilde might have become reconciled. Hagen, however, knows better, and explains his reasons for disposing of the gold. When Volker asks whether he is afraid of "dem Weib," Hagen admits that he is indeed "Um meinetwillen nicht, doch um Burgund!" As Rüdiger and Krimhilde leave the cathedral, they encounter Hagen and Volker, in a scene which anticipates that in which they do not rise before her. Hagen taunts Krimhilde with Siegfried's memory and accuses her, in rather coarse terms, of using her body to buy Etzel's power. Krimhilde counters by accusing Hagen of having slain Siegfried in order to obtain the hoard for his own use, at which Volker interjects: "Ich kann bezeugen, daß er nur das Eisen achtet und nimmer wie dein Siegfried mit den andern Menschen all die Schwäche teilt, das gelbe Gold zu lieben." In this scene, Volker appeared to sympathize with Krimhilde, while reproaching Hagen for lacking wisdom. Immediately, however, Hagen was able to show him his mistake. Hagen emerges as being selflessly concerned for the welfare of Burgundy, so selfless in fact, that Volker can accuse Siegfried, along with all other men, of greed for gold, a weakness which his friend Hagen does not share (pp. 26-31).

In Act III, as the Burgundians are departing from Bechlaren, Dietrich von Bern enters, to warn them of Krimhilde's planned revenge, and to beg them, either to turn back to Worms, or to turn the hoard over to him, so that he may use it to intercede for them with Krimhilde. The hoard



is in the Rhine, and Hagen, who has nothing to lose but the reputation of having killed out of desire for gold, will not turn back. Volker makes, at this point, the strongest affirmation of loyalty to Hagen of any Volker figure we have examined thus far: "Dank dir, Hagen, Dank! Der fernste Stern im Raum kann so der Sonne für den reinen, klaren Strahl nicht danken und der nächste nicht mit solchem Stolz sich ihr ergeben fühlen wie in diesem Augenblick dir ich, Volker von Alzey!" (p. 72). Dietrich represents the last witness for the prosecution, for he, a Christian, sympathizes with Krimhilde, but Hagen refutes his arguments and the Burgundians, especially Volker, stand by him.

Act IV is devoted to the night watch. Werbel and Schwemmel approach, offering among other things, to procure feminine companionship for the two heroes. After the two have been driven away, Volker plays and sings: "Komme, süßer Schlaf, / Wie du zu Worms am Rheine kamst" (p. 92), invoking the gentle spirits, that they may bring the faithful heart home once more. Krimhilde enters and demands the hoard once more. During this final confrontation, Volker cuts down two Huns who have pressed in too close to the Burgundians, while Hagen mocks Krimhilde and the Huns. The act ends with a repetition of Volker's song.

Except for the innovation of having Volker and Rüdiger slay each other, Act V need not detain us. We have seen in Bergmann's drama the first attempt at a literary justification of Hagen, with the concurrent elevation of the Volker figure through his combat with Rüdiger. Krimhilde becomes the "valandinne," with all of her negative characteristics fully developed in order to exonerate the hero. Hagen's resemblance to Bismarck is plain: he sacrifices everything in order to work for the good of the fatherland. His use of the phrase "blood and iron" confirms this, if there were any doubt. Volker questions, at first, the wisdom of Hagen's actions, but, being convinced of their rightness, makes his glowing affirmation of loyalty.



Meinrad Sadil's Rüdeger<sup>252</sup> takes place in the time of the "Völkerwanderung." Rüdeger is the governor of Noricum with Attila as his neighbor, not his lord, as Attila has left Noricum to Rome out of respect for Rüdeger. Volker carries a fiddle (p. 171), Giselher alludes to his music (p. 172), and Kriemhilde greets him as "Der fedle Spielmann" (p. 183), while Hagen calls his sword a fiddle-bow (p. 190). After the battle in the great hall, Rüdeger reports that Volker is accompanying Hagen as the latter sings a satirical song (p. 193). The Burgundian minstrel's principal role, however, is that of a faithful companion to Hagen. As the heroes enter the great hall, to be welcomed by Attila and Kriemhilde, Volker points out the solid construction and admires the building from a tactical defensive standpoint (pp. 182-83). At the banquet, Volker sits between Hagen and Rüdeger and warns his friend when he overhears Attila giving Kriemhilde a free hand in planning her revenge (p. 187). Finally, when the hostilities break out, Volker gives Kriemhilde the reason for his loyalty to Hagen: "Nach allem Rechte fiel dein Mann. Der Frevel ist die Saat, das Unheil ist die Ernte. Wer Unrecht leiden läßt, ist schlecht" (p. 190). The injustice, which Siegfried did to Brunhilde emerges as the cause of his death, and Hagen did right in killing him.

Does Volker speak for the author at this point? In Bechlaren, Gotlinde, acting out of maternal ambition, forces her unwilling daughter into an engagement with Giselher, whom she admires but does not love. Rüdeger, too, must cooperate, even though he knows of the mutual love between Swemma and Dietlinde, as Gotlinde convinces him that it is politically wise. Dietlinde's position is similar to that of Brunhilde, and since Sadil shows clearly his sympathy with the former, we can assume that Volker speaks for him in regard to Siegfried and the marriage into which he forced Brunhilde against her will by using deception.

Sadil, a Benedictine priest from Moravia, taught German

and German literature at the Schotten-Gymnasium in Vienna.<sup>253</sup> We do not, therefore, find Hagen as a Bismarck figure, nor do we find a great deal of sympathy for the Burgundians. Rüdiger regrets having carried Attila's proposal of marriage to Kriemhilde, and Attila regrets having sent him (201). Volker, in view of the importance given to Swemmu, whose song in its variations provides the leitmotif of the drama, is a minor character: yet by even partially exonerating Hagen, he is consistent with the tendency of this era, which, in the dramas, does not see Siegfried as the ideal hero, as he had appeared in earlier works.

In Siegfried, however, Josef Bächtiger<sup>254</sup> returns his hero to the role of "die strahlendste Heldengestalt des deutschen Epos" (preface). The drama opens with Mime forging Siegfried's sword, a perfect sword for a hero "ohne Fehle und schuldlos" (p. 5), when Volker, a wandering minstrel, enters. He has been lost in the wood since morning, and rejoices to find the smithy, whose sounds he praises as "das schönste Lied, / Das ich als Spielmann je gehört." Volker comes from Niederland and is heading for "Burgund, / Zu König Gunther. / Es soll ein trübes Sinnen ihn bedrücken, / Ich muß ihm singen, daß er heiter wird." He tells of the Burgundian court, of Kriemhild, and of Hagen, "Ein finsterner Mann," whom no hero can subdue in battle. This arouses Siegfried's interest, and Volker explains that whoever would be stronger than Hagen must possess the "Nebelhelm des Nibelungenhorts," of which Siegfried has never heard. Volker must relate the tale of the hoard and the dragon, which can only be conquered by one who has never learned fear. He offers to show Siegfried the way to the dragon and to Gunther's court, whereupon Mime reveals that Siegfried is a king's son, and encourages him "Nun ziehe in die Welt, / Jung Siegfried, / Und mache sie dir eigen!" Volker offers to lead him to the princes, to attest to his noble birth, and never to desert him.

Siegfried answers: "Sei Bruder mir, nicht Diener!" and the two friends set off for Worms (pp. 10-17). There Volker swears by Wodan that Siegfried is the son of King Siegmund of Niederland, whom Hunding had slain, and then he relates how Siegfried killed the dragon, bathed in its blood, and took the hoard of the Nibelungen (pp. 23-26). Hagen is not glad to see Siegfried in Worms and challenges him to a contest of strength during which Volker relates Siegfried's exploits to an astonished Rumolt while the two observe the contest, rejoicing at Siegfried's victory.

In Act III, Volker sings the "Siegfried-Lied," a paean to Siegfried's strength, bravery, generosity, and service to Gunther (p. 38). When Volker begs Hagen for a decent grave in which to bury his friend, Hagen answers: "Das schaufle du! / Du brachtest ihn hieher." Hagen mocks Volker, saying that the dead do not rise again, but Volker insists that the dead do rise, in the persons of their avengers. The act ends with the faithful minstrel's oath to seek vengeance "Selbst droben vor Valhallas Toren" and his vision of the end of the ungrateful Burgundians: "Dann bricht das Unheil über dir zusammen, / Und Siegfried triumphiert, der tote Held!" (pp. 56-57).

This vengeance is the visitation of Etzel's fury upon Burgundy, instigated by Volker and Mime. Volker has sung of the Nibelungen hoard to Etzel and his wife, arousing their greed. When Hagen refuses to reveal the location of the hoard to Etzel, they fight and Hagen receives a mortal wound. Only then does he tell Etzel that the hoard is at the bottom of the Rhine, whereupon Etzel orders that all of Burgundy be destroyed. Volker rejoices: "Für diese Tat will ich im Lied dich preisen: / Jung-Siegfried ist gerächt!" (p. 73).

Bächtiger states in the preface: "Mein Drama will zeigen, daß schon damals Undank der Welt Lohn war, und daß der schlechten Tat Gewissensbisse und die verdiente Strafe folgen." Volker is loyal to Siegfried, the embodiment of virtue, who

inspires jealousy in the basehearted Hagen. Bächtiger has made Siegfried's murder completely despicable by removing Kriemhild and Brunhild, and thus eliminating any suggestion of guilt on Siegfried's part. By making Volker Siegfried's countryman, he has separated him from the Burgundians, enabling him to admire Siegfried and carry out his revenge without appearing unpatriotic.

The action in Paul Ernst's Chriemhild<sup>255</sup> takes place in the courtyard in front of Etzel's palace, over a period of twenty-four hours. Hagen is the hero and his loyalty forms the basis for the tragedy. Volker is "Hagens Freund, von dem es heißt, / Er führt den Fiedelbogen wie das Schwert, / Und führt das Schwert so, wie es Hagen führt!" (pp. 138-39). His first speech is a nineteen-line description of the night, as it falls over Etzel's castle, and over the threatened Burgundians. Sleep gives relief to their weary limbs and liberates their spirits: some ascend into the heights, whence they awaken refreshed with the reflection of heaven in their faces, while others, earthbound, hover over house and home, and awaken, bathed in sweat, with a cry of terror from their anxious sleep. When the Burgundians retire, Volker and Hagen stand watch. Volker's song (for which Ernst had a baritone in mind)<sup>256</sup> continues the theme of his speech: "Schlummert, müde Geister; schlaft, Gedanken, / Seelen, fliegt, wie eure Wahl euch trieb" (p. 143), so that the speech and the song form a unity, in which Volker analyzes the dichotomy of higher and lower beings, (the theme of Ernst's Nibelungen drama)<sup>257</sup> and of their eventual union as God resolves this dualism. For heavenly and earthly beings are a dream, which God creates for himself, like a child at the seashore, dipping water with a seashell from the heavenly to the earthly sea, a pool dug with his childlike hands (pp. 141-44). The Burgundians, caught between time and eternity, struggle with their earthly wills, their earthly faith, until God, uniting

all through his divine love, will take them to himself.

Volker's song ends Act I. In Act II it begins to appear that Chriemhild might relent, for she encourages Giselher and Gudrun (Rüdiger's daughter) to become engaged. Volker has a vision of a long line of descendants: "Kinder wachsen / Im Haus. Gebaut vor langen Jahren hat's / Als kräft'ger Mann der Ahn," down through the ages the line will flourish, with the portraits of the ancestors looking at the new life in their halls. Yet his friend Hagen contradicts: "Du siehst die Welt mit freundlich klarem Auge," for Hagen has to see the deeds he was forced to do: "den höchsten Mann, / Der mir vertraute wie ein Kind, . . . muß ich von hinten morden" (pp. 147-48), and Chriemhild will never forget what she has suffered on account of it.

In Act III, after Chriemhild has ordered the great hall set on fire, Volker speaks for the last time: surrounded by his foes, with no rescue in sight, good sense can only plan how to drag as many as possible with him to the underworld. Chriemhild counters that the German only understands force and power; here, in another land, she has learned to seek justice, so that guests (Siegfried) and innocent children (Ortlieb) are inviolable even to the wildest (Hagen). Volker's response is oracular: the white of the sunbeam is one, yet composed of all seven colors. Believe in white. "Wird das Weiß, / Und es ist nicht. Menschen aber sind." Volker is imperfect, and will remain what he is, not pretend to be something which he is not, even though he yearns for the coming perfection of mankind (p. 160).

Taken together, Volker's speeches and songs constitute a commentary on the tragedy: the dichotomy in man as a heavenly/earthly being, in which the one or the other may predominate; the optimism of the second act; the defiance in heroic affirmation of self in the third. Ernst knew his Hebbel,<sup>258</sup> and studied the Nibelungen tradition thoroughly before he wrote his dramas. Volker's vision of the hoard and its curse un-

doubtedly inspired Ernst in his creation of the Volker figure, in his affirmation of the unalterability of creation.

Herein lies his commitment to Hagen, for Hagen too, must be what he is, the loyal servant of an unworthy King, whose loyalty is his downfall. In an afterword to Chriemhild, Ernst wrote: "Wir hatten einen Narren als Kaiser. Die Männer, die für das Volk verantwortlich waren, hielten diesem Kaiser in subalternen Weise die Treue, statt ihn unschädlich zu machen."<sup>259</sup> The fault of the Germans, their tragic flaw, is that, like Hagen they misplace their loyalty, and like Volker in the second act of Chriemhild, see things as they would like them to be, not as they are. Volker's oracular pronouncements, seen in this light, emerge as an example of the German tendency to see the world in terms of universal abstractions. Volker constantly speaks in universal terms, and it is only with some effort that one is able to see their relevance to the situation at hand; conversely, however, one can apply his statements to any conceivable situation, just as Nietzsche could be treated as a prophet of German nationalism. To be sure, Ernst described Chriemhild as being "lyrisch gebaut;" his characters, particularly in the Chriemhild, are "Lebensenergien, die rhythmisch und melodisch dargestellt sind u. durch den Zwang der Handlung ihre dramatische Wirkung erzielen."<sup>260</sup> Volker, too, attains his dramatic effect through the action and his relation to it: his philosophizing while the world is collapsing around him in Act III, his vision of Giselher as founder of a mighty dynasty in Act II, and his metaphysical reflections in Act I, underline the gap between the speculative thinker and the world of objective reality. If Hagen is an indictment of the German "Untertan," then his friend Volker is also an accusation of the philosophers who helped produce him and rationalize his behavior.

## 2. The ballad

### Miegel

Written in November 1903, during her stay in England,<sup>261</sup> Agnes Miegel's "Die Nibelungen"<sup>262</sup> shows Hagen Tronje and the Kings sitting together in the darkening hall of Gunther's castle. Siegfried has not yet appeared in Worms, the action of the NI has not begun, as Gunther calls for a song from Volker; Kriemhild is kneeling before the fire, her delicate hands making the flames flicker "wie Gold und Blut" against the castle walls. Volker begins twice: first jubilantly with "'Einst zähmte ich / Einen edelen Falken . . .'" and then pensively, "'Im Odenwald / Da fließt ein kühler Bronnen . . .'" but each time Kriemhild stops him, with tears in her eyes and her heart trembling. Then Volker sings the song for which he seems to know that she has been waiting. He sings it against his will, his fiddle cries out in protest against the song, while his voice is that of a bird on a midnight heath. He sings of the hoard and of the dwarfs who guard it, of the greed it inspires, and of the bloodshed it causes. Envy, murder, deception, and all-destroying revenge follow it, until at last the blood it has shed engulfs creation in its purple tide. The song is set in five-line stanzas, the first four lines of each rhyming on the quatrain pattern; the fifth lines do not rhyme to their stanzas, but among themselves on an a b a b pattern, so that they can comment on the stanzas while uniting the song within the context of the ballad. The fifth line of the fifth stanza "'Weh über mich, weh über euch!'" a nonrhyming last line, sums up these lamenting fifth lines, which foretell the suffering of Siegfried, Kriemhild, and the Nibelungen in the vivid imagery of conception, birth, suckling, and young love.

At the last stroke of the bow, the strings shriek and burst, Hagen hefts the sword in his lap ever so slightly,

but Kriemhild laughs, and pokes at the fire till its flames rise once again, shedding their blood-gold glow onto the walls. The minstrel has played the song which made Kriemhild happier than she had ever been before, but Volker stands outside of his own vision of the approaching doom. In his song the hoard is both thing and symbol;<sup>263</sup> thing in that it is an object of human greed, producing ever more crime and misery for those who have it and for those who desire it; symbol, too, of the evils that plague humanity, and of violent death, the end of it all. Volker seems attracted and repelled by his vision: attracted by its awful majesty while being repelled by the evil which it foresees. He sees Siegfried's murder and Kriemhild's revenge as being inspired by lust for gold, which destroyed the love Siegfried had brought to her: "O weh der Lieb, die lieb mir war!"

Volker foretells the entire story of the Burgundians' fall, taking his cues from Kriemhild. The songs which foreshadow her love of Siegfried and his murder in the Odenwald sadden her so, that she asks Volker not to sing them, but the vision of the final catastrophe raises her spirits to the point of exaltation. Volker does Kriemhild's bidding, and in his song we see, even in his laments, an acceptance of the coming tragedy, for there is no hint that it might be averted, and no indication that Volker would have it otherwise, for with his "Weh über mich" he clearly includes himself in the coming events. The strings on his fiddle burst, but we know, as do Volker, Hagen, and Kriemhild, that the minstrel will sing again, in Bechlaren and, at last at the night watch, in the face of the doom which he here accepts. Miegel sees Kriemhild as the motive force in the Burgundian tragedy and Volker, the loyal minstrel, as obedient to her commands even though he knows the end.



3. The novel

Jansen

Werner Jansen's "Buch Treue"<sup>264</sup> shows a Volker in the prime of life, handsome, brown-bearded (p. 63), and with an eye for feminine charms (pp. 13, 40). We first meet him when the Burgundians, having been challenged by Sigfrid to defend their kingdom in combat with him, are holding a council of war. The arrogant Gunther is in favor of the combat, as are all of the Burgundians except Hagen, the "Kanzler," while Volker remains uncommitted but looks questioningly at Hagen. Hagen continues the debate, and the force of his arguments brings everyone but Gunther over to his side. Volker, however, knows that before dawn Gunther will come to Hagen begging pardon (pp. 18-24).

When Sigfrid comes to Worms as a friend, Volker sings him a song of welcome and, with Hagen's approval, calls Chriemhild's beauty to his attention. Then the women withdraw and the men devote themselves to drinking. Finally, Sigfrid leads the wavering Gunther to the door. Volker notices how like the two are in build and facial appearance, and asks Hagen in a whisper, which of them is the King. Hagen "zischt durch die Zähne: 'Das ist der, den man führen muß! Das ist unser König!'" Gunther cannot hold his wine, which disgusts Hagen, who orders his horse and departs for Tronje (pp. 31-38).

Volker accompanies him, and on the way the minstrel has an opportunity to reflect on Hagen and their friendship. As often as he has tried to penetrate into the soul of this remarkable man, even he, who can read a man's character like an open book, has constantly come upon obstacles which defy force as well as love. Every so often, however, Volker gains an insight. As they approach the ferry, which will take them across the Rhine to Tronje, he sees Hagen,

flanked by two of his men, and thinks, a people composed of Hagens would be eternally invincible; yet, on reflection, not eternally, "Es würde an sich selbst zugrunde gehen, denn ihm bliebe nichts zu tun übrig. Hagen lebt von der Tat!" Hagen ferries them across the Rhine. As they approach the eastern side, Volker hears a bird singing, and remarks to Hagen that there is no love like that expressed in a bird's song, to which Hagen answers, that even greater is the human affection which they had observed earlier in the banquet hall. Volker scarcely dares to ask his opinion of Sigfrid, but Hagen, reading his thoughts, observes that Sigfrid looks like a younger Volker, wonderfully transfigured, but of the same substance. Volker who had also recognized in Sigfrid everything he had ever dreamed of and striven for, is dumfounded by Hagen's penetrating intuition. Volker has traveled much, loved many women, and the reader gets the impression that Sigfrid, whose parentage is never mentioned, might be Volker's son. In the castle, Hagen gives his friend his own bearskin to sleep on, but when Volker begins to toss in his sleep, Hagen fetches a softer skin from the closet. The minstrel is sleeping peacefully as the chancellor sets out with his dogs to hunt (pp. 38-41).

All is peaceful at Worms until Gunther learns of Brunhild and her fabulous beauty. For two years, Hagen and Volker have known of her, but have guarded the secret from their King, lest in his arrogance he should desire to woo her. Sigfrid, too, knows Brunhild, and the dangers attendant upon wooing her. The unhappy knight Rinald, of whom Volker has sung, was one of her suitors, and Volker himself has seen her on one of his minstrel's journeys. "Volker, mein Freund, nun geht deine Treue einen harten Gang!" says Hagen to himself after the trip to Thule has been decided on. Chriemhild, too, is alarmed at the undertaking, but, as Ute tells her, even "der getreue Volker" could not prevent the journey (pp. 47-57).

They will travel north in the spring, when the ice is gone. Now it is winter, and with the first snowfall, Volker sets out for his home in Alzey. Jansen places Alzey, "ein ödes Felsenest" in the Vosges, thus including Alsace-Lorraine in Gunther's territory. In Alzey his two sons are waiting for him, together with his wife Berga, whom his horse Sleipa had found one winter morning lying unconscious in the snow, with a dead baby in her arms. Volker recognized her innate nobility, and when they stopped at an inn on the way, put her to bed before she regained consciousness and laid a sword between them as they slept. In Alzey he asked for her hand, and she has been his faithful wife for eight years. Now, when he rides to Alzey, as he does each winter, for he uses the winter to collect his thoughts and has never spent it at a prince's castle, his estate is a real home and not merely good enough, "den Winter zu verschlafen." That night, however, his sleep is disturbed by a bloody vision and he cries out, waking the house: "'Sigfrid!--Sigfrid!--Sie verderben dich!'" (pp. 63-66).

After the Senna, Volker realizes, without being told, that Sigfrid must die. Hagen's motive is "Treue" to Gunther as King, to which Volker protests: "'Ich weiß es, . . . Und ich glaube an dich . . . aber ich kann dir nicht folgen . . . Du wächst uns aus den Augen, Bruder, niemand wird dich be-greifen'" (p. 144). In Hagen's view, there is nothing higher than loyalty to the King, and finally Volker, too, realizes that Sigfrid must die because of the wrongs in which they all share, "'weil wir Böses taten!'" (p. 146). Later, when the others begin to accuse Hagen, Volker defends him thus: "'Daß der recht geht, der einen kleinen Gang wagt, ist geringer Ruhm. Niemand aber soll den schelten, der, weiten Zieles, einmal vom Wege irrt!'" (p. 180). Volker thus admits that Sigfrid's murder was wrong, but the fact that Hagen committed it with a long-term goal in mind seems to justify it. At least no one ought to criticize Hagen for this one.

mistake, because he has such great plans for the future of Burgundy.

After this scene, Volker retires to Alzey, and only when the Burgundians are preparing to set out for Etzel's court in Vienna, does he re-enter the action. Hagen rides personally to Alzey, where he finds Volker, with his armor polished, ready for the journey; his two sons had left in the morning for Worms. Volker is grateful for Hagen's call: "'Du hast Großes um Burgund getan! . . . und du bekehrst mich zu dir. . . . Denn laß dir sagen, Kanzler von Burgund, . . . ich und mein Weib haben Burgund in unsrer Stille fast vergessen, und es gehörte dein starker Heerruf und der unverwirrte Drang unsrer Kinder dazu, uns zu unserm Volk zurückzufinden. Jetzt hast du uns wieder, Hagen!'" to which Berga adds: "'Fahret ohne Sorge und traut auf eure Frauen!'" (pp. 272-76).

The rest of Volker's action follows the N1; after the scene with the mermaids, Volker states his loyalty to Hagen once more: "'Hagen, ich bin dir nicht immer gefolgt, du wandeltest in übergroßen Maßen. Aber duldest du, Einsamer, auf diesem letzten Wege einen neben dir, der unentwegten Glauben in dich setzt, so nimm mich hin!'" (p. 284). Volker's loyalty to Hagen is based on his awe of Hagen's power, and on his faith that whatever Hagen does must be right, as he has made Burgundy so powerful. The "Treue," which is the subject of Jansen's novel, is that of Hagen to the Reich, no matter how unworthy its King may be, and that of Volker, the hero-minstrel, to Hagen, because even though he does not always agree with him or understand him, he believes that Hagen has the best interests of the Reich in mind; where understanding fails, faith takes over. Jansen and Ernst have two opposing views of "Treue," but each sees Volker in the same relationship to Hagen: he supports him, and interprets his actions to the public.

4. The verse adaptation

Legerlotz

Gustav Legerlotz tells the N1 in 1,082 four-line stanzas, in which the original is greatly condensed.<sup>265</sup> Volker is described as ". . . neben Hagen der kühnste, ein Held ganz auserwählt / War Volker von Alzeie, ein Meister der Fiedelkunst, / Und höher als sein Bogen stand seine Klinge noch in Gunst" (p. 2). Volker's role is directly translated from the N1, except that his killing the Hun who tries to slip out with Etzel, his killing the margrave as he helps his wounded relative, and his killing Siegestab are omitted.

5. The retellings in prose

Mobius  
Keim

Treumund  
Herzog

Nover  
~~Bumüller~~

Hermine Mobius<sup>266</sup> introduces Volker as the "streitbare Spielmann" (p. 22), but he takes no part in the action until the Nibelungen arrive in Bechlaren, where he praises Rüdiger and his daughter "in hochtönendem Gesange" (p. 122). Although Mobius wanted to make N1 II as short as possible, particularly the "Blutbad am Schlusse" (p. 6), she managed to include all of Volker's action except his killing the Hun who tries to slip out with Etzel, and the margrave who tries to help his wounded relative. His loyalty to Hagen is indicated when the two do not rise before Kriemhild, and again when Hagen tries to avenge his loyal "Schwertgenoß" (p. 153).

As the Burgundians are setting out for Hunnenland, Franz Keim<sup>267</sup> introduces "Volker von Alzei, ein Sänger und Spielmann, der mit gleicher Kühnheit das Schwert und den

Fiedelbogen führt" (p. 50). When they leave Bechlaren, "Besonders der Spielmann wird viel belobt und reich beschenkt" (p. 52), and in Hunnenland he is described as "der stärkste und der sonnigste aller Burgunden" (p. 57). This portrait of the amiable minstrel continues into the night watch, where "Lieblich erklingt Volkers Geige, um die Reisemüden in Schlaf zu singen (p. 58), while his mockery of the Huns is omitted, as was his protestation of loyalty to Hagen when the two refused to rise before Kriemhild. Volker joins Dankwart in guarding the door to the great hall (p. 59); later he refuses to fight Rüdiger (p. 65), and when Hildebrand kills him (p. 65), the reader almost wonders why. Keim has emphasized Volker's music and his likeable qualities at the complete expense of his fighting spirit, giving us a minstrel figure consistent with his bourgeois, sentimental treatment of the Nl. The striking "Jugendstil" illustrations by Carl Otto Czeschka complement Keim's retelling and emphasize the importance of the Nl among the educated middle class at the turn of the century.

In 1912, Karl Treumund<sup>268</sup> described Volker as "der Liebling aller, der waffenstarke Volker von Alzey, der das Schwert nicht minder geschickt führte als den Fiedelbogen und dessen herrliches Spiel alle, die ihn hörten, in Leid und Freude tröstete und erhob" (p. 22). His valor is underlined by Siegfried's "besonderen Wunsch" that he bear the standard in the Saxon war, and in the night watch scene, his music soothes his weary comrades. Yet Treumund, unlike Keim, includes all of Volker's actions from the Nl, even his killing the Hun who tries to help his wounded relative, and emphasizes his loyalty to Hagen. The minstrel is once again the warrior and comrade-in-arms.

Rudolf Herzog<sup>269</sup> expands considerably on Volker's heroism, his music, and his friendship with Hagen. He in-

troduces Volker as "Herr Volker von Alzey, der die Fiedel so heiß und lieblich erklingen lassen konnte, wie er lustig und nimmermüd den Degen pfeifen ließ" (p. 35). As the Kings are sitting together in the great hall, Volker's songs of "Ritterliebe und Heldentum" inspire Siegfried to broach to Gunther the subject of his sister Kriemhild (p. 40). In the Saxon war, Volker whistles love songs, while carrying the standard in one hand and killing Saxons with the other (p. 44), and it is Volker's songs of Brunhild's beauty which arouse Gunther's desire to woo her (p. 69).

When Etzel's minstrels arrive in Worms, they find Gunther together with his men, among them "der Herr von Alzey, Volker, der ritterliche Spielmann, der das Fürchten nicht kannte, und der stärkste Degen der Nibelungen hieß seit Siegfrieds Tode" (p. 110). The noble minstrel has nothing but scorn for the Huns, whose voices sound like squeaking mice (p. 111) and whose mincing gait and effeminate voices he imitates to the delight of the Burgundians (p. 113). Hagen is pleased that Volker can make light of the danger into which they are riding, and even more so at the thousand knights who follow Volker on the journey (p. 114).

Volker rides at the head of the troop, "Und weil Volker seinen Körper gestählt und dabei der hohen Kunst gepflogen hatte, so sah er lauter Fröhliches, wo die andern Menschen Stürme sahen, und jeder Kampf ward ihm zum Fest" (p. 118). Volker's songs distract the men from their thoughts of death, for he sings of life, which is short for the fearful but eternal for the brave, and of death, which tastes sweeter than a maiden's kiss, when one's sword is steaming with the enemy's blood. Even the squires ride faster, and their eyes shine brighter at Volker's martial lays.

After the rest in Bechlaren, Volker rides once again at the head of the company as it approaches Vienna. Geiselher joins him, and soon Volker's battle songs give way to Geiselher's "Minnelieder" (p. 124). With love songs on their

lips, the Burgundians ride into Kriemhild's silent land. Hagen does not like their reception and fears "'auf dieser Kirmes wird mehr geweint als gejubelt werden'" but Dankwart laughs: "'Ohne Sorge! Der Volker führt den Fiedelbogen!'" (p. 124).

In Etzel's castle, after Kriemhild has demanded the hoard, Volker, without being asked, assures Hagen he is his "Kamerad." Hagen thanks him for his loyalty, to which Volker replies that he learned the meaning of loyalty from Hagen, for no knight ever served his lord more loyally than Hagen has served his King (p. 127). Herzog's Volker values "Treue" above all other qualities: he is loyal to Hagen because Hagen is a model of loyalty and because he has taught, by his example, the meaning of genuine loyalty to Volker. Even when it comes to a discussion between them on the issue of Siegfried's murder, or of Hagen's taking the hoard from Kriemhild, the only thing that matters to Volker is Hagen's loyalty (p. 132) and it is on this basis that he declares himself to be Hagen's comrade.

During the night watch, Volker plays and sings of home, of the Rhine, and of heroic death in battle. After the battle in the great hall, during which Herzog makes liberal use of the sword-fiddle-bow motif, Volker and Hagen have an opportunity to mock the Huns and Etzel. Volker asks if the smell of his subjects' blood had made Etzel ill, and if so, he knows an excellent cure. When this fails to arouse Etzel's wrath, Volker shouts that they must have lost their way, for instead of arriving in Hunnenland, they have wandered into "Altweiberland."

Volker must also appear as the jolly minstrel; he mocks Iring, comparing his slender physique to a fiddle, on which he will play his tunes, and lures Etzel's men into the hall after the fight with Iring, like mice into the mousetrap (p. 146). He trades jibes with Siegstab before killing him, then, as he falls under Hildebrand's sword shouting "'Lebt



wohl, ihr Herren vom Rhein!" (p. 160), Hagen sheds the first tear of his life.

Jacob Nover's Siegfried<sup>270</sup> gives all of the available material in the Germanic traditions relating to Siegfried's exploits, in order to present a complete picture of him "Seitdem Siegfried, unser ältester Nationalheld, besonders in neuerer Zeit zu einer Lieblingsfigur in Kunst und Literatur geworden ist" (preface). Volker is not present in Nover's account of N1 I so as not to detract from the glorification of Siegfried by having another positive character present.

We first see him, "der lustige Spielmann Volker von Alzey, der die Fiedel so meisterhaft zu handhaben verstand wie das Schwert, und mit dem nachmals Hagen von Tronei innige Freundschaft schloß" (p. 66), on the way to Etzel's court, where he swears to stand by Hagen "auf Leben und Tod" (p. 70). Volker rises "ehrerbietig vor der Königin," and does not kill the helping margrave, or the Hun who tries to slip out with Etzel. Nover also omits, in his brief recapitulation of Kriemhild's revenge, most of Volker's mockery: before and during the night watch, where he plays "wehmütig . . . wie ein Abschied vom Leben, dann wieder trotzig und kampflustig," and after the battle in the great hall, where Nover merely explains that Volker accused the Huns of "Feigheit." Volker's defense of Rüdiger to Kriemhild and his battle of words with Wolfhart are completely omitted, as if these scenes were inappropriate to his "süße Sängermund" (pp. 71-75).

Nover mentions Volker's loyalty to Hagen twice, and his death so enrages his friend that Hildebrand is forced to flee from his wrath. Clearly, the Volker-Hagen relationship of mutual friendship and admiration was important to the author. Equally important, however, is his respect to the other persons of rank in the action, since Volker does rise before Kriemhild, for the first time since Wilbrandt's drama, and he does not insult Etzel nor reproach Kriemhild.

Johannes Bumüller<sup>271</sup> describes Volker as "der wackere Spielmann und tapfere Held" (p. 10), who carried the standard in the Saxon war. He and his men join the march to Etzel's court, along with Dankwart, Hagen, and others (p. 35). As they leave Bechlaren (p. 37), Volker plays "eine süße Weise" and sings "ein Lied." To Dietrich's warning, he replies that come what may, since nothing can be changed, they will travel "unerschrockenen Mutes" (p. 37) and discover what awaits them in Hunnenland. Hagen must restrain him from rising before Kriemhild; later the two friends stand guard and Volker's music lulls the Burgundians to sleep (pp. 39-40). ✓

The rest of Volker's role closely follows the N1. Bumüller makes no additions, but does delete most of Volker's violence and mockery, retaining only the statement that he "höhnte . . . den vorschnellen Wolfhart" (p. 54), and that it was the "Großsprecherei Volkers" which caused the battle with the Amelungs. In sum, we can say that Bumüller emphasized Volker's fearlessness and his friendship to Hagen, while, like Nover, giving him the courteous manners which would make him a suitable model to his young readers.

## 6. Summary

The works of this period divide into two groups, those written before 1908, and those written between 1912 and 1918. In the first group, the friendship between Volker and Hagen is less intimate and is given less emphasis than is the case with the second group. In Hauptmann's fragment, Hagen does not appear nor is he mentioned, while Oliven's operetta has no ideological cast to it. Strobl's pageant play shows Hagen hoping for Volker's friendship, which Volker is honored and pleased to grant, yet this friendship is not so clearly defined and delineated as it had been a few years earlier in Prott, Schröter, or Wägner. The retellings of Legerlotz, Mobius, and Keim continue the tendency started by Bacmeister

to leave out offensive or extraneous material, thus making it appropriate for children, as in the case of Mobius, or to the sentimentality of the middle class (Keim and Oliven). Through these authors, Volker has become an exemplary Victorian hero, even, in Strobl, a sort of Sunday schoolteacher.

This treatment of the Volker figure, which began in the dramas of Veihel-Müller (1881) and Siegert (1887), where Volker had no relationship to Hagen, can be attributed to two causes: as a glance at the "fever chart" shows, the general production of Nibelungen works dropped off sharply during this period; the national enthusiasm generated by the "Nibelungen experiences" of 1866 and 1870-1871 had died down, and those men whose patriotism had inspired them to literary adaptations of the NI had already done so. This made itself felt especially in the figure of Volker, which contained the authors' personal identification with the NI as an expression of the national ideology. The second, and perhaps more direct cause of Volker's decline, was the dismissal of Bismarck. The founder of the Reich, as personified in the figure of Hagen, had been the object of the poets' patriotism. When this object was removed, and Wilhelm II tried to assume Bismarck's role in German political life, the results for Volker were disastrous, for without Hagen he could have no existence. From her vantage point in England, Miegel registered this development in her ballad, where Hagen has been replaced by Kriemhild as the center of authority for Volker. This is not solely due to the fact that the work was written by a woman; Kriemhild has filled the gap left by Hagen's departure, a gap which could not be filled by the King, who sits dumbly by in pained confusion, having been able to request a song for his entertainment, but not to comprehend the result of his request.

This situation culminated in the Volkmar of Lublinski's drama: when there is no Hagen, Volkmar goes over to Attila. It would be folly to assert that Lublinski wrote his drama

as a direct reaction to the "Daily Telegraph Affair," which so aroused the German public,<sup>272</sup> yet it can hardly be coincidental that both belong to the same year, when it had become apparent that Wilhelm II was a dilettante and a fraud<sup>273</sup> who was even endangering the future of the German monarchy. Miegel and Lublinski both present a Volker without relationship to Hagen, and both of these Volker figures foretell the doom of Burgundy. They are our only pessimistic Volker figures; Miegel's Volker accepts his fate, while Volkmar draws the appropriate conclusions and changes sides.

Between 1908 and 1912, Volker disappears from the scene. During these years, however, something took place, which gave rise to a new treatment of the Burgundian minstrel. Whether it was the second Morocco crisis,<sup>274</sup> which frustrated the nationalists by netting insignificant colonial gains after having raised hopes for a German West Morocco, or whether it was the propaganda of the Pan-German League, which wanted to see the world become a Greater Germany and believed the Kaiser when he told them that they were to help him bring this about,<sup>275</sup> or General Friedrich von Bernhardi's pamphlet Germany and the Next War, which went through six editions in the years 1912-1913, and saw Germany's historic goal as the domination of Europe,<sup>276</sup> or a combination of all of these factors, the years after 1912 saw a resurgence of interest in the Nibelungen, and the emergence of a Volker figure with a new dimension to his loyalty to Hagen.

"'Kein Ritter auf der Männererde war seinem Herrn je treuer als Ihr'" (p. 127), says Herzog's Volker to Hagen. Therefore, he was right in killing Siegfried, because he committed the act out of loyalty to the King. This Volker, whom Mobius had merely called the "streitbare Spielmann" without elaborating on his aggressiveness, has become the Volker, whose loyalty laughs at death and the devil (p. 127), and who has learned this loyalty, from Hagen. In the same year, Treumund published his retelling, which included once again

all of Volker's actions from the N1, emphasizing his "Treue." Bergmann's minstrel follows the same line: Hagen has been loyal to Burgundy, and Volker, inspired by his example, follows him into death. In these works, especially in Herzog's seminovel and Bergmann's drama, the emphasis of Volker's loyalty has shifted. During the actual "Bismarck era," Volker was loyal to Burgundy, and on account of this allegiance and of the necessity of all Burgundians' standing together, Volker stood by Hagen. Now, however, the situation is reversed: Hagen has always been a devoted servant to Burgundy, and therefore Volker is loyal to Hagen; his allegiance to Hagen, not to Burgundy, is his primary consideration.

According to Sadil, the basis for this loyalty is the fact that Siegfried's murder was justifiable. Volker does not elaborate on the reasons why it was right to kill him, but his attitude suggests that he agrees with Hagen when the latter points out to Kriemhilde that it was she who first insulted the Queen of Burgundy (p. 190). Sadil seems to have assumed that his audience would trace this insult to Siegfried's revelation to Kriemhilde of his part in the wooing of Brunhilde, for otherwise it would not seem right to punish Siegfried for his wife's fault. In any case, Sadil's Volker has allied himself with Hagen because, as he tells Kriemhilde, it was right to kill Siegfried.

In Jansen's novel, Volker takes the opposite stand: he asks Hagen: "'Wo ist der Elende, der seine Hand an diesen Guten legen kann?'" (p. 146). Not Sigfrid, but the Burgundians are at fault, and especially Hagen, who did not deter Gunther from the fateful journey to Isenland. Of course, once Gunther decided to woo Brunhild, any attempt at dissuading him would have appeared dictated by motives of safety or prudence, which could border on cowardice. It is, therefore, Gunther's arrogant bravado which has caused the tragic developments leading to his own and Brunhild's humiliation. In this context Volker asks Hagen, how much

loyalty one owes to such a man, to which Hagen answers, as much as a man's heart can bestow, for there is no loyalty greater than the loyalty to the King, no matter how unworthy he may be. Later, when the Burgundians wish to reproach Hagen for killing Sigfrid, it is Volker who defends him, not because he understands Hagen, but because he has faith in him.

The Volker figure is no longer adrift, for Hagen has returned to the action. He no longer needs to go over to Attila, there is a source and center of power in Burgundy once again. Sadil and Herzog see Volker's actions as motivated by his loyalty to Hagen, Bergmann and Jansen see him as being loyal to Hagen even though the King is unworthy and Hagen is loyal to this unworthy King. Jansen even goes to the extent of suggesting a blood relationship between Sigfrid and Volker, who therefore opposes the murder more vehemently than any Volker figure other than Bächtiger's, and yet Volker expresses his loyalty to Hagen in equally passionate prose, attributing, by implication, his initial opposition to Hagen to the fact that he does not possess his depth of intellect and therefore cannot grasp his long-range plans.

The unworthy Gunther of Bergmann and Jansen bears many of the characteristics of Wilhelm II, while Hagen, as we have noted, strongly resembles Bismarck. The "Iron Chancellor," however, disapproved of the Kaiser's policies, as Hagen does of Gunther's, but unlike Hagen, he made his opposition public in his speeches to the rifle clubs and civic deputations which made pilgrimages to Friedrichsruh. Paradoxically, he would attack the government, while praising the constitution which he had disregarded so often during his active career.<sup>277</sup> These speeches, which ended with the singing of "Deutschland über Alles" and "Die Wacht am Rhein" provided the stuff of the Bismarck legend, the view that he was the embodiment of Teutonic strength, courage, and last but by no means least, wisdom.<sup>278</sup> The generation which grew up under the Reich saw Bismarck's loyalty to the fatherland as the foundation of

Germany's greatness, and of the prosperity which they were now enjoying.<sup>279</sup> Bismarck's death in 1898 abetted the development of the legend and by 1912 his position was secure; he was the glorious past as opposed to the dreary reality of the present. He had taught his followers loyalty to the monarchy which they therefore would not oppose in principle even though the kingship might be occupied by an unworthy man. Bismarck, or the Bismarck figure in contemporary legend, could, however, do no wrong. If he seemed to err from the right path as in Jansen's novel, then one must not, according to Volker, criticize him but rather overlook this minor slip and concentrate on the great goals which he has set for the people and the state.

Bächtiger's playlet is only an apparent exception to this pattern: Hagen is the villain who has betrayed the spotless hero, Siegfried, and the punishment meted out to him and to the Burgundians is well-deserved. The Volker figure, however, remains consistent by expressing the view of the author regarding the Nibelungen tradition, in a role invented for him by Bächtiger. Siegfried represents Germany and the Kaiser, for whom things were going badly in 1917; the Burgundians and their leader Hagen who kill Siegfried out of jealousy may well stand for those elements in German political life who were later accused of having stabbed Germany in the back in order to gain power for themselves. The author has projected himself into Volker, who remains loyal to the symbol of German national greatness. Ernst's Chriemhild represents another reaction to the first defeat of Prussian arms since the battle of Jena and Auerstädt in 1806. As we have seen, Ernst saw the reason for the defeat in the personality of the Kaiser, whom he called a fool, but not in the institution of monarchy, nor in the authoritarian state; he was as scornful of the "demokratische Phrase"<sup>280</sup> as of Wilhelm II. His Volker speaks in philosophical "Phrasen" as the poet-minstrel in alliance with Hagen's misplaced loyalty.

During the era of Wilhelm II, we have observed a development in the conception of the Volker figure towards a more specialized and carefully considered relationship to Hagen. This development, which reflects the events of contemporary history even more sensitively than in the previous era, showed Volker lacking any orientation at the beginning, opposing the crumbling Burgundian power structure in the middle, and finally, as the Bismarck legend took root and the forces of national awareness began to reassert themselves, Bismarck's disciples realized the implications involved in combining loyalty to the monarchy with the person of an unworthy monarch, achieving a loyalty to Hagen alone, based on Hagen's "Treue." This emerges as loyalty for its own sake, irrespective of the worth of its object; Volker stands by Hagen because Hagen stands by the King, bad as the King may be.

Stated in terms of the relationship between the poet figure and the symbols of strength and authority, we observe an intensification of this relationship during the era under discussion. Hauptmann's Volker is the kingly minstrel, Strobl sees him as Hagen's true friend, and even Oliven has him sing along with the Burgundians. Lublinski sees Attila as the center of power replacing a crumbling Burgundy, and Volkmar is irresistibly drawn to him. When Hagen emerges as the true center of strength and authority, Volker's relation to him becomes absolute, based on admiration of his accomplishments, and on faith when even reason fails him. The retellings too follow this development: the pale Volker of Legerlotz, Mobius, and Keim becomes the true Nibelungen Volker of Treumund, with all of his bloodthirsty violence, while Nover includes all but the least admirable traits of the figure, as does Bumüller, albeit in abridged form. Herzog's Volker is the first anticipation of a coming Nibelungen experience since Vilmar's retelling in 1845 anticipated the National Revolution, while Bergmann, Sadil,



Bächtiger, and Ernst represent various reactions to World War I.

Unlike the works of previous eras, these poetic adaptations of the Nibelungen saga are virtually uninfluenced by contemporary literary styles: naturalism, symbolism, expressionism, and impressionism come and go, unnoticed by these authors. Ernst's Chriemhild shows, to be sure, signs of neoclassicism: in this context Volker may be seen as the Greek chorus underlining the futility of Hagen's "Treue," yet, the principal source of inspiration for the drama was contemporary events. The case of Hauptmann, who moved through all of the literary trends which came into fashion during his long life, is significant: he could not fit the NI into any of them.

Philological speculation probably helped to form the character of Lublinski's Volkmar, who shifts his loyalty according to the rewards he can expect,<sup>281</sup> and Jansen alludes frequently to the distinction between the noble minstrel, Volker, and the minstrels of a lower order, as found among the Huns. Strobl's Volker passes the tradition on to the Kürnberger, while Miegel and Ernst portray Volker as the visionary prophet. Strobl, Bergmann, Ernst, and of course Miegel have made Volker the vehicle for their own poetry. The emphasis in the Volker figure has, however, shifted markedly in this period from the literary-philological to the political implications of the minstrel as allied with and speaking for the power structure.

#### IV. 1919-1932

##### 1. The dramas

Jansen

Jansen

Zindler

Fritz Jansen's Siegfrieds Tod<sup>282</sup> is based on the N1 with additions from the Scandinavian tradition and from Harbou's Nibelungenbuch. In the opening scene, Gunther has Volker play once again "jene Wundermär" which is currently being sung about Brunhild. Volker responds with two stanzas, translations of N1 326 and 327, which tell of the young Queen, the contests one must enter to win her love, and the dangers involved. Thereupon Gunther decides that he will woo Brunhild in spite of the warnings from Hagen, Gernot, Volker, and Giselher, who points out that even "Held Siegfried" would hesitate to undertake such a venture (p. 7).

Giselher then requests "Die Märe von Siegfried," but not his slaying of the dragon; the young King wants the story of Siegfried's inauguration into knighthood. Volker sings twenty lines, taken from the N1 stanzas twenty-six through forty, but omitting entirely the two stanzas which allude to the religious observances, as well as the references to the minstrels' rewards. The song is interrupted twice by trumpet fanfares in the distance, which the experienced reader identifies immediately as heralding the approach of Siegfried in person (p. 8). Kriemhild rewards Volker for his song with a garment which she had embroidered herself.

Along with the rest of the Nibelungen, Volker welcomes Siegfried in Worms (p. 10); Gunther comes right to the point and tells Siegfried of his desire to woo Brunhild, at which Siegfried offers to help him by means of a ruse. Volker wonders how they will manage to keep the secret from Brunhild, a problem which Siegfried will solve with his "Tarnkappe,"

of which no one had been aware, since Volker had never mentioned it (p. 14). They decide to risk the journey to Isenstein: Volker, whom Hagen praises as a "Meister der Fiedelkunst" and "tüchtiger Kämpfer" (p. 16) is to accompany them; however, in Isenstein he takes no part in the action.

Back in Worms, the two Queens quarrel; it is Volker who is to fetch Siegfried, so that the latter may smooth things over (p. 29). This proves impossible, and, as Brunhild is inconsolable, Hagen demands that Siegfried be killed. Volker points out the difficulty involved (p. 31), since "Horn den ganzen Leib bedeckt" (p. 32), but Hagen knows where he is vulnerable. After the fatal decision has been made, Gunther begins to regret it, to which Volker adds that Gunther did in fact go too far; after all, he is still "Herr im Land" and ought to protect the life of his guest (p. 34).

Nevertheless, it is Volker who escorts the messengers with their spurious declaration of war, and who points out that with Siegfried on their side, the Saxons will fear the Nibelungen (p. 37); it is also Volker who invents the story of thieves having killed Siegfried "als er / Zu weit sich vorwagt in den düstern Wald" (p. 43), adding that they heard him blowing his horn for help, but arrived too late to save him. Volker realizes that it is wrong to kill Siegfried, of whom he has sung so enthusiastically, and who is Gunther's guest, yet he cooperates with Hagen and Gunther once the murder has been decided on. The subject of the play is "Treue;" to Volker this means going along with whatever is done by those in authority, even where he privately disagrees.

Three years after Siegfrieds Tod, Fritz Jansen published another dramatization of the NI entitled Siegfried: Ein deutscher Heldensang.<sup>283</sup> Here Jansen has combined elements from Hebbel's Nibelungen with his previous play to produce a drama intended for amateur performance, which, like its

predecessor, is to celebrate "Treue" through the person of Siegfried.

Jansen's Volker differs little from Hebbel's minstrel in Siegfrieds Tod: he tells of Siegfried and of Brunhild using Hebbel's words (pp. 4-5), and after Siegfried has agreed to assist Gunther in winning Brunhild, Volker advises against the enterprise, as it involves the use of "falsche Künste" (p. 13). Nevertheless, when appointed by Siegfried, Volker accompanies Gunther, Hagen, and Siegfried to Isenland, where he asks Brunhild the reason for her reluctance to leave her inhospitable land; he receives no answer (p. 17). After they return to Worms, Volker expresses to Dankwart his apprehensions over Brunhild's suspicion that she has been deceived; Dankwart vows to stand by Brunhild in any quarrel, while Volker declares that he will always side with Kriemhild (pp. 23-24). During the discussion over whether Siegfried is to be murdered, Volker expresses his disapproval of Hagen's proposal, even though he has always approved of Hagen's actions up to this point (p. 33); later he reminds Gunther that he had warned against deceiving Brunhild already before the Isenstein expedition (p. 36). Volker goes no further, however, in his allegiance to Kriemhild, except to express sympathy over her coming grief, while the others are laying Siegfried's corpse before her door (p. 43).

What was true of Jansen's earlier Volker is also true of this one: Volker opposes killing Siegfried, as he had opposed the deception of Brunhild, yet once the decisions are made, Volker cooperates as before. To Hebbel and to his previous play, Jansen adds only Volker's explicit rejection of Hagen's advice, a rejection which, according to Volker, has never occurred before. In this, as in Jansen's earlier drama, Volker is no longer Hagen's companion and does not cooperate with those in power any more than he can help.

In the 163-page introduction to his 90-page drama,

Der stolze Adel Mensch, Erwin Zindler<sup>284</sup> goes so far as to claim that Hagen and Brunhild are the "großen Lichtgestalten" (p. 7) and not Siegfried and Kriemhild. Siegfried has accomplished his great feats of strength through the use of supernatural forces, and therefore does not deserve as much credit as Hagen, who has only his human prowess at his command (p. 36). Likewise Brunhild, whom Zindler does not endow with supernatural qualities, is more sympathetic than the arrogant wrathful Kriemhild (p. 137). A play with Hagen as its hero might be expected to accord Volker a major role, however, just the reverse is the case. Volker is not a minstrel in Zindler's drama, where he appears only in the night watch. He remarks to Hagen that they are all sinners, to which Hagen answers that they are also the heralds of loyalty. When Hagen points out that the mischief which is afoot will inevitably rebound upon those who instigate it, Volker agrees that Hagen is right, for his soul remained pure. Then they sing, in unison, that they are the defenders of humanity, who, even though they have erred, are steeled by the will to goodness and loyalty (p. 240).

Zindler seems to have realized that a well-developed Volker figure would only detract from Hagen as he does in the N1, where he places Hagen in the shadow, to the advantage of Kriemhild, the heroine. Thus Volker appears only to confirm Hagen in his views, and to reinforce him as the hero of the play. The author places his self-portrait in the center of the drama however, and one of his few lines sums up the entire work, as he says to Hagen: "Recht hast du. Rein blieb die Seele."

## 2. The ballad

von Münchhausen

Börries Freiherr von Münchhausen wrote three ballads

based on the N1 material:<sup>285</sup> "Kind Hagen" tells of the young hero, whose sword becomes his teacher and guide; "Hagen und die Donaufrauen" recreates in powerfully moving images the encounter on the way to the hero's doom. "Ein Lied Volkers" presents, in a ballad sung in the first person, a view of Hagen, as seen by his closest friend, the minstrel.

Hagen's commands in battle make Volker's ears ring, yet he loves no other voice so well; whatever Hagen has ever done, seems "edel und eisern gut" to Volker, even though he saw Hagen murder Siegfried. Hagen can be arrogant and fond of violence, but this is outweighed by his absolute and inviolable loyalty. All of the King's vassals face death each day, but Hagen's loyalty has been put to the ultimate test, for he sacrificed not merely his life, but his honor. Thus Hagen has no friends among the other peers, for he stabbed a better man than he in the back, and stole the hoard, which the peers had fetched, from its rightful owner, a defenseless woman.

Gunther's other knights have offered merely their sword arms in homage, "Doch am schwersten Tage gab Hagen / An Gunther den Eid: 'Mein Teil sei die Schuld.'" Hagen took upon himself the odium of doing what had to be done in order to preserve the integrity of Gunther's kingship, therefore, even though Volker's heart trembled at Siegfried's death and Kriemhild's bereavement, Hagen, "vom Grauen unwittert," is the hero of his lays, his friend.

Volker admires Hagen in spite of his arrogance and violent temper, for Hagen is the most loyal of Gunther's knights. Münchhausen's ballad says in poetry what Herzog's retelling said in prose: Hagen commands the poet's esteem because he has given to his lord the most that a loyal knight can give. Without honor an aristocrat is no longer an aristocrat, he has therefore in a very real sense sacrificed himself, his person, out of fealty to the King. Volker does not inquire whether it was right to do this, whether the King

ought to have accepted this sacrifice. It is enough for him that Hagen did it, and for the right reasons. Volker would likely have done the same, since he approves so strongly. The poet, therefore, willingly places himself at the disposal of power and authority (one needs both words to render satisfactorily the German "Macht"), which he will serve unquestioningly.

### 3. The novel

#### Harbou

After World War I, the German film industry, which had already produced "Der Student von Prag" and "Der Golem" attempted a film version of the NI. The result was Fritz Lang's "Die Nibelungen" (1924), to which his wife Thea von Harbou wrote the scenario and a novel<sup>286</sup> which closely follows the silent film. This film, in which the Volker figure is made to resemble Stefan George, was intended by Lang to offer something that might be considered a true manifestation of the German mind, a document fit to publicize German culture all over the world.<sup>287</sup> Here fate is the moving force in the tragedy, working through the anarchical outbursts of ungovernable instincts and passions<sup>288</sup> as it drives the characters to their inevitable doom, a doom which is foreordained and leaves nothing to chance. Hagen is cast as the agent of this fate, who prevents any good luck from slipping in and altering the outcome; his loyalty to the Kings, seems motivated by a self-destroying lust for power, foreshadowing a type of leader which became too well-known a few years later. Volker's relationship to him is, at this stage, ambiguous, as will be seen in the discussion of the book.

The novel begins with Rüdiger's arrival in Worms; Kriemhild relates to him the story of Siegfried's life and death

as it is told in the N1, minimizing his faults and exaggerating his virtues (pp. 36-112). Volker von Alzey, who had admired Siegfried, has grown prematurely grey out of grief over his death (p. 22). He sings no longer and does not even replace the broken strings on his fiddle, for there is no more joy in Worms. Volker had sung of Siegfried before his arrival in Worms, and the song pleased Kriemhild so, that she gave Volker a coat which she had embroidered herself (p. 36). Later, however, when she demanded revenge, all of her brothers and even Volker protected Siegfried's murderer (p. 111).

At Kriemhild's departure from Worms, Volker attempts to tune his fiddle once again, but the tone is not pure, his voice is hoarse, and his song wild and confused. He sings of how Kriemhild had embodied all the joys of life: summertime, blue sky, nature, and religious exaltation. Now that Kriemhild is departing forever, the countryside will seem empty, and the minstrel who received a coat because he sang another's praise, walks in his coat, living but dead. Hagen, hearing his song, asks whether Volker has remembered after all that he is called the "Spielmann," to which Volker replies: "Da verstummen die Lieder, wo der Mord umgeht." Volker had protected Hagen out of duty, but his heart belongs to Siegfried, and now to Siegfried's widow. He slings his fiddle over his back and descends to the courtyard to bid her farewell, and as she departs, he smashes his instrument (pp. 134-38).

During the night watch, Hagen reminisces to Volker about the journey to Etzel's court. We learn that Volker had to be physically restrained from jumping into the Danube to aid the priest whom Hagen had thrown overboard, and that Hagen had to order Volker to stand watch with him. Volker does not respond to this, and so Hagen commands: "'Spiele, Spielmann! Deine Könige schlafen!'" Volker raises his "Seheraugen" to the heavens and fetches his song from the stars. He sings of the castle at Worms, with the Rhine flowing past,



of their last look at its "heiligen Türme," and how, during their journey, they sat at night around the campfire and saw in spirit their "heilige Heimat, Worms!" His song is interrupted by the approach of Hunnish warriors. It is Hagen alone who frightens them away, and after they are gone, Volker is unable to resume his song; he and Hagen sit motionless together, while the Kings sleep (pp. 204-07).

Volker appears for the last time after the battle with Rüdiger, as the minstrel is sitting in the King's place, raised above the crowd. He has not spoken since he killed his friend Rüdiger, who died in Volker's arms, giving him a look which Volker has since been trying to interpret. Suddenly a flaming arrow shoots into the hall, and lodges in an upright beam beside Volker. Motionless he watches it smoulder, while Hagen and Gunther attempt to extinguish the flames from the hail of arrows shot by Kriemhild's Huns.

The scene shifts to Kriemhild. She and Etzel, with Dietrich, and Hildebrand are watching the fire. They hear singing: Volker's song from the night watch, with additional lines praising the cool, green Rhine and, in a final burst of pathos, the holy, eternal home which rises out of this hell to comfort them. The roof collapses in flames, but Volker's song is still heard, as Dietrich opens the door to the hall, intending to put an end to their torment. As he does so, a mortally wounded Hun shoots an arrow into the burning hall, which lodges in Volker's throat (pp. 250-61).

After Kriemhild's death, a boy enters the ruins of the great hall, takes up Volker's fiddle and bow, which have miraculously survived the holocaust, and wanders through the world, singing the song of the Nibelungen: thus the minstrel transmits the tradition to posterity (p. 268). Volker sees Siegfried and Kriemhild as the positive characters in the action, while his relationship to Hagen has been reduced from friendship to hostility and grudging obedience. Neither does he appear to have any feelings for

the Kings, and his songs of home do not betray any love for the people there, but only for the Rhine, the forests, and the towers of Worms. He never fails to mention the cathedral, with its candles and incense, and he would have rescued the chaplain had Hagen not prevented him, as though through the Volker figure the author intended to include in Volker the religiosity which is totally lacking in Hagen. The minstrel figure seems to present Harbou's interpretation of the saga: Siegfried and Kriemhild are the heroes and Hagen the villain. Volker has no inner relationship to any of the characters except to Siegfried and to Kriemhild, with whom the author appears to associate Germany and herself.

4. The adaptations in verse

Libiger

Hauser

von der Trenck

Richard Libiger<sup>289</sup> tells the NI in a series of poems with prose links, which presuppose familiarity with the original poem. Volker is first mentioned on p. 65, where without previous introduction "Herr Volker ergriff seinen Bogen / Und drückte die Fiedel an's Kinn." Hagen has just destroyed the boat in which the Nibelungen crossed the Danube, and related the mermaids' prophecy. Volker sings of heroic loyalty, fearless dying, and deeds without remorse. The waves of the Danube pick up Volker's song "Und singen's noch heute zur Nacht," thus becoming bearers of the tradition which they have received from Volker.

Volker's second song, sung during the night watch, conjures up visions of their now distant homeland. He grows melancholy as he sings, and at the end, bids farewell to the "grüner Rhein!" (p. 68). The two heroes drive off a troop of Huns, while the rest of the Nibelungen sleep until morning. Libiger's intention in writing his book is to show how the Nibelungen protected each other to the last, to encourage

the Germans to the same heroism as shown by Dankwart, Volker, and the rest, and to demonstrate that "Es geht auch in schwerster Stunde, / Kein treues Volk zugrunde!" (pp. 73-74).

Otto Hauser's retelling<sup>290</sup> in alliterative verse is based mainly on the *Ths* and concentrates on Siegfried's life (pp. 3-108), relating *Nl II* only briefly (pp. 109-24). With his fiddle on his back (p. 114), and his sword in his hand, Volker accompanies the Nibelungen to Hunland. As they ride along, many are plagued by apprehensions, but Volker, riding through the fallow fields, takes no notice of the landscape, for he has a song of Siegfried in his heart (p. 115). In Hunland the battle between the Nibelungen and the Huns begins immediately. Hagen is soon captured by ten Huns (p. 118), while Volker and Ortwin try in vain to rescue him (p. 119). That night, while the Nibelungen are sleeping, Volker sits at the door to the hall and plays the song of Siegfried (p. 120) while Hagen lies in the dungeon. They fight all through the next day, and at night Volker stands guard again and sings "von Sonnensiegfried: / Wie er traurig fiel durch falsche Treue / Und mit ihm sich verbrannte die bräutliche Brünhild" (p. 120). Grimhild has the hall set on fire, and Volker perishes with the rest.

Once again we have seen Volker, a minor character, giving the author's view of the Nibelungen saga from within his work. Volker and Hagen have no contact with each other, as Volker rides alone composing a song of Siegfried. Volker is also alone when he sings this song; during the two night watches from which Hagen has been removed. Hauser believes that the basis of the saga is the old Aryan sun myth (p. 125) and sees Siegfried as the sun god. Hagen represents the forces of darkness who kill the sun god out of jealousy. Volker loves the sun, but as a mortal must perish on account of the evil over which he has no control.

Siegfried von der Trenck gives the same interpretation through his retelling in modified N1 stanzas.<sup>291</sup> Volker is mentioned only once, in the last canto, where Trenck says of him: "Volker ließ die Fiedel singen süß zum letzten Stüdelein. / In des Rheines grünes Klingen mischte sich der Flammen Schein" (p. 61). Siegfried is the shining hero, Brunhild and Hagen are the powers of tyranny and deceit, and Gunther is the frail mortal who is misled by them. Volker, this brief reference, shows the beauty of music and the green freshness of the Rhine perishing in the flames which consume the Burgundians.

#### 5. The retellings in prose

Stieglitz	Tecklenburg	Ziegler
Kopp	Weber	Lehmann
von Wolzogen	Vesper	Weber
	Lichtenberger	

During the years of the Weimar Republic, the favored means of bringing the N1 to the people was the prose retelling. In all, twenty-two of them appeared in print during this period of fourteen years, beginning with Hans Stieglitz,<sup>292</sup> an elementary schoolteacher in Pasing (pp. vi, 2) who presents a retelling in Bavarian dialect which he believes could eventually replace the N1 altogether (p. 7). His purpose is to familiarize the "Altbayern" with the national epic and to show "daß im Verfasser eine heiße Glut brennt für das unglückliche Vaterland. Möchten die anspruchslosen Erzählungen ein kleiner Beitrag sein, um den Stolz auf unser Volkstum zu steigern und die alte Kraft zu wecken, mit der wir uns eine schönere Zukunft bauen!" (p. 12).

Volker's role is identical to that in the N1; he is introduced at the outset as "Volker vo' Alzei" (p. 13), who provides the music at court, and whose swordsmanship is

practically as good "als wie da Hag'n und dös will was hoäß'n" (p. 14). In the Saxon war, "Volka, da Spielma' vo' Alzei, der macht 'n Führa" (p. 22). After the Nibelungen have crossed the Danube en route "in's Hunnaland" (p. 56), Volker becomes the leader once again, as he is familiar with "'s Bayerland" (p. 60). In Etzel's castle, Hagen calls Volker his blood brother (p. 66), while Volker refers to Hagen as "'Kanzla'" (p. 72) the only one of the Nibelungen to do so.

Stieglitz refers to Hagen in his preface as the chancellor (p. 8), and describes his strength as being "begründet in der Macht der Burgundenkönige und gerichtet auf die Erhaltung der Nationalehre." Of the N1 as a whole, he says: "Es wurzelt ja ohnehin zu tiefst in unserm Volkstum, wurde neu geschaffen zur Zeit der Frühblüte unseres bayerischen Schrifttums, wo der Bayernstamm den andern Völkerschaften wegweisend mit der Fidel voranschritt" (p. 10, emphasis mine). Thus Stieglitz identifies not only himself but all of Bavaria with Volker, the loyal friend of the chancellor.

Jonannes Kopp retells the entire N1 with some additions from the Nürnen Seyfried in his brief prose version.<sup>293</sup>

Volker is "der edle Spielmann, der ebenso gut mit Fiedel und Bogen, als mit dem Schwerte umgehen konnte" (p. 34). He responds to Dietrich's warning much as in the N1, but with less heroic defiance than in the original (p. 35); in Etzel's castle, Hagen finds in Volker "einen kühnen Genossen, der ihm treu in aller Gefahr zur Seite stände" (p. 36), and in the night watch he calls the Huns "Ihr elenden Feiglinge!" (p. 37).

Kopp includes two poems in his account: Dahn's "Kriemhilde," sung during the night watch, and Geibel's "Volkers Nachtgesang," after the fire in the hall. Together with Hagen, Volker refuses to fight with Rüdiger; Volker defends the margrave to Kriemhilde as follows: "Schämt Euch, daß Ihr so schlecht von dem denket, der Euch sogar bis in den

Tod diente" (p. 45). Volker's loyalty to Hagen is emphasized, but his reproach to Kriemhilde has been moderated and his violent actions omitted entirely.

Hans Paul Freiherr von Wolzogen calls his retelling Der Nibelungen Not.<sup>294</sup> As the story opens, Werbel and Swemmel are arriving in Worms, where, after repeating Etzel's invitation, they and some young Burgundians ask Volker for the story of Siegfried. Volker relates how he slew the dragon and took the hoard, even though he had no need of it, how he saw Brunhild, and how he came to Worms. Volker does not know how Gunther heard of Brunhild, he can only say that he decided to woo her against Siegfried's advice, and that "'der Tronjer, der Treue, mutig und weise'" advised the King to seek Siegfried's help. When a "Frechling" in the audience asks Volker whether Brunhild hung Gunther on a nail overnight, Hagen, who is sitting beside Volker, seizes his arm. Volker hesitates, then rebukes the questioner, saying that this is none of his business, for "'Gunther ist euer edler König und milder Herr. . . Siegfried der Kühne war unvorsichtig . . . und unklug war er obendrein,'" for taking a belt from Brunhild, while performing a service for Gunther (unspecified). He was unwise for giving this belt to his beloved Kriemhild, since "'Dieser Gürtel hat ihn erwürgt'" (pp. 19-26).

Volker's narrative continues with the Senna, with Hagen's discovery of Siegfried's vulnerability, with the hunt, at which Volker hesitates again. Hagen is sitting beside him, staring straight ahead, silent. Volker continues: he tells of the hunt, and how Siegfried knelt at the spring, while someone stood behind him, raised the spear . . . When the audience demands the name of the murderer, Hagen jumps to his feet and names himself, as he strides towards the door. To the insistent questions about Brunhild's fate, Hagen turns and answers: "'Die fuhr zur Hölle! Dummes Volk!

Was sonst?'" (p. 30).

Up to this point, Volker has given an objective account of Siegfried: he introduced his account with admiration, for "'ein Göttliches lebte in ihm, das wirkte heldisch gewaltige Taten, dergleichen vor ihm und nach ihm kein anderer Held aus Menschengeschlecht jemals vollbracht'" (p. 18), yet he sees Siegfried's faults as well. Now, however, he launches into an encomium without precedent on the subject of the hero. "'Solch ein Held, in dem sich Gott lebendig Menschen kund tut, . . . der stirbt nicht, der kommt wieder. Nicht zwar derselbe, . . . der ohnegleichen in der Sage lebt, doch gleichen Wesens, Retter in der Not, Führer zum Siege, göttlich . . . Es ist ein Wunder, aber wahr; der Sänger weiß es, Gott erfüllt's, er kommt. Wir werden's nicht erleben, doch er kommt!--, Geschlechter vergehen, nichts bleibt bestehen, in Asche stürzt das hohe Königshaus: nur mit der Menschheit stirbt der Siegfried aus!'" (p. 30). Wolzogen, born in 1848, was seventy-two when he wrote these words, and he died in 1938. Volker has laid the groundwork for a reconciliation of his admiration for Siegfried and his loyalty to Hagen and Gunther.

Volker leads the company on the journey to Etzel's land (p. 36). They arrive in Bechlarren, where Volker sings at length of the treachery of the Bavarians, and then for Rüdiger's daughter, whom he would woo, were he a prince. It is Hagen, however, who points out that the girl would probably be more interested in Giselher, than in two graybeards like him or Volker (pp. 39-40). The rest of the tale follows the N1 point for point, except for omitting the slaying of the margrave as he helps his wounded relative and Volker's defense of Rüdiger to Kriemhild. After Rüdiger's death, Volker sings for the last time, "'Nun wäre alle Treue tot, stünden nicht Volker und Hagen beisammen in höchster Not'" (p. 64), thus he confirms his loyalty to Hagen.

At no point in this retelling does Volker explicitly

defend Hagen for killing Siegfried, except by pointing out the latter's faults and that they, embodied in Brunhild's belt, became his undoing. Nor does Volker condemn the hero's murder, for he praises Hagen as being courageous, wise, and, most especially, loyal. Hagen and Volker demonstrate their loyalty to Gunther by refusing to mention his disgrace, insisting that he is their gracious King and lord. Hagen, moreover, feels that he needs to remind Volker of what his loyalty to the King demanded of him, thus implying that his loyalty is greater and more consistent than Volker's. In the illustrations which accompany the text in the 1934 edition, Hagen is depicted wearing a helmet unlike the winged helmets of the other warriors, and strongly resembling the type favored by Bismarck in his later years.

August Tecklenburg<sup>295</sup> introduces Volker at the beginning of the night watch. Volker is called "der lustige Spielmann" who promises to stand by Hagen "bis zum letzten Augenblick." They remain seated "mutig und trutzig" as Kriemhild approaches. The Huns are afraid to attack "die deutschen Helden," and later in the night, when they attempt another attack, Volker frightens them away "mit seinen Spielmannsliedern. Es waren Totengesänge fröhlich sterbender Helden." Then follows "Volkers Nachtgesang" with credit to Geibel (pp. 60-61). Tecklenburg does not mention Volker again; in his brief retelling, he has included Volker's loyalty to Hagen, his Germanness, and his music during the night watch. These traits, and the fact that he dies happily were to the author the most significant aspects of the Volker figure.

Emil Weber<sup>296</sup> retells the entire N1; in the Saxon war, "Die Fahne trug Volker, der kühne Spielmann, der nicht nur das Schwert, sondern auch den Fiedelbogen zu führen verstand" (p. 8). There is no further mention of Volker\* until the Burgundians arrive in Bechlaren: there he is kissed by Diet-



linde (p. 34) as she greets the heroes, and receives an unspecified gift in reward for his music upon his departure. In Etzel's castle, Hagen looks "nach einem Genossen um, der in Treue zu ihm stünde, wenn's zum Kampf kommen sollte." He selects "den kühnen Spielmann," and together they sit on a bench opposite Kriemhild's apartments. Volker urges Hagen to rise as she approaches "'damit sie uns nicht Unhöflichkeit nachsage,'" but on Hagen's insistence they remain seated (pp. 35-36). Later, the two stand watch; Volker lulls the Burgundians to sleep, then spots the approaching Huns. As they retreat at Hagen's rebuke, Volker calls after them: "'Seit wann gehen Recken bei Nacht auf Raub und Mord aus? Kommt bei Tage, ihr Feiglinge!'" (p. 38). He fights in the banquet hall, guards the door with Dankwart, and refuses to hand over Rüdiger's body, mocking Wolfhart with: "'Gebt den Löwen frei, Meister; ich will ihn schon zähmen!'" (p. 44). Weber thus emphasizes Volker's mockery and heroism more than his loyalty to Hagen, which he mentions almost by the way.

Will Vesper's detailed retelling of the N1<sup>297</sup> introduces Volker in the "Aufbruch nach dem Hunnenland" as "Volker von Alzei, der der Spielmann hieß, weil er die Fiedel zu spielen verstand, wie die Spielleute tun. Er war wirklich ein Meister in dieser Kunst, aber das Schwert zu führen verstand er nicht weniger" (p. 93), and as the Burgundians are leaving Bechlaren, Volker plays a dance, such as one plays at weddings (p. 101). To Dietrich's warning, Volker replies, that having come this far, they will continue and see what develops: "Mancher hat einen bösen Plan. Aber Wille und Tat liegen weit voneinander" (p. 103).

Except for omitting Volker's killing the margrave as he helps his wounded relative, Vesper follows the N1 with occasional embellishments. As Krimhild is approaching the two seated Burgundians, Volker calls to the Huns: "'Wenn jemand Lust hat, zu tanzen, so will ich ihm geigen'" (p. 107),

and Volker's music during the night watch is described in some detail. He conjures up images of battles, of home, and of loved ones. The Burgundians can see their forests and hear the wind in the trees and the rushing of the Rhine. Finally, peace descends upon them and they sleep soundly. Volker takes up his sword and shield, to watch until morning comes.

After Mass, Etzel orders the tournament. Volker is impatient for hostilities to break out, for "'Dies Warten und Schöntun mit falschem Herzen ist schlimmer als alles'" and finally, when an overdecorated Hun enters the lists, Volker joins in the fray "Und er stieß den Schild des Hunnen auf die Seite und rannte ihm den Speer in den Leib und spießte ihn auf, wie einen Frosch, daß er sogleich tot vom Pferde fiel." When Etzel smooths the quarrel over, Volker is disappointed, for now the hostilities will only have to break out anew (pp. 114-15).

Vesper elaborates on Volker's verbal exchange with Wolfhart, and on this last scene of the minstrel's life: "'Totentanz!' rief Volker, 'Totentanz! Wie schade, daß ihr mein Schwert braucht, sonst wollte ich die Fiedel dazu spielen.'" Hildebrand sees him fell Sigstab, and shouts: "'Aber nun will ich dir geigen, daß auch du einmal tanzen mußt.'" With a cry of "'Ausgespielt!'" Volker falls. The vignette at the end of the chapter shows Volker smiling in death, surrounded by roses with a rainbow above him (pp. 139-40).

Hagen sought Volker's support in the coming struggle by asking: "'Da wüßte ich gerne, Freund, wessen ich mich zu euch versehen soll, wenn es einmal ernst wird?' 'Das war keine gute Frage,'" answered Volker affirming that his place would always be at Hagen's side. Hagen responded: "'Das erwartete ich auch nicht anders'" (p. 106), for he had known that Volker would stand by him. Vesper sees the minstrel as an adjunct to Hagen, the center of power, not

questioning but simply doing his duty and trying to hasten the inevitable. Volker's impatience to get the fight going is portrayed more clearly than by any of Vesper's predecessors, while his loyalty is simply to be understood.

Franz Lichtenberger's Krimhilds Rache<sup>298</sup> retells N1 II; "Volker von Alzei, der tapfere Spielmann" accompanies the Burgundians on their journey "ins Heunenland" (p. 19). In Bechlaren, he is kissed by Gateline and her daughter Dietlinde, whom he praises, saying were he a king, Rüdiger's lovely daughter would be his queen (pp. 25-26). To Dietrich's warning, Volker answers: "'Was ist jetzt noch daran zu ändern? Wir können doch hier nicht mehr umkehren. Laßt uns also reiten, ihr Herren! Wir werden ja bald sehen, wie es uns bei den Heunen ergehen wird'" (p. 28). During the night watch, Volker plays "die alten schönen Lieder, die die Burgunden so oft schon von ihm am Rhein gehört hatten," but, Hagen, not Volker, shouts insults after the retreating Huns.

As Dietrich's men approach, Volker cries: "'O weh,'" and when Wolfhart demands Rüdiger's body, shouts: "'Ihr habt es ja sehr eilig. Holt ihn euch doch selbst! Oder habt ihr nicht genug Mut dazu?'" (p. 44). Lichtenberger, like Vesper, sees Volker as Hagen's loyal friend, but develops the relationship no further; using words translated from the N1, he affirms that he will stand by Hagen, even if Etzel and his whole army should attack them (p. 30). Lichtenberger also has Volker sing songs of the Burgundians' home on the Rhine during the night watch.

Josef Ziegler<sup>299</sup> begins his retelling in the knights' hall of the Burgundians' castle in Worms. Kriemhilde has just told Ute of her falcon dream, and Ute has explained it as referring to Kriemhilde's future husband. Just then, heavy steps approach: Gunther, Gernot, the youthful Giselher, her uncle Hagen and "der Spielmann, Volker von Alzey" enter.

The ladies rise to greet the heroes, who bid them a good day, and proceed to discuss the Saxon declaration of war. Volker picks up the harp, which is leaning at the fireplace, and sings "von einem jungen Helden aus den fernen Niederlanden. Siegfried ist sein Name," telling Siegfried's adventures with the dragon, the "Tarnkappe," and the hoard, and that now the hero is traveling "wie ein lichter Frühlingsmorgen durch die Lande und seinen Namen rühmt das Lied der Sänger." Upon hearing this, Hagen "schaute finster drein," while Kriemhilde feels a sweet melancholy (pp. 4-6). That afternoon, Siegfried approaches the castle. Hagen identifies him as "'Siegmunds kühner Sohn, von dem Volker erst heute gesungen. Empfanget ihn wohl, . . . auf daß uns durch ihn kein Unheil erstehe!'" (p. 6). This ends Volker's role in N1 I. He admires Siegfried unreservedly, while Hagen's reaction could easily be interpreted as jealousy or even fear.

Volker is next mentioned as the heroes are leaving Bechlaren: he plays "Zum Abschied seine schönsten Lieder" and receives six gold arm rings as his reward (p. 28). At Etzel's court, Hagen und Volker "ahnten böse Absicht und beschloßen angesichts solcher Gefahr einen Treubund auf Leben und Tod" (p. 29). After the confrontation with Kriemhilde and the Huns, Ziegler comments: "Kriemhilde hatte dieses Mal das Spiel verloren, weil der Freund so treu zum Freunde gestanden war" (p. 30). In the night watch, Volker takes up "seine liebe Fiedel" and plays sweetly in the summer night; the tired Burgundians in the hall see "in ihren Träumen die ferne Heimat am Rhein." As the approaching Huns turn away at the sight of the two "riesigen Gestalten," Volker shouts "verächtliche Worte" at them before they disappear into the darkness (p. 30).

Volker admires Siegfried, and is not mentioned as Hagen's friend until after the danger has become apparent. It is necessity which has brought them together, and Ziegler

makes this clear: it is an alliance of convenience, not of inclination. Once again, the Rhine has been mentioned in connection with Volker's music during the night watch, as the home of the Burgundian heroes.

Gotthold Lehmann<sup>300</sup> sees the Siegfried saga as "Das Hohelied auf deutsche . . . Treue" (preface). Volker is described as "Hagens bester Freund" (p. 38), a brave hero and a good fiddler, who sings of "kühnen Helden oder von schönen Frauen. Auch von dem jungen Siegfried wußte er manches Lied." He can throw a stone as far as all of the Burgundians except Gunther and Hagen and he admires Siegfried, who throws better than all of them (p. 39). He accompanies the Burgundians in the Saxon war, and then disappears until they arrive at Etzel's castle.

Volker silently joins Hagen for the night watch. Hagen "reichte ihm die Hand und sprach: 'Habe Dank, lieber Kamerad, für deine Treue.' Dann nahm Volker seine Geige und . . . leise sang und spielte . . . von dem schönen Rhein" (p. 68). When Kriemhild offers to let them go home if they will surrender Hagen, Volker is the first to step to Hagen's side: "'Wo Hagen bleibt, bleibe ich auch!'" (p. 74). Hagen and Volker stand watch for a second night, and again Volker plays a song "von dem schönen Rhein. Aber es klang gar traurig" (p. 74), for Volker knows that he will never see his home again.

When one of Dietrich's men demands Rüdiger's body, Volker retorts that they must fetch it themselves, but he doubts that they have enough courage. In the ensuing battle, Hildebrand slays the minstrel, who shouts as he dies: "'Lebt wohl, ihr Helden vom Rhein! Leb wohl, Freund Hagen!'" (p. 77). Hagen sheds the first tear of his life over the death of his friend. Lehmann's Volker admires Siegfried, but not at the expense of his friendship with Hagen, which exemplifies the "Treue" that Lehmann wished to demonstrate. He emphasizes

this relationship more than has any writer since Wolzogen, while eliminating Volker's acts of violence.

Erst Weber<sup>301</sup> retells the first part of the N1: Volker is called "der starke Volker von Alzey" (p. 1) when the Burgundian heroes are enumerated. As they depart for the Saxon war, "der starke Spielmann" (p. 4) raises the banner and rides at the head of the company. This is all that Weber tells about Volker in his brief account of Siegfried's life.

## 6. Summary

The colorful variety of minstrel figures from earlier periods has given way to a certain uniformity in the conception of Volker. This is in part due to the nature of the authors involved: we find no Hebbel or Geibel, no Ernst or Miegel using the N1 as the basis for literary work. Münchhausen alone enjoyed recognition as a poet, while Harbou is known only for her bombastic romanticism, which came into its own in popularity after 1933.<sup>302</sup> The fact that retellings, which by their nature do not allow for great originality, comprise the major portion of works during this period, also helps to explain the similarity of the Volker figures to each other. The most important reason, however, for the similarity of these Volker figures is that their authors had a purpose in writing their works, and this purpose, except in the case of Münchhausen, was not the creation of a literary work of art.

Stieglitz, Wolzogen, and Münchhausen begin the era. Stieglitz' Volker does not comment on Siegfried's murder, but refers to Hagen as "Kanzla" and his friend. Wolzogen's Volker admires Siegfried, but recognizes that he is unwise and imprudent. He calls Hagen wise and loyal, however, does not mention any faults in connection with him, and emphasizes

their friendship. Münchhausen's Volker makes Hagen the hero of his songs because, out of loyalty, he took upon himself the odium of killing a good man. In none of these works is Volker subject to any of the divisive sentiments to be found in earlier works. He is not loyal to Hagen in spite of his murder of Siegfried, as was the case with Siemssen, or more recently Werner Jansen, but rather, in Münchhausen at least, because of it. In these three works, Volker's loyalty to Hagen is complete, uncomplicated by other considerations. In this context we should note that the identification of Hagen as "Kanzla" in Stieglitz probably took place independently of Jansen's novel, for in his introduction, Stieglitz enumerated the retellings and translations of the N1 with which he was familiar: Vilmar, Uhland's lectures, Simrock's translation, Legerlotz, Ernst Weber (probably the 1911 edition which was unavailable for this study), and Gustav Freytag, who included a translation of the N1 by Koppitz in his anthology of German literature.<sup>303</sup> If he had read Jansen's novel, he would surely have mentioned it.

Volker's complete and unswerving loyalty to Hagen, which we can attribute to the Bismarck cult, breaks down, however, after 1920, and is not taken up again until Lehmann's retelling in 1927 and Zindler's play of 1932, of which Hagen is again the hero. Vesper's Volker figure affirms his loyalty to Hagen with less emphasis than in Münchhausen or Wolzogen, and only after Hagen has urgently requested it. In the remaining works of this period, Volker is either a minstrel who does virtually no fighting and expresses no views regarding any of the main characters, or his admiration belongs to Siegfried. Harbou and Hauser, writing in 1923, place Volker on Siegfried's side, eliminating his friendship with Hagen altogether; Fritz Jansen's Volker has no relationship to Hagen at all, and states that robbers killed Siegfried, while Trenck virtually eliminates Volker from his poem, which extols Siegfried and condemns Hagen and Brunhild.

This breakdown of the Volker-Hagen relationship is probably a result of the "Stab-in-the-back" legend, which was current throughout the years of the Weimar Republic.<sup>304</sup> In 1922 Zwehl's Der Dolchstoß in den Rücken des siegreichen Heeres<sup>305</sup> appeared, and even Hindenburg, who had advised Wilhelm II to leave for Holland, was bothered by doubts about his own part in the outcome of the war.<sup>306</sup> Since Hagen killed Siegfried by stabbing him in the back, and since Siegfried was readily identifiable, especially since Wagner, as the personification of Germany and as the German national hero, it is understandable that the relationship between the poet and Hagen would be seen in a different light after World War I. Siegfried, who represents Germany, is good; Hagen, who kills him, must necessarily be evil. The authors of the twenties, identifying themselves and their class with Volker, wished, therefore, to distance the minstrel figure from Hagen. In doing so, however, they deprived Volker of the object of his loyalty, the very quality which he was supposed to embody in the ideological interpretation of the Nl. It is thus natural that Volker should recede into the background of the retellings and plays during the twenties, functioning only as the minstrel who in the plays recapitulates those details of the tradition which the authors desired to relate to their audiences, but which could not be directly presented on the stage, while in the retellings he embodies bravery and German musicianship.

This change is reflected even in Wölzogen's retelling, for when Volker praises the coming Siegfried, affirming that his virtues of strength and courage will rise again, in a newer and presumably less flawed form, he is of course predicting a revival of German glory. Stieglitz sees in Siegfried the expression of naive strength, of the force of nature, beyond good and evil, while Hagen incorporates the principle of national honor. When these two forces are brought into opposition by uncontrolled human passion, represented



by Kriemhild (pp. 8-9), Siegfried must die. Thus both see fate, not Hagen's will, at work in Siegfried's death but both also look to a time when, under different conditions, it need not happen, when Siegfried and Hagen could cooperate in the attainment of higher goals. Münchhausen's Volker, too, admits that Siegfried was, after all, "der bessere Mann," but that his death was necessary to preserve the existing power structure. Stieglitz and Wolzogen agree, and Kopp's Volker likewise maintains his loyalty to Hagen.

Harbou, Hauser, Jansen, and Trenck, on the other hand, see Siegfried's murder as motivated by jealousy or envy on the part of Hagen, and eliminate the friendship between him and Volker. Where Volker sings of "Treue," as in Libiger, he praises that virtue in general terms, without specific application; Tecklenburg, Weber, Lichtenberger, and Ziegler, the authors of the retellings of this middle period, take away all of Volker's fighting qualities, leaving only the minstrel, who remains seated before Kriemhild and sings for the Burgundians during the night watch. In this connection it is noteworthy that Keim's retelling with Czeschka's illustrations was reprinted in 1924.

Volker's songs are, with few exceptions, related to the Rhine, which flows through the N1 adaptations of this period more persistently than before. The Rhineland, with Alzey and Worms the home of the N1, was now occupied by the hereditary enemy, France. After 1925, each of the retellings of the N1 II contained a reference to the Rhine as the "Heimat" of the Burgundian warriors, and it is always Volker who, through his music, makes this homeland present to them on the night before their final battle. Lehmann, the only writer between 1921 and 1930 to emphasize the friendship between Volker and Hagen, has two night watches, and thus is able to have Volker sing his Rhenish songs twice. The Rhine, the symbol of the German nation, and now the symbol of the Versailles Treaty with its injustices, replaces Hagen as Volker's companion.

It can hardly be a coincidence, that the year 1925, in which Vesper's Volker became impatient for the coming confrontation with the Huns, and Volker began to emphasize the Rhine, was also the year which saw the hero of Tannenberg, Paul von Hindenburg, elected president of the Republic. Furthermore, in the three years 1925-1928, ten literary adaptations of the Nibelungen saga were published, seven of which have the name Siegfried in their titles. The Germans were once again looking for a new Siegfried, who would restore their national glory.

It is probably on account of the "Stab-in-the-back" legend, that Volker's loyalty to Hagen is de-emphasized during this era. Hagen is replaced variously by Siegfried, Kriemhild, "Creue," and the Rhine, each of which stands for Germany. The Germany which the authors had in mind was not, however, the Germany in which they were living, the Weimar Republic. The Republic had betrayed the German army and signed away the Rhineland in the Treaty of Versailles, in order to gain power for its politicians. The Germany which is the object of Volker's loyalty is the past and future Germany, the country which Bismarck had built and Hindenburg was to rebuild, founded on power. The uniformity among the Volker figures which we noted at the beginning of this summary is thus a symptom of the authors' attitudes, and of their rejection of the "weak" Republic. The relationship between the poet and authority has weakened, since contemporary Germany cannot claim his loyalty and Hagen, his partner in the tradition, is seen as evil. Only in Zindler's drama does Volker find his way once again to Hagen, this time because, as with Münchhausen, he has acted in the interests of the greater good. Hagen destroyed the usurper, Siegfried, and, keeping his heart pure, restored order. With Hagen restored to favor, Volker once again becomes his friend, the poet-minstrel allied with the power figure. Volker sought a Siegfried, but found Hagen instead.

V. 1933-1945

1. The dramas

Bley	Weber	Baumann
Bacmeister	Wichmann	Rogge
Schöttler	Winkler von Hermeden	Mell

Wulf Bley's Die Gibichunge,<sup>307</sup> covers Nl II; Volker's first entrance is with Giselher. When Hagen asks why the two have no greeting for him or the other Kings, Volker answers that they have been riding through the "Rheinwald," and Giselher adds that while they were there, Volker sang of Siegfried. Hagen finds this natural, since it is spring-time, but Gunther rejoins that when they killed Siegfried, they destroyed the spring. Hagen, calling Siegfried the deceitful fool, answers that loyalty and the desire to avert the fate which he saw descending upon them caused him to do it. As yet, however, the Gibichunge do not understand Hagen's action, nor does Volker, as his silence attests (pp. 21-22).

At the end of Act II, Gernoth protests Kriemhild's decision to become Etzel's wife, suspecting revenge as her motive. Volker tries to calm the young King, saying that everything must take its course. When Kriemhild's determination to join Etzel, as well as her hatred of Hagen, become apparent, Hagen reminds Gunther of his oath (of loyalty to Hagen as his vassal). Volker, to emphasize Hagen's words, plucks at his "Saitenspiel" so violently, that the strings burst, foretelling the violent end of the Burgundian Kings.

Acts III and IV take place in Etzel's castle. The Kings, Hagen, and Volker have ridden there alone, at Etzel's invitation. When they arrive, Etzel demands Siegfried's sword and the Nibelung treasure, in atonement for the injury done to his wife. Since the Burgundians refuse to hand them over, Etzel places them under house arrest, and orders that they

be killed on sight, should they attempt to leave. When they are alone again, the five Burgundians begin to discuss their situation: Hagen claims that it was fate which made him kill Siegfried, and fate which will one day snuff out their brief existence. At this point he turns to Volker, who answers: "All mein Wissen und Wünschen / heißt immer nur Heimat, Hagen" (p. 48). At this, Hagen reminds Volker of that which he had forgotten and Hagen had concealed: "daß dafür Blut geflossen sein muß, guter Volker!" Volker had forgotten this hard fact of life because he did not wish to remember it; now, when the Burgundians' fate confronts them, Volker, the poet, needs Hagen, the leader and agent of their fate, to guide him to the fulfillment of his destiny.

When Etzel's servant informs the Burgundians that Etzel is willing to release the Kings and Volker if Hagen will give himself up, Hagen is willing to do so. Gunther, however, refuses to allow this, even though it means that he will perish with Hagen, for "Das Volk kann ohne einen König leben, / nicht aber ohne königliches Beispiel . . ." (p. 53); at this Volker exclaims: "Gunther, nun bin ich ganz glücklich!" Gunther admits that he has learned this from Hagen, that the King must sacrifice his freedom and even his life, in order that his people may not have to live under the tyranny of a "Fremdenvolk." Now Hagen can for the first time acknowledge Gunther as "Herr," now Volker can be completely happy. As the servant leaves, Volker begins his song. The minstrel's heart is bursting with joy, for "die Treue von Burgund" defies the jaws of hell. Five Burgundians, who fell into Etzel's hands, now see their souls flying homeward, like doves. Gernoth, who interprets Volker's song as a call from the homeland, determines to escape and return with the army. Hagen wishes him good luck, knowing that the attempt is in vain. Volker repeats the refrain: "Es kann uns niemand rauben / das starke Herz . . ." for Burgundy is with them in spirit (pp. 53-55).

In Act IV, we learn through Volker that Gernoth has been killed. Gunther reproaches Hagen for having let him go, but Hagen answers that Burgundy is protected by the army, but no power on earth can save the four of them. They, however, can by their example save Burgundy, which otherwise "in furchtbar seliger Satttheit / elend verfaulen müßte." Volker agrees, telling Gunther that he must follow Hagen's example, and make his "Müssen zum Wollen," thus Gunther will assure himself of a glorious death: "dann blutet in deines Schicksals Schale / die sinkende Sonne ihr letztes Licht / herrlich hinein!" Gunther ought, like Hagen, to die splendidly (pp. 58-59). Volker sets a good example. When a group of Huns led by Etzel attempts to overwhelm and bind the Burgundians, Etzel's servant plunges a dagger into Volker's breast as Volker tries to kill Etzel. Before he dies, Volker sings "mit großer Anstrengung, trotzig-froh" (p. 67) his song once more. He has progressed from rejection of Hagen to an acceptance and admiration of him, which he has achieved through gradually coming to understand the lessons that only Hagen can teach. The tradition bearer has become the bearer of Hagen's insights, which he passes on to the rest of the Burgundians.

In Ernst Bacmeister's Siegfried,<sup>308</sup> Volker speaks only the last eight lines of the play (p. 82). Gernot and Giseler have attempted to avenge Siegfried's death, but Hagen has repulsed them. As Volker steps forward, Hagen taunts him, saying: "He, Volker, willst du schlagen oder singen?" Volker answers that Hagen had better leave off his boasting, for Siegfried's stature has taught the Burgundians to see greatness in a new perspective, and Hagen has become a nonentity "Und wehe dir!" says Volker, "Wenn einer ihn besingt," for Hagen's crime has made the Burgundians into his accomplices so that vengeance for Siegfried will strike them all. Thus Volker pronounces judgment on Hagen: "Doch

groß umschattet von dem Machtgeschick / Des großen Toten  
sieht mein Geist zwei Frauen. - - - " Volker's sympathies  
are with Siegfried as he foretells the coming doom of the  
Burgundians. Two women have loved Siegfried: the one whom  
he rejected has caused his death; the one who can no longer  
have him, will avenge him. This vengeance will strike just  
as surely as a poet, inspired by Siegfried's "Machtgeschick,"  
will sing of him.

Wilhelm Schöttler wrote Der Nibelunge Not<sup>309</sup> for ama-  
teur theatricals, and in the preface, Rudolf Mirbt mentions  
having seen the play performed in Danzig, Güstrow, and Lodz.  
The work is based on the Edda, and Volker is included only  
because, according to Schöttler, he is "mit unserm Bewußtsein  
so eng verbunden" (p. 37), that he could not be left out. As  
the play opens, it is winter in Worms; Volker, who used to  
while away the long nights for them with his music, will  
play no longer, for Siegfried is dead, and "Seit jenem Tage  
ist in dieser Halle / das Lachen tot" (p. 8). Gernot realizes  
that Siegfried was slain out of envy, that Volker refuses  
to play his fiddle because he is ashamed of their deed, while  
Volker confirms this, saying that where death reigns, one  
lays one's bow aside. They are all doomed, says Volker, and  
know their fate. For his part, he will remain mute until  
"das letzte Mal. Dann will ich singen!" (p. 11). As he says  
this, Etzel's messenger enters, bearing his master's invi-  
tation to Gunther, Hagen, and whomever else they wish to  
bring with them. Hagen knows that Volker will not wish to  
remain at home, for he is their blood brother (p. 16). The  
three set out alone, leaving Gernot to rule in their absence.

The second "Bild" is set in Etzel's castle. Gudrun  
awaits her brothers with mixed feelings; she had tried to  
warn them of Etzel's intentions yet she cannot forget that  
they murdered her husband. When the three arrive, Etzel has  
Knefröd, his servant, welcome "Gunther und Hagen, die Brüder, /

und Volker, den freudigen Spielmann!" (p. 21), but refuses them food or drink. Hagen and Gunther lie down to sleep, while Volker watches alone. Gudrun enters during Volker's song, to tell Volker that he must die with her brothers. Volker endeavors to enlist her help against Etzel, pointing out that they came in good faith, and that they are bound together by blood relationship, which is "Mehr als Ehe und jeder Vertrag" (p. 28). When Gudrun asks why they came in spite of her warning, Volker replies that ordinary men might have found an excuse to remain at home, but kings may not avoid danger, no matter how great. His final plea is to Gudrun's common sense: he points out that their death will not bring relief from her sorrow, but only increase it, as then she will truly be alone in the world. Saying: "Wie klug sind die Brüder, auf diese Fahrt / dich, Volker, mit sich zu nehmen!" (p. 29), Gudrun is ready to guide her brothers to safety, for he has shown her the value of "Sippe und Freundschaft." But at this point Etzel enters, demanding Siegfried's hoard and atonement for the life of his man, Wingi, whom Hagen had slain en route.

Volker's music, but even more than his music the reasonableness of his arguments, almost rescued Hagen and Gunther, and would have, had the Atli of the Edda truly become the Etzel of the Nl. Schöttler's Volker can plead the cause of the Nibelungen in words which would seem cowardly in the mouth of Gunther or Hagen. He thus stands between the two centers of power, with a mobility which allows him to approach each with more freedom than they have towards each other, and to interpret these centers of power to each other. He has no relationship to Etzel, who is the non-Germanic element, and with whom he can therefore make no contact.

Carl Heinz Weber's Der Nibelunge Not,<sup>310</sup> is also intended for amateur performance. Kriemhild has been Etzel's

wife "seit etlich Jahren" (p. 9), but Gunther still has threatening premonitions. Hagen, too, believes that Kriemhild is plotting revenge, but Volker von Alzey accuses him of painting too black a picture. After all, she is living in splendor in Hunnenland, and "Der Weiber Sinn ist solchen Dingen leicht gefällig." Volker believes that her revenge is "längst vergessen," will hear nothing of bad dreams, and wishes to go hunting. Just then, Gieselher and Gernot enter with Werbel, bringing Etzel's invitation (pp. 9-10).

In the second "Bild," the Nibelungen are camped on the Danube. Volker reports to Hagen that the "Knechte" are complaining because Hagen has destroyed the ferry (p. 13). Hagen ignores this, saying that they have no business judging their lords' actions. Later in the scene, after Gunther has promised to defend Hagen, should Kriemhild be planning revenge, Volker also promises to stand by his "Freund aus frohen Tagen" and sings his song of the value of fame after death. Everything: family, possessions, even the body will perish, but the fame of one's deeds assures one immortality (p. 16). The song is taken from the Edda in Felix Genzmer's translation;<sup>311</sup> in his introduction, Genzmer refers to these lines as being especially appropriate to a monument "für unsere Toten des Weltkrieges."<sup>312</sup>

Volker leads the procession into Hunnenland and plays the "Volkermotiv" (included in the music supplement) during the night watch (p. 19). During the banquet scene in the fifth "Bild," in answer to Etzel's request that the Burgundians take Ortlieb back to Worms, Gunther states that "Der Fiedler Volker soll sein Meister sein" (p. 22). Volker has no more lines; shortly before his capture by Dietrich, Hagen reports Volker's death to Gunther (p. 25). His role in this playlet is to provide the musical element, and some inspirational verse, with a heroic theme, as well as an example of loyalty to the leader after having overcome his initial doubts.



Fritz Wichmann based his Nibelungenlos<sup>313</sup> on the entire N1; he admires Siegfried, but realizes that his death is due to his own faults. Kriemhild's curiosity and arrogance cause his death, after which she becomes a vengeful fury. Hagen is a positive character, and Volker is his faithful friend. The Senna begins while the two Queens are sitting under a linden tree in the background, while Volker sings a song about the Teutonic fist knocking on the door of world history. The Germanic peoples are bringing a new day, accompanied by storm and warfare, and all of Rome's cohorts will be powerless to protect the old order from the onrush of the new one (p. 42). At the end of the song, the women are in the middle of their quarrel, which follows its familiar course.

During the night watch, Hagen asks Volker what he believes to be the "Höchste . . . auf der Welt?" Volker answers honor, but Hagen points out that it is manly courage which brings us honor, to which Volker adds: "Und auch die Treue!" This leads Hagen to reflect on his own loyalty: he had, after all, been Siegfried's "Blutsfreund," but his loyalty to Brunhild had to take precedence. He asks Volker pointblank: "Zerbrach da meine Ehre?" to which Volker answers, rather evasively: "Nicht Zweifel können jetzt helfen, nur Festigkeit!" and when Hagen is not satisfied with this, he adds: "Nur treu sein gegen sich selbst!" Hagen affirms that he has indeed been firm, and true to himself, yet "es bleibt noch ein Rest, und der ist bitter!" Then Volker takes up his fiddle and sings: every man has been placed in the world to be the author of his own fate. God has placed into his hand "Die eisenharte Wehre!" and into his heart loyalty, manly courage, and honor. Therefore, since Hagen has shaped his destiny keeping these values uppermost, he has not violated his honor. Volker regretted the killing of Siegfried, and in the Odenwald he even asked: "Hagen, muß es sein?" (p. 66), yet now, when Hagen asks him for a verdict, Volker seems to

hedge, saying that if Hagen believed it was right, then it was right by Hagen's standards, a neat bit of circular reasoning. Hagen has indeed been true to himself, but that was not what he had asked Volker.

The minstrel sings for the third time after the great fire: it is a reaction to Hagen's suggestion that if they are thirsty, they may drink the blood of the slain. This time, all of the Burgundians join in Volker's song, which compares their god Tor to Hagen: "Ohne Zaudern, ohne Zagen / Steht er wie ein Fels im Meer!" (p. 110) like Tor with his hammer, with thunder and lightning raging around him. Volker is not much help when it comes to questions of ethics, but his admiration of Hagen's courage and physical prowess knows no bounds, for Hagen is the sort of man whose Teutonic fist will help to topple the Roman Empire. As long as he remains true to himself, whatever he does is justified and he can be sure of the poet's allegiance.

Viktor Winkler von Hermeden's Markgraf Rüdiger,<sup>314</sup> a one-act play for amateurs, deals with the problem of whether Rüdiger is a "Hunnenknecht," as Hagen calls him, or a "deutscher Recke," as Volker would have it. In scene two, while Rüdiger is in Worms suing for Kriemhild's hand on Etzel's behalf, Volker reproaches Hagen for avoiding their distinguished guest. Hagen answers that he is not needed, since Gunther is entertaining the strangers with banquets and resounding speeches, while Gernot is jousting with the "Hunnenknechten." It develops that Hagen uses such strong language to describe Rüdiger, because he has no respect for a "Recken . . . / Der Feinden sich dingt," even though he may have a great reputation among the masses. It is easy, says Hagen, for minstrels to praise someone who lives as far away as Rüdiger does, for the people have no way of testing the truth of his reports. At this point, Rüdiger enters. Volker greets him warmly but Hagen does not speak

to him. Rüdiger tells Volker that Kriemhild has refused to see him, which Volker explains by saying that Kriemhild has not gotten over the misery "Das Siegfrieds Sterben / Der Armen schuf," Volker seems to sympathize with Kriemhild, calling her "die Arme," but obviously does not wish to antagonize Hagen, and thus uses the word "Sterben" in referring to Siegfried's death (pp. 14-16).

Upon hearing from Kriemhild's maid that she has refused a second request for an audience, Rüdiger asks to see her, not as Etzel's messenger, but as a German margrave. After the maid has left, Hagen addresses Rüdiger for the first time: "Nicht mehrt die Ehre / Dem deutschen Markgraf / Der Hunnendienst!" to which Rüdiger answers that his cooperation with Etzel keeps the Huns in check, so that they will not burn and pillage the interior of Germany. Hagen counters that only "weichlicher Wille" could bow to foreign domination, and that a Burgundian would never bear the foreigner's yoke, to which Rüdiger replies that "Wer Grenzwacht hält" must bear the heaviest yoke of all, separation from his own nation, and that fate has placed this burden upon the "Ostmark-deutschen." He must teach civilization to the uncouth foreigners while loyally serving their lords, but thus he increases the glory of his own people and preserves the land of his fathers from rapine (pp. 18-20).

Volker assures Rüdiger that he enjoys the respect of the Burgundians, who know the valor of his deeds in distant lands. Hagen, however, insists that no one can learn true heroism in the service of another, and suggests that he send the flower of his youth to Burgundy, "Daß männlicher Mut / . . . / Die Herzen härte." Rüdiger points to the strength of his warriors as demonstrated in today's tournament and Volker confirms that all of them were as "kühn" as Rüdiger himself, but Hagen is not impressed, for anyone can appear strong and brave while jousting with friends. Hagen believes that "rheinische Recken" would be needed to subdue the peoples

of the East, and Rüdiger would welcome some Rhenish soldiers "Als Helfer der Ostmark," implying that these heroes need to learn what it means to be "Auf sich nur gestellt" without the companionship of their fellow Germans (pp. 21-22).

When Kriemhild's maid enters with the news that her lady will receive Rüdiger, he departs, leaving Hagen and Volker alone. Volker rejoices at Kriemhild's change of heart, believing that "Zum Guten sich wendet / Der Königin Sinn," but Hagen is more skeptical, believing that Kriemhild will try to engage Etzel's servant, as he persists in calling Rüdiger, to avenge Siegfried. Hagen has already warned the Kings "Vor Rüdigers Tücke," now Gunther must be on his guard. Volker, however, insists that Hagen's hostility, and mistrustfulness see only malice everywhere; Hagen merely answers: "Seid klüger als Hagen! / Ich schärfe das Schwert (pp. 23-24).

In Bechlaren (scene five), we see Rüdiger at work, teaching and disciplining the foreign peoples on the border. As the Burgundians are departing, Gunther praises him for performing a difficult task so well, and for his hospitality. Volker confirms this, saying that he has never heard such sweet music, or song so "herzerhebend, / So andachtsvoll," as in Rüdiger's castle. When Rüdiger is called away suddenly he asks Gunther and Gernot to accompany him, leaving Hagen and Volker alone. Volker expresses once again his admiration for Rüdiger: "Den Recken mir weise, / Der Rüdiger gleicht!" saying that if he had not been born in Worms on the Rhine, he would want to live here, helping the margrave "Im Wehren und Wirken." Hagen still does not trust Rüdiger, however, for in the "Ostmarkland" the heart rules, not the sword, and life is too easygoing, "Nur tändelndes Spiel ringsum." Rüdiger is even now enmeshing the Burgundians in his clever schemes, claims Hagen, pointing to "Giselher dort! / Ihn kirrt Dietlinde," at which Volker is shocked, for Hagen's "Mißtrauen schont / Das Heiligste nicht," and the two exit, leaving the lovers alone (pp. 38-43).

Rüdiger vindicates himself, needless to say, and in the end Hagen too must recognize in him the true German hero. In Volker's speeches, however, we see that the minstrel likes Rüdiger and believes in him, but does not successfully refute any of Hagen's charges. Indeed, these charges seem, upon first inspection, to be so well-founded that even Gottfried Weber<sup>315</sup> could see Rüdiger much as Hagen does. Volker trusts Rüdiger, and in this he speaks for the author and for the average German of the twenties and thirties who trusted and liked the Austrians. Hagen, Volker's friend, speaks for those in power in the Reich who believed that the Austrians were unreliable, having been corrupted by contact with non-German cultures and races. Volker cannot effectively refute Hagen, only Rüdiger can do that, by his deeds, not by words. Having him do so, and thus proving the reliability of Austria, may very likely be a welcome to fellow Germans to the South after the "Anschluß," i.e. the union of Germany and Austria in 1938.

Hans Baumann's Rüdiger von Bechelaren<sup>316</sup> shows the Nibelungen returning after a thousand years to the scenes of their triumphs and tragedy, Bechelaren and Gran. Volker is a central figure in this drama, conveying much of its message through his songs. After Rüdiger greets the Kings, Volker is the first to speak, affirming that he has brought his "singend Schwert," "dem neuen Strom zu lauschen." He salutes the land which welcomes them, like a new day dawning, banishing the fears of the night, while its mountains and streams bring joy to their hearts. Then, ascending to a higher place on stage, he sings to the streams which flow through meadows, bridges and cities, summoning the Nibelungen. Interrupting his own song, he changes to a minor key, and, together with the Nibelungen, sings of his and their heroic defiance of fear and death. The best of them may fall, yet they will not tremble before shadows, for

whoever falls and dies will guide the stars in their paths. Combat and peril will bless their brows, when they encounter fleeting time upon a different star: for now, having died a thousand deaths, the Nibelungen belong to life (pp. 19-22). For Giselher's engagement, Volker has composed a song comparing the two lovers to the Rhine and the Danube, which rise from the same mountain, yet go their separate ways, singing the same song into the night. The two rivers know nothing of each other, until the day casts a silvery bridge from the Rhine to the Danube, uniting them so that "ein Leuchten wandert ins Land" (pp. 25-26). The union of Giselher with Rüdiger's daughter seems to stand for the "Anschluß" after the long night of Austria's separation from Germany.

Kriemhild enters, welcoming the Nibelungen to her new realm, Volker greets her with: "Uns ist der Rhein entfremdet, seit du trauerst, / im Odenwald entspringt kein neuer Quell" (p. 31). When they depart for Gran, the Nibelungen strike up the last chorus of Volker's "Nibelungenmarsch," proclaiming once again that they now belong to life (p. 36). As the march music fades, "ungezügelter Rhythmen, die sich langsam zu einem fremdartigen Tanz finden" take its place. The Huns are doing a fire dance, which Volker watches from a wall. When he springs down into their midst, they disperse as if in fear, but Volker offers to play for them, singing a "Kinderlied:" "Schnupper ins Feuerchen, / brenn dir den Bart nicht an, / stinkender Ziegenbock, / spring übern Rauch!" thus making the Huns dance to his tune, until Hagen appears and scatters the "Satanspack." Hagen reminds Volker of the danger they are in, that Kriemhild might have a dance of her own in mind, to which Volker answers: "Ihr sing ich noch ein Lied, daß sie erstarret," and remarks that Kriemhild has accepted her new environment quite readily (pp. 37-39).

Volker's last song is a variation of his first song in Bechelaren: day is now ending, shadows of night close in as the poet salutes his land once more, so that the threatening

shadows may not fall, before their swords have driven them away. Then, ascending the steps again, he sings four stanzas apostrophizing the land, its mountains, its forests, its lakes, finally repeating the stanza to the rivers which he had sung in Bechelaren, only that now these rivers "stürmen ins Meer / und rufen, rufen die Herzen ins Feld!" (pp. 45-46).

When Kriemhild appears and demands that Rüdiger fight Hagen, since no Hun dares to attack the German hero, Rüdiger refuses, as he is a German as well, and as the Huns and Kriemhild stand helplessly by, Volker leads the Nibelungen triumphantly through their midst to safety (p. 56). Baumann's Rüdiger von Bechelaren is a classic example of the "Blut und Boden" style popular in the Third Reich: Rüdiger, with his re-entry into the German racial community provides the "Blut" element, while Volker personifies the "Boden," the unique bond between the German people and the German soil. At one point, Giselher says to Volker: "mit dir will ich durch Deutschland reiten" (p. 46), while Volker reveals to him the manifold wonders of the good German earth, teaching the youth of Germany to value its roots, which can only be found in the "Land." His song for Giselher's and Gotlinde's betrothal celebrates the reunion of Germany and Austria; his Nibelungen march proclaims the rebirth of the spirit of the Nibelungen coupled with the confidence that they are now invincible.

In Heinrich Rogge's Brunhild,<sup>317</sup> Volker and Hagen know that Siegfried had loved Brunhild before he saw Kriemhild, but they disagree on whether he deliberately betrayed his first love. Hagen believes it was deliberate, but Volker claims that Kriemhild's charms, together with a blow to the head which Hagen gave him during a tournament, caused him to forget Brunhild. Volker insists: "Treue und Liebe sind eins. Siegfried, der helle und klare, und solche Lüge," but Hagen answers: "Pah, er spielt ein doppelt Spiel." Volker

points out that the Burgundians are also guilty of duplicity, for Hagen had devised the scheme of having Siegfried win Brunhild for Gunther. Also, since Gunther, Siegfried, Hagen, and Volker are blood brothers, loyalty obliged Siegfried to assist Gunther: "Aus Treue ward er zum Betrüger." Hagen maintains that whoever could be disloyal to Brunhild knows no loyalty; he cannot believe that Siegfried has forgotten her, as he remembers everything else. Then Volker discourses on the difference between Hagen and Siegfried: the latter is "heiter, unbeschwert und tatenfroh, . . . das Leben trinkend wie den schönsten Wein," while Hagen is "schwer und finster, schicksalverbunden mit der Nornen Wissen, kraftgefesselt." The "Sänger" understands them both, yet is powerless to unite them. Hagen retorts that Volker ought to see that the only bridge from Hagen to Siegfried is death. To this, Volker exclaims: "Hagen, was willst du tun?" Hagen answers: "Nichts will ich, aber ich weiß es." He sees Siegfried's murder as inevitable, but to Volker it is "Verrat," for they are blood brothers. The bridge, insists Volker, must lead to life, not death. Does Hagen know what comes after death? "Das Nichts, das große Nichts" is Hagen's answer. Volker agrees, and points out that we all came from this nothingness, will return to it, and fight for it. He sees life as an aspect of death, the great nothingness, and even in Hagen he sees life, "Ich wär sonst nicht dein Freund." Therefore the bridge between Hagen and Siegfried must exist, though Hagen continues to deny it (pp. 75-77). When it becomes clear that Siegfried will help subdue Brunhild again, Volker can only comment "Aus Treue untreu!" (p. 80).

Hagen and Volker witness the Senna, in which Kriemhild emerges as malicious and cowardly. Hagen asks: "Nun, Sänger edlen Menschentums, ist das Verrat oder nicht?" to which Volker's answer: "Schändlich!" (p. 89) sums up his attitude. Still Volker tries to defend Siegfried from Hagen's and Brunhild's revenge. He protests that even had Kriemhild



merely found Brunhild's belt, she would have been able to put two and two together, but Hagen objects that Siegfried should have been more careful for "Geschwätzt oder nicht, es bleibt Verrat." Volker opposes the murder because they were all accomplices in deceiving Brunhild and demanded an "unedle Tat" of Siegfried. However, when Hagen points out that Siegfried could have refused, Volker, too, admits: "Furchtbar bist du, Hagen, doch weiß auch ich hier keine andre Sühne, -- als den Tod" (p. 91).

After the murder, Volker reports Siegfried's death to Brunhild, saying that "Der grimme Hagen" has laid the body before Kriemhild's door. He adds that during the hunt, while Siegfried was wrestling with a bear, his memory returned, and he remembered having promised himself to Brunhild. Volker cannot deny that Siegfried committed ignoble deeds while his memory was gone, for having made one false step, "Die eine Lüge zieht die andre nach," yet before his death he atoned for everything. Siegfried's last words were: "'Brunhild und Siegfried, sie sind eins. Kriemhild--der halben Seele halber Traum, gefesselt von der Enge des eigenen Hirns. Nur eine Pflicht gibt's für den Helden: Wahrhaftigkeit, damit die Wahrheit siege und mit ihr das Leben!'" Brunhild responds: "Freund Volker--!" and the minstrel departs reverently (pp. 97-99).

Volker's attitude that Siegfried should not be punished for betraying Brunhild, since he has lost his memory and is not responsible for his actions, turns out to be correct. Hagen is able, however, to demonstrate that Siegfried must be killed, because he could and should have refused to subdue Brunhild, as this action was unworthy of a hero. Volker, having agreed to this, presents this version to Brunhild, even though he had tried to warn Siegfried as Hagen was hurling the spear. Rogge's Volker appears to vacillate between his inclination to excuse Siegfried and his realization that it was necessary that Hagen kill him. Standing between the

two, and comprehending them both, it is impossible for Volker to commit himself to either Hagen or Siegfried.

Max Mell's Der Nibelunge Not<sup>318</sup> was begun during the Third Reich and completed during the postwar era. The manuscript of Part I, under the title "Die Nibelungen" is dated 1943; it was performed in Vienna on 23 January 1944.<sup>319</sup> The completed work was published in 1951, but we discuss it here, as its conception surely belongs to the end of the Third Reich, and may stand for the contribution of the inner emigration to the popular reception of the Nl. Volker von Alzey is a minstrel, the friend not of Hagen but of Alberich, who enjoys his music, and who has been guarding Siegfried's hoard while he and Kriemhild were away from Worms. Volker announces their return in the form of a riddle: "Gott ist er keiner, noch göttlichen Leibes. / Besser als menschlichen Leibes doch ist er. / Eisen schneidet eher den Nebel als seine Haut" (p. 11).

Gunther is glad to see them and praises Siegfried for his strength and wealth, but Volker praises Burgundy, which has "Aller Frauen Preis" as its Queen; he has composed a song of how Gunther won her, risking his life after the custom of her strange land, and wishes to sing it for the guests (p. 13). Volker has never studied music, "Er hat es aus sich" yet his song of the Saxon war made everyone at court laugh, for "uns schien nichts davon wahr / Und doch, als wär' es uns alles bekannt." Volker answers that the world forgets, but "Das Lied ist treu." Gunther, however, believes it would be better if Volker did not sing his song today. Therefore Volker does not enter the hall with the others, for, "Soll ich nicht singen, will ich auch nicht trinken," whereupon Hagen points to Alberich, who is standing by, and suggests that Volker sing for him. With Siegfried in Worms, however, Volker no longer wishes to entertain Alberich, for "Ich singe nur denen, die ich rühmen kann, / Die stark sind und herrlich

kämpfen und siegen!" (p. 21).

Outside the banquet hall, Alberich explains to Volker that gold is "Dem kleinen Volk" what the sun is to human beings: it awakens the life force in them, makes them flourish, and therefore "Unser Scheitel steht immer danach!" Their nature is to hold on to it, and constantly to dig for more. Whoever has the sun need not to do this, but Alberich believes that the lot of the dwarfs is better: "Das Leben sei Fleiß," to which Volker answers: "Mir wieder ist es genehm, wie wir es haben." Man, counters Alberich, rules the earth, but hard times are coming for human beings; Volker questions how Alberich can know this, and further: "Wie alt bist du? Weißt du's nicht?" Alberich knows his age, but the dwarfs do not count by years, rather by forests and mountains. Men, answers Volker, have only a short time on earth, but he does not envy the dwarfs their long life, for men have an immortal soul. Alberich then asks where this soul begins, and why do men act as though they had none. Volker says he would punish Alberich for saying this, if he did not secretly take pleasure in doing so. The soul "entfaltet sich," but this is something Alberich cannot understand (pp. 22-23).

Alberich lives in space and draws his sustenance from the earth, gold is his sun, and his life is work. Volker lives in time and draws his sustenance from the sun in heaven. His time on Alberich's earth is short, but his soul is immortal, and will dwell in regions which Alberich cannot comprehend. Man, however, can realize his mission only gradually, and often behaves as though he had no soul. The realization of man's destiny must be achieved through disciplining his baser instincts, and thus Volker may not punish Alberich, because he would do it for his own pleasure, not for Alberich's instruction, since Alberich cannot know what Volker knows. Man, while he is on earth, partakes of Alberich's nature, but he must transcend it, as Volker does, when he promises to play "Ein Narrenlied!" for Alberich before the dwarf

leaves Worms.

After the Senna, Dankwart and Volker wonder what the King will do about the evil rumors which will spread. As Volker points out to Gunther, the ordinary man believes what he sees with his own eyes; Volker wants to know what he should tell the people, but Gunther refuses to add anything to Siegfried's oath (p. 55). Before the hunt, Volker believes that "krumme Dinge" are going on, but Hagen tells him to mind his own business. "Du hast hier keine Stimme, kleiner Mann" advising him to guard his tongue, for "Es ist Geduld genug, wenn wir bisweilen / Hinhören, wie du zirpst and klingelst!" Volker rejoins that where his voice is heard, "Wölbt sie sich einen heiligen Raum / Zum Wiederklingen. Wo der nicht wird, / Die Ode meid' ich." Volker does not fear for Siegfried, for no one can betray him, and whoever attempts to, will be trampled into the dust. Volker exits, while Hagen, looking after him, sneers: "Was erkühnt sich so einer? Nun, wir sind ihn los" (pp. 82-83).

Hagen's contempt for Volker seems to be based on Volker's musicianship: there was a note of disdain in Hagen's suggestion that Volker play for Alberich, since the King did not wish to hear his song, and now Hagen rejects the minstrel's objections to his plans on the grounds that he has no voice here. Volker has lost, for the first time, all contact with the power structure, which rejects him and his music. The fault, however, is in the power structure, not in Volker, for the minstrel maintains his higher vision of humanity, as seen in the dialogue with Alberich. Volker has become the voice of Burgundy's conscience, but he must avoid that desert where the voice of conscience is ignored.

After the murder, Volker leaves Worms. Even if they accorded him more honor than has thus far been the case, he could not stay, for while he will not sit in judgment, still he can live only "mit freier Brust." Volker wants to live in a place, where the creature can, through his existence,

praise his creator. Such a man was Siegfried, and Volker touches the dead hero's forehead, looks kindly at Dankwart, and departs. The poet-prophet is not honored in Worms, but even if he were, he could not stay. Even if they listened to his voice, they would not make of Worms a place where one is free, for they have killed Siegfried, and thus shown that they will not let Worms be a place for men like him, who glorify God through their lives. Evil rules in Burgundy, and the poet, recognizing this, must go away (pp. 95-96).

In Part II, Hagen and the Nibelungen are no longer the hunters, they have become the hunted instead. After their arrival in Etzel's castle, Hagen asks the Burgundians how they had enjoyed the "Weg vom Strom herauf?" After a short pause, Volker answers that there is "reichlich viel Volk umher," to which Dankwart adds that they seemed to be armed. Volker remembers having seen looks on their faces as though they were trying, unsuccessfully, to conceal mockery or threats. Hagen explains them as being "die Kriegsleute, die aufgeboden sind / Oder solche, die's verhehlen, daß sie's sind!" (pp. 125-26). The other Burgundians, however, do not wish to believe that they are in a trap and even Volker is confident that Dietrich, whose "Herrschaft erfüllt das Land!" will be able to keep peace for them. Nevertheless, when Hagen prepares to stand watch while the others sleep, Volker's reaction is: "Und magst du mich, ich wache mit dir" (pp. 130-31).

The "kleine Mann" of Part I has become Hagen's "Willkommener Gesell!" in Part II. He welcomes Volker, who has also recognized the Huns' intentions, and who, in Hagen's eyes, has returned to the Burgundians. Hagen's only comment on Volker's return is: "Da kamst du mit. Das ist gut" (p. 131), two short sentences expressing his acceptance of Volker as his companion. The latter, however, is still not the Volker of the popular NI reception, for, as he tells his friend:

Hagen Tronje, alle sagen von mir,  
Und mich langweilt es, daß sie es sagen:

Er führt das Schwert wie den Fiedelbogen.

Gelt, du weißt, ich führe das Schwert nicht gut. (p. 1st)  
Hagen answers that up to now he has managed, but Volker insists that if he could not fiddle any better than he fights, "O weh!" As Volker gets older, it begins to seem that man's days are like grass which is mowed down, and "Ein Rätsel ist der Tag. / Einen Lichtschein von ihm aber behält das Lied / Und manchmal ist es, als löste der die Frage." Hagen falls asleep, and now the minstrel has one more task, to sing a lullaby for Hagen:

Schatten ist all unser Tun,  
Ist, was wir begehrten und hatten.  
Nacht, nimm uns auf in deinen Schatten!  
Laß Schatten in Schatten ruh'n! (pp. 161-62)

Referring to the sleeping Hagen as "alter Knabe" Volker exclaims that now, at least, he knows why Hagen threw their good chaplain into the water, calling it a foolish test, but adding that when Hagen gets the urge to do something, nothing can stop him. The horn call signaling the new day awakens him; Volker leaves his "Freund" and goes to join Dankwart and the men.

Now that betrayal threatens Hagen, Volker stands by him, not because of common race or common nationality, but because of their common humanity. Volker and Hagen are both reduced to human dimensions: Volker is not an invincible sworaman, and Hagen falls asleep during the night watch. Volker never alludes to Siegfried's murder, and sees Hagen only as a fellow mortal, whose strivings and accomplishments will all pass into the shadows, even as they themselves, and whose lives are mysteries which only song can begin to penetrate. Hagen's humanity is underlined by the manner of his awakening: he springs to his feet as any guard would do when he realizes that he has dozed off; his "O Schmach!" shows his embarrassment, yet he is relieved to know that he has "einen Gesellen" like Volker, who will watch even while

his comrade sleeps, and not expose him to the rest of the company (p. 162). Hagen has become human through suffering. His soul has developed as Volker told Alberich, and the minstrel has become his friend. Volker is singing a song to Ortlieb when Dankwart bursts into the hall covered with blood (p. 169); later, a Hun throws his fiddle out of the guest house, signifying Volker's death. The poet has stood by those in power, not as a hero, but as a human being; Mell has given us the first postwar Volker, born of the German catastrophe.

## 2. The novels

Schreyvogel

Buhl

Buhl

Stresau

Friedrich Schreyvogel retells Nl-III in Heerfahrt nach Osten,<sup>320</sup> written in 1938; the same book, printed from the same plates, was published in Berlin in 1941, under the title Die Nibelungen. Volker is Hagen's companion, the poet-minstrel to whom Hagen confides his innermost thoughts, as only Volker can comprehend them. Volker lives at court (p. 12), and when Rüdiger arrives (p. 18) to sue for Kriemhilde's hand on behalf of Etzel, Volker is there to greet him. He and Dankwart preside at two of the tables during the feast in Rüdiger's honor, but unlike Gunther, who has a weakness for wine, or Ortwin, whom Volker finally has to carry from the hall, Volker and Dankwart are moderate in their enjoyment of food and drink. Usually, after his lords have quenched their first thirst, Volker recites poetry to them, songs about the gods and heroes, which he has learned on his travels in northern lands, but tonight the Huns are raising such a din that no one pays any attention to him, and even Gunther is too engrossed in his wine and stories (pp. 34-41).

Hagen is not well-liked at court, on account of his

overriding sense of duty, which drives him to work when the others wish to relax. On one occasion, when his tactlessness has caused even Giselher to remark: "'Ich staune nicht mehr, daß dich so wenige lieben'" (p. 107), Hagen is sitting alone in the great hall. Rumolt avoids him, but when Volker comes in, Hagen looks up and beckons to him. Poets, thinks Rumolt, have strange tastes in friends. Hagen asks Volker for the saga of Harald Gudrunson: how Odin took on his shape and in one night slew an army which was besieging his town while the King appeared to be sleeping. "'So möchte ich kämpfen,'" he tells Volker, "'mit dem zweiten Leib, der als Erbschaft der Götter in uns lebt. Für alle möchte ich die Schlacht schlagen'" (p. 108). But Hagen reflects further: the enemy hated Harald, because he slew so many of their men, and the townspeople probably were afraid of him, because of the mystery about his person. No one, thinks Hagen, loved him.

When the Burgundians set out for Etzel's castle, Volker rides just behind the three Kings and Hagen (p. 158). In Bechlaren, only the Kings are kissed by Rüdiger's ladies; Hagen, Volker, and Ortwin must be content with a bumper of wine. After the feast, Hagen asks Volker to accompany him on a walk down to the Danube, where he kneels and stares into the water so long, that Volker has to ask him what he is up to. Without looking up, he answers: "'Der Fluß ist flüchtig, nur unser Bild in ihm bleibt. Schau auf uns. Wir fließen nicht!'" (p. 217). As day breaks, Hagen rises: he compares the Burgundian army to a river, which as it flows constantly changes its character. The course of a river is determined by its bed, not by the water in it. Most of the earth's water becomes springs and brooks, which disappear into greater rivers, losing their identity, while only a few streams are able to carve a bed into the earth, into which all others must empty: these become the great rivers. So it is with nations: some exist only to amplify others, while some become great and powerful, like the great rivers.



The Rhine is one such river: the Burgundians have enjoyed fishing in its waters, but Hagen has traveled to its source, to see how it came to be. In the beginning, there was no riverbed for it. The turbulent water made a path for itself, and all the rest of the water followed in this path. With men it is the same: some must force the path, these are the bold and powerful; the rest follow in the path that the bold have dug, becoming part of this bold nation and obeying it. The Romans are one such nation, and the Burgundians are another. They came from the sea and now are living on the Rhine, surrounded by Huns and Romans. But the Burgundians are not "Wasser, das andere breiter macht, wir sind selbst ein Strom! Das mußt du singen, hörst du, Volker, daß es die Unseren nie mehr vergessen!" (p. 219, emphasis mine). The Burgundians must realize that they are a river, which must dig its own bed.

Volker tries to object: men are not water, and when the Rhine forces its way through rocks and gravel, only water is tossed about. Human beings are of flesh and blood, their case is different.

No, insists Hagen, with nations too, it is important "daß ein Weg für alle Zeiten geschaffen wird" (p. 220). The cost in blood and human life is unimportant. Volker looks at the great man in wonderment. Now he realizes why Hagen urged Kriemhilde to marry Attila, and why he urged the Burgundians to make the journey to Attila's court. The Burgundians are to sacrifice themselves by cutting a path to the East for others to follow. They will make the riverbed in which the mighty waters of the German nation will flow. This is what the poet must sing. Here in Bechlaren, just a few miles from Schreyvogel's home, the Volker figure receives for the first time an actual commission from Hagen: poetry has been placed completely under the tutelage and in the service of power.

The journey continues. At the border of Attila's terri-

tory they meet Eckewart, who, much to Volker's annoyance (p. 263), warns them of Kriemhilde's hostile intentions. Eckewart advises them to turn back, for Attila has assembled a mighty army, but Volker insists that he is merely assembling his vassals in honor of the Burgundians. When Eckewart asks why then the Burgundians are traveling with such a great army, Volker replies that it was done on Hagen's advice, so that the Huns may see at once who the Burgundians are.

Dankwart is furious at the idea that Hagen's opinions should determine their every move, for he is convinced that Hagen urged the journey out of personal spite against Kriemhilde (p. 264). Dankwart reminds the Burgundians of their wives and children, their houses and farms (p. 265), and that they were prepared to ride to a great festival, but not to death. Dankwart's thoughts are of the present with its comfort and prosperity, as he advises the Burgundians to turn back while they are still able.

To this, Volker answers that if they turn back now, all of the people at home will laugh at them, since they will be returning with empty pockets. This deflates Dankwart, whose rhetoric had been inspired by resentment of Hagen. Ortwin, however, has other ideas: they could demand tribute from Rome as their price for not harassing the Empire; or they could form a coalition with Rome against Attila, or with Attila against Constantinople.

They only talk such nonsense because Hagen is not there, cries Volker; were he present, they would creep into their holes like mice (p. 266). Now, it is Hunold's turn. He reminds the Burgundians that Rome's tribute to Alaric was "'Fünftausend Tonnen Gold, dreißigtausend Tonnen Silber, viertausend seidene Gewänder, dreitausend purpurfarbene Tücher und dreitausend Pfund Pfeffer'" (p. 267).

Volker is saddened by all of this. These men, normally brave and sensible, are so easily swayed by trivial consid-

erations, that they can even be tempted by pepper, which they do not like: "Es verdroß ihn, daß er je diese Welt als groß und herrlich besungen hatte." Prosperity, power, and riches, are the temptations to which the Burgundians are exposed; the reader is reminded of the biblical temptations in the desert. Only Volker, Hagen's faithful pupil and disciple, is strong enough to resist them without the aid of Hagen himself.

Hagen and Volker take their places for the night watch (pp. 293-96) on a bench in front of the wooden hall. Volker sings of a king's voyage in search of adventure and the undone deeds, which are sleeping in the world like a nut in its shell. One need only crack the shell to get to the meat. Now they are no longer on a ship. They ride through an unknown land, and at night they come to a strange castle, where they are treacherously laid to rest. While the exhausted heroes are sleeping, the enemy attacks them. The king calls to Odin for help, and out of the body of each sleeping knight steps an armed warrior. Together they repel the attackers. In the morning, when the weary men awake, they see the corpses of their enemies, killed by unseen hands. "'Es waren, Fremde, die sie gerettet hatten, und doch sie selbst!'" The hopes, wishes, and the indomitable wills of the heroes have saved them, for "'Großes gedeiht nur dem Mann, der Großes geträumt, keiner ersiegt, was nicht erst die Sehnsucht suchend ersann!'" (p. 296).

After Volker has ended his song, Hagen is silent; he puts his arm around Volker's shoulder, so tightly, that the minstrel can hardly breathe (p. 297). Nations, says Hagen, become great through their dreams. What people consciously desire is often base and worthless, but in the hour of turmoil their dreams take over and make them greater than their adversaries. Volker interrupts: the Burgundian dream, which Hagen has revealed to him, is great and glowing; why then does Hagen never laugh? Volker's song, says Hagen, has al-

ready given the reason: the sleep of the warrior's was death. Just as a seed must die, in order that the plant may grow, so men must die, that their dreams may be realized. "'Es war nicht Odin, Völker. Die Not des Todes war es.'" Hagen has interpreted Volker's song (p. 298).

As much of the great man as can be revealed to human understanding has been revealed to Volker. The minstrel no longer analyzes his friend, he no longer justifies him, his relationship has developed into one of awe and reverence, and imperfect comprehension. Volker rises as Kriemhilde approaches them at dawn, but he does not encourage Hagen to do so, nor does Hagen tell him to remain seated. Hagen taunts Kriemhilde with Siegfried's sword, and forbids that she go in to wake her brothers, for they must be well-rested at the banquet. After she has departed, Volker asks why Hagen provokes her so, to which he answers: "'Weißt du es noch immer nicht, Volker? Weil ich es muß!'" (p. 300).

Not until the end of his life does Volker achieve complete understanding. As he is fighting in front of the hall, surrounded by Goths, he catches sight of Werbel approaching. The Goths, too, see Werbel and lower their swords, to see if he brings news from Attila. Volker takes advantage of this chance and attacks the minstrel, who had brought the invitation from Kriemhilde. The Goths cut Volker down from behind, but before he dies he hears a strange voice say "'Anankee!'" a Greek word, which Volker understands to mean "'Das Notwendige . . . Das Gesetz'" (p. 396). Volker can barely muster the strength to repeat the word: "'Anankee!' flüsterte er. Das schmeckte erst bitter, aber wie er nun hinsank, nahm es auch allen Durst und alle Schwere von ihm, ganz leicht hatte es ihn gemacht. Mit ihm schwebte er in das Nichts" (pp. 396-97).

All of this was necessary, all required by "das Gesetz." The law refers to the inner workings of the universe, which required that the Burgundian nation sacrifice itself, in

order to cut a path for those who would follow. Only Hagen knew this from the beginning, but only Volker could put it into words. The minstrel's inspiration must sometimes supply the words, but the great thoughts originate in the depths of Hagen's soul, to be understood and expressed by Volker.

In Krone der Frauen,<sup>321</sup> Herbert Erich Buhl retells Nl I. While Siegfried is in Isenland, helping Gunther to win his bride, "Königin Kriemhild" is entertained by "Volker von Alzey, der herzliche Spielmann, der den Burgunden mit seinen Liedern Freude und Frohsinn brachte." Volker is a musician, singer, and poet; his songs of love and of the joys of nature gladden the hearts of everyone in Burgundy. The passage which describes Volker also contains the following reflection: the ordinary man, says Buhl, is "das Antlitz des Staates." If the peasant, the smith, and the townsman are happy and prosperous, then all is well; and if the poet and artist are at work, then "wohl ist dem Staat und gesegnet ist seine Macht. Denn sie ist eine Macht der Welt nicht nur, sondern zugleich auch des Geistes Macht, und mächtiger ist der Geist, mächtiger der Wille, mächtiger die heroische Seele als alles Geklüngel der im Erddunkel nistenden Alben." Certainly Buhl, a doctor of laws,<sup>322</sup> did not believe in fairies, so one can only speculate on what he meant by the gang of elves nesting in the bowels of the earth, but he tells us clearly enough that art and poetry are symptoms of the well-being and of the power of the state (pp. 114-15).

Brunhild's humiliation in the Senna, and her refusal to be content with Siegfried's oath, throw Gunther into such a fit of depression, that even Volker cannot bring him out of it. Hagen reminds him of his and Volker's loyalty, but that, too, does not help. Finally Volker speaks, telling Gunther that the fates have woven a bloody destiny for

Burgundy, and that Brunhild, "'ein heldisch Weib, wie keines noch mein Auge je erschaute,'" cannot be ignored. Even though Gunther has pronounced sentence, proclaiming himself satisfied with Siegfried's oath of innocence, still Brunhild demands another judgment, and Gunther must grant it to her, for she is the Queen (p. 272).

This is Hagen's cue to demand revenge for Brunhild's injured honor. Volker begins to suspect what Hagen is up to, and protests that Hagen's hatred of Siegfried is obscuring his sense of justice. Siegfried did not want Kriemhild to do what she did, and Kriemhild did not want "was ihr die Norne befahl.'" Hagen responds with: "'Schweige doch, Spielmann. Gehe du zu deiner Fiedel und singe von Lenz und Liebe und vom Wein! Ein stählern Spiel, wie dieses, erfordert stärkere Hände als die deinen!'" Hagen must admit that this reproach to Volker is unjustified, but insists that Gunther will have to avenge Brunhild's disgrace. Volker, who sees Brunhild coming, tells Hagen through clenched teeth: "'Die Rächerin naht selbst, sie wird dich nicht brauchen'" (p. 274).

Volker discovers Siegfried's body, and his lamentations awaken Kriemhild. Together they go to the body, which is lying at the foot of the stairs leading to the throne room. Volker knows only that Siegfried is dead, not that he has been murdered, for at Kriemhild's lament that her husband was "'Feig gemordet!'" (p. 328), Volker is genuinely taken aback. He tries to calm her when Gunther approaches, and when she accuses the King of being a murderer, reminds her that he is still her brother. She rushes up the stairs to confront him, but Volker, who arrives first, attempts to depict her pitiable condition to Gunther and urges him: "'rechte nicht mit ihr. Sie ist außer sich'" (p. 329). Gunther, however, pushes him aside "wie einen lästigen Knecht" and turns to Kriemhild. He has no time for Volker now; if the power of the state depends on the happiness of its poets, then Burgundy is in a sad state indeed.

After Siegfried's burial, Brunhild decides to return to Isenland, since Burgundy has become unbearable to her. As she is leaving, Volker praises her decision to go back to her own people, and calls her, in the words of the title, the crown of women (p. 375). Volker is upset by Siegfried's death, but his reaction is also interesting, for he does not condemn Hagen for committing it nor Gunther for allowing it. Rather he reminds Kriemhild that Gunther is her brother, as though telling her that blood is thicker than water. When Volker praises Brunhild, he is expressing the author's sentiments, for Brunhild is the heroine of the novel. Hagen, although Volker never calls him by the title, is "Kanzler von Burgund," and Brunhild feels drawn more to him than to the weak King. In his description of Volker, Buhl emphasizes the importance of the "Dichter" to the "Macht" of the state, thus preparing the reader for the emergence of Volker as spokesman for Hagen's power politics.

Siegfried is the hero of Hermann Stresau's Erben des Schwertes,<sup>323</sup> which also retells N1 I. Before Siegfried arrives in Worms, Volker sings of his adventures (p. 125) particularly with the Saxons, who refused him and his twelve heroes hospitality, and of the blood bath which Siegfried brought about there. Volker knows many tales, and Giselher especially loves to listen to them: about the battles fought on the Altkönig,<sup>324</sup> where ruined fortifications may still be seen and about the gods in the sky (pp. 129-30). Siegfried arrives at Worms with some previous knowledge of its inhabitants: he recognizes Hagen by his one eye, Gunther by his tall stature, and Volker by the "hochgewölbten Augenbrauen im scharfknochigen Gesicht" (p. 142). The ladies enter: beside Gunther walks Kriemhild, whom Volker calls "die Sonne der Burgunden . . . und ihr Glück auf Erden" (p. 151). She is, thinks Dankwart, pleasant to look at, although Volker has a way of being overwhelmed by feminine beauty. After

dinner, Volker entertains them with his harp and song. He sings of a hero who killed a dragon, but Siegfried, who recognizes himself in Volker's song, also sees that the minstrel is embellishing his adventures, making them seem more wonderful than they really were. He tells Volker this, but the minstrel laughs, gives Siegfried his hand, and says: "'Das weiß ich, daß es anders war. Aber du bist so, wie ich dich mir dachte. Besser noch bist du, als ich's mir dachte. Besser noch bist du, als ich's mir träumen ließ!'" (p. 160). In the war with the Saxons, Volker accompanies the Burgundians as standard-bearer (p. 182). Siegfried's reward for his assistance is Kriemhild's hand in marriage, and as a wedding gift, he plans to give her the hoard of the Nibelungen. He, Gunther, Volker, and Alberich journey to Albenland (p. 191) to fetch it, but before they set out, Siegfried mentions his sister, Brunhild, as a suitable wife for Gunther (p. 193). Gunther likes the suggestion, and since Brunhild lives in Albenland, they can fetch her and the hoard together.

As they sail down the Rhine, Gunther listens to Volker's songs; Volker had insisted on accompanying them, and Gunther believes he knows the reason: Hagen sent him along as an "Aufpasser," but Gunther does not mind. Volker is good company, he can "ihnen die Zeit verkürzen mit seinen Liedern und Geschichten, und vor Volkers seit langem bewährten schlichten (sic) Treue wie vor seiner Klügheit braucht er nicht den König hervorzukehren" (p. 197). Hagen seems to have special confidence in Volker, for he trusts him to see to it that Gunther does not get into any trouble. This is, however, Stresau's only indication of such a relationship between the two vassals. Gunther also has complete confidence in Volker's loyalty, as well as in his intelligence, for Gunther, who likes to relax, does not have to play "the King in front of his minstrel; Volker will never take advantage of the confidence which Gunther has placed in him.

During the voyage, Volker entertains the company with



tales of Etzel, the King of the Huns, and of Hagen, who once lived at his court. He also tells how Walther escaped with Hildegund and how they fought with Gunther and Hagen until the latter "voraussah, daß sie alle drei den Abend in den Fichten des Wasgenwalds nicht überleben würden, und er sei der letzte, der in einer solchen Lage um nichts und wieder nichts sein Leben dreingäbe," and therefore proposed a truce with Walther. He sings too about Albenland and "Göttern, die in Wolkenburgen thronten und unerkant durch die Welt schweiften" (pp. 198-99).

Siegfried, who has heard about the gods from an old woman who was living in Brunhild's hut, asks where they are now. Gunther answers that they do not exist, but Volker corrects him: "'Sie sind, . . . Einst gab es das Nichts-- Erde war nicht noch Himmel, nicht das leuchtende Meer und das Menschengeschlecht. Alles wurde geboren aus dem einzigen, was es gab, und das war das Licht. Und alles wird verschwinden und vergehen, wieder im Licht, und so geht nichts aus der Welt verloren. Was untergeht, kommt wieder; wir erkennen's nur nicht, denn nichts kommt so wieder, wie es war . . .'" (pp. 200-01).

As Siegfried leads them to Brunhild's home, Volker remarks that they have arrived at the end of the world and believes that "'Zauberei,'" is at work. Gunther agrees that they are in Siegfried's hand, for here "'dürfte es wohl kaum einen Hahn geben, der nach uns krächte.'" Volker disapproves of such jests, and shakes his head in respectful reproach. The stories he has heard about Albenland make him anxious for the safety of his King, but having begun the journey, he resolves to see it through and protect Gunther as best he can. Moreover, Volker admires Siegfried, has confidence in his good will and judgment (pp. 201-02).

Siegfried dies in Volker's arms (p. 268); when the dying hero wishes he had never seen the Burgundians, Hagen bends over him and asks whether that is true of Kriemhild

as well. "'Schuft!' zischte Volker zurück" (p. 269) beckoning to Gunther to approach and hear Siegfried's last words. After he has expired, Volker remains kneeling beside him, but his eyes are fixed on Hagen; in speechless rage and pain he shakes his fist at him, but Hagen merely braces his foot against Siegfried's shoulder and pulls out his spear. Later, Volker is present at Siegfried's bier, together with the rest of the Burgundian court. Giselher asks where Volker was when Siegfried was killed (p. 286), as if the young King's friend could have prevented the murder.

We have noted the cooperation between Hagen and Volker, when it was a matter of loyalty to Gunther and to Burgundy; when, however, it comes to the question of Siegfried's murder, Volker disassociates himself from Hagen. As a minstrel, Volker transmits the traditions of his people through his songs, and in his assertion that nothing is lost, but that everything which perishes returns in altered form, we may recognize the prophecy of Siegfried's eventual return in a different guise.

Herbert Erich Buhl's Auf fremdem Thron,<sup>325</sup> the sequel to his Brunhild novel, tells Nl II. Volker has not been able to sing since Siegfried's death (p. 155), but when Hagen is placed in charge of the Burgundian army, he promises his loyalty and obedience (p. 162). Volker is given the task of assembling the army for a grand military review (p. 168). As Hagen watches the army of Burgundy march by (p. 186) he turns to Volker, saying: "'Dies ist mein Burgund!'" Volker does not answer; he smiles. And when he smiles, the earth begins to sing, for Volker's songs melt the snows of winter and bring out the first flowers of springtime. Wherever Volker goes, envy and discord disappear. His friends call him Baldur's son, and Hagen, too, must think of Baldur as Volker's eyes meet his, and seek to penetrate into the depths of his soul.

Finally Volker finds his voice: "'Dies ist dein Werk, Kanzler!'" he says, and were he not Volker, he would want to be Hagen. Hagen replies, that were he not Volker, he would not have shown him all of this, and he would not have spoken thus to him before this great assembly. Then Volker bows so low, as if he were standing before one of his Kings. Hagen has never honored anyone, as he is honoring Volker now, and Volker can only hope that the day will come, when he will be able to thank Hagen, not with words, but with iron deeds.

Wortlos legte Hagen seine Rechte in Volkers Hand.  
Schweigend standen die Könige und schauten.

Schweigend starrten sie auf die beiden Männer, in denen sich Burgunds größter Reichtum offenbarte: des Reiches größten Staatsmann und des Reiches größten Sänger.

Des Reiches Geist und des Reiches Herz--sie standen geeint im Sturme der Zeit.

Thus Volker finds his way to Hagen, the alliance of the poet with power is complete (p. 189).

Hagen reveals to Volker alone his innermost thoughts and feelings: on the subject of the invitation, Hagen explains to Volker that he remembers Kriemhild as "'einst Königin von Niederland'" and now Queen of "Hunnland," and because he remembers all of this, he does not regard the proposed trip as merely a happy reunion "'mit einer schönen, lange ent-behrten Frau, deren Angesicht euch als die verlorene Sonne Burgunds erscheint!'" In spite of his admiration of Hagen, Volker cannot believe that Kriemhild means to harm the Burgundians. Hagen attributes this to his sunny personality, which produces the songs that charm all of Burgundy. This is the only point of difference between them, however, and it does not disturb their unity of purpose nor their respect for each other (p. 191).

Before the Burgundians depart for "Hunnland," Giselher must test his prowess at arms, since he will be King of

Burgundy after Hagen is dead. The young King chooses Volker as his opponent. Volker is astonished, but, as Hagen tells him, Giselher must prepare himself for the reception which Kriemhild is planning for them. Volker objects once more to this slander of Kriemhild, but Hagen answers that no matter what the minstrel may think, the chancellor must keep the welfare of Burgundy in mind. Giselher bests Volker using a cut he had learned from Hagen. The fiddler is so enraged that he directs a blow at the lad's head which would surely have been fatal, had Hagen not held Balming in the path of Volker's sword. Once again, Volker must recognize the greatness of Hagen's vision, for Giselher alone of the three Kings of Burgundy is worthy to wear its crown. "'Er ist ein König,'" affirms Volker, to which Hagen replies: "'Er ist der König! . . . die Zukunft Burgunds!'" (pp. 268-72).

When the Burgundians set out (p. 331), Volker is the standard-bearer. Before they reach the Danube, in the middle of a dense forest, Hagen tells Volker to give the flag to Dankwart (p. 336) and sing a song for the company. Volker remembers a time when he was not in armor, riding through the lush countryside with armed warriors, "sondern eine an seiner Seite ritt, die ihm lieb und teurer war denn alles Gold und Edelgestein und selbst die Gunst seiner Könige." Volker sings a love song in three stanzas, using conventional imagery and rhyme, which Buhl describes as "eine übermenschliche Kraft des Gesanges, eine Innigkeit des Ausdrucks, wie er sie kaum jemals erreicht hatte" (p. 337). The Burgundians at any rate like it so well that they ask for another, and get one. This song is for Giselher alone, two stanzas of six and eight lines respectively, about lovers who have to part. It saddens Giselher so, that he is unable to speak for some time, but when he does, he asks Volker to sing it for him again, if he ever has to part from one whom he loves.

Volker now assumes a fatherly attitude towards the young King, expressing confidence that he will never have

to taste the bitterness of love which has to part. Giselher feels that his bitter experience that morning, of having to part from his mother, was the most difficult he could ever bear, but Volker assures him that, "'was du erlebtest, war das Schicksal. Schwer tragen die Herren dieser Welt daran. Aber--sie tragen es für ihre Völker!'" To Giselher's objection that this is "'ein karger Trost!'" Volker answers: "'Nicht doch, König Giselher! Ein stolzes Leben!'" (p. 340).

The lessons which Volker has learned from Hagen are now being passed on to Giselher. When the young King asks whether pride is enough to sustain one throughout life, Volker explains that it is not a question of can, but of must, and this "'müssen'" is fate. Giselher whispers, as if to himself, that pride and majesty may well be too much for him to grasp, for all he is yearning for is happiness. Volker, however, knows better. There will come a time, when Giselher will experience the bitter truth, that there is barely enough happiness in the whole world for a few hearts to live from, but "'Stolz und Hoheit, sie geben ein hartes Bett ab für heiße Herzen. Aber sie sind zugleich ihre edelste Zier. Denn sie geben ihnen die Kraft, über sich selbst hinaus für die anderen zu leben, denen sie den Weg bahnen durch die Wirrnis der Zeiten!'" Giselher, the future of the Reich, must learn these values, putting his own happiness aside for the sake of the greater good of the nation, just as Hagen has done.

During the night watch, Volker sings his third song, at Hagen's request. The chancellor asks that the minstrel sing once again "'das Lied vom Rhein'" as they stand guard "'vor dem Throne des Reiches . . . in feindlicher Fremde!'" The song tells of youth, manhood, and heroic death, as experienced through and reflected in "'Vater Rhein;" life is glorious, death even more so, when transfigured by the green waters of their sacred homeland, for which they willingly die a tenfold death, striding fearlessly through all its terrors, "'für dich, / heiligstes Herz, / deutsches Wort: /

Heimat am Rhein!'" At these words, Hagen drops the composure which has always kept him from revealing himself to those who are not worthy of him. He leaps to his feet and joins Volker in the final stanza of the last song he will ever sing on earth: together they swear fidelity to their home on the Rhine, even though they may lie buried in foreign soil. Their life, their death, all that they are, belong to the "'Heiliger Strom / im Herzen des Reiches / . . . / ewige Heimat am Rhein'" (pp. 458-61).

Buhl's Hagen has united his voice with Volker's in praise of the Rhine and in a pledge of loyalty to the death to their sacred homeland. Volker has progressed from the coarse rebuke, which he received in Krone der Frauen, where Hagen accused him of weakness, to become Hagen's right hand, through whom his wisdom is transmitted to coming generations, and who joins the chancellor in heroic death for the Reich. Volker is no longer the bearer of the Nibelungen saga or the Teutonic heroic tradition, but of Hagen's insights, in the same manner as the schoolteachers and other intellectuals were accustomed to transmit the thoughts of those in authority to the German people.

### 3. The retellings in prose

Gerlach

Blunck

Linke

Busch

In Die Mär von Siegfried, Johannes Gerlach<sup>326</sup> mentions Volker only once, in the statement that Ortwin von Metz and "Volker von Alzey, der Spielmann" (p. 5), together with many others, protected the land.

The popular novelist Hans Friedrich Blunck included the miniatures from the "Hundeshagen Manuscript" in his retelling of the Nl.<sup>327</sup> This brief account describes Volker consistently

as "der Spielmann" and on one occasion as "der Fiedelspieler" (p. 46), but neglects to mention his home in Alzey. Volker bears the standard in the Saxon war (p. 16), and leads the Burgundians from the Danube until they reach Ofen. There, after the rest have retired, Hagen and Volker "blieben zurück, sie wählten eine Bank im Hofe der Burg, um Umschau zu halten" (p. 41). As Kriemhild approaches, Volker draws his "Fiedelbogen" closer, ready to spring into battle. Volker plays his fiddle during the night watch, and in the morning sings: "'Ich fühl' es an den Lüften, es ist nicht weit vor Tag, mir wird so kühl der Harnisch, nicht lang mehr währt die Nacht'" (p. 43). Later in the day, Volker kills the overdressed Hun during the tournament (p. 43), and rages beside Hagen during the battle in the banquet hall (p. 45), so that his fiddle-bow resounds against the helmets and shields.

He slays Irnfried von Thüringen (p. 47) and stands watch with Hagen a second night (p. 48). After the battle with Rüdiger, Volker announces his death to Etzel (p. 51). When Dietrich and his twelve men request Rüdiger's body, Gunther is quite willing to hand it over, "Volker der Spielmann aber spottete und riet, den Toten selbst zu holen, über dem er geige. 'Ehe ihr indes meinen Saiten die Töne raubt, wird ~~euer~~ Helm trüb werden von meiner Hand'" (p. 52). "Der übermütige Volker" is slain by Hildebrand, and Hagen attempts to avenge "des getreuen Volkers Tod" (p. 53). By including the slaying of the overdressed Hun and the abbreviated version of Volker's verbal exchange with the Amelungs, Blunck has made Volker's "Übermut" convincing. He has, however, omitted Volker's loyalty to Hagen or to Burgundy, except for Hagen's one allusion to it.

Karl Busch accompanies his retelling<sup>328</sup> with illustrations by artists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Busch relates all of Volker's actions including his

slaying of the Hunnish margrave as he tries to aid a wounded relative: he even includes an illustration of this scene by Schnorr von Carolsfeld (p. 34). He does not quote any of Volker's mockery of the Huns, but merely states that he does so, and likewise his response to Kriemhild as he shows her Rüdiger's body, is milder than in the N1 (p. 35). Of the more than fifty illustrations, ten show Volker, usually as a young man, with a swan crest on his helmet (Schnorr and Neureuther) and a fiddle on his shield (Rethel). The picture of Volker which the reader takes from this work is that of a stalwart German knight and loyal companion to Hagen.

Karl Linke's retelling of the N1 is intended for Polish students of German in the lower grades.<sup>329</sup> Volker appears in the confrontation between Hagen and Kriemhild, where he promises to help Hagen against Etzel's whole army (p. 40). Volker wishes to rise as Kriemhild approaches, but Hagen restrains him (p. 41). During the night watch, Volker fetches his fiddle and sits down in front of the guest house, where "Sein Spiel klang voll und stark, die Töne ergossen sich ins Haus, und mancher Held fiel in Schlummer. Nun spielte Volker süß und sanft, und als sie alle schliefen, legte er die Fiedel weg und nahm den Schild zur Hand." Volker sees a helmet shining in the darkness, and the Huns recognize him as well; as they retreat, Volker calls them "Feiglinge" and shouts a challenge after them (p. 43).

During the battle in the hall, he is mentioned as fighting at Hagen's side, and after the battle he and Hagen stand outside the door mocking the Huns once more (p. 51). Linke includes in his brief account a still from Fritz Lang's film showing Volker with his instrument, a sort of guitar, during the night watch. The author wished to emphasize Volker's bravery, his disdain of cowardice, and his loyalty to "'Freund Hagen;'" uppermost in his mind, however, was Volker's music, and the idea that in the German minstrel heroism and the lyrical element are united.



#### 4. Summary

Viewing the works of this period, their most striking feature is the de-emphasis of Siegfried. Of the thirty works produced during the Third Reich, only eight are entitled Siegfried, which contrasts sharply with the Weimar Republic, where of thirty-seven works, fifteen have Siegfried's name in the title. Internally, too, Siegfried's importance decreases. Of the thirteen dramas and novels discussed, seven of them retell Ní II, where Siegfried does not appear. In Wichmann, Rogge, and Buhl's Krone der Frauen, his "schwätzen" is stressed, so as to make his murder seem justified. This criticism of Siegfried is usually expressed through Hagen to Volker, who agrees with it and expresses understanding for the necessity of killing him. In Rogge, he agrees that Siegfried was "untreu" and in Buhl, his distress over Siegfried's death does not permanently cloud his admiration for Hagen.

Only Bacmeister and Stresau have Volker condemn Siegfried's murder and his murderer, the latter even having Siegfried die in Volker's arms. Stresau's Volker finds Siegfried even greater than he had imagined, while Bacmeister's Volker announces that through Siegfried the Burgundians have learned to measure greatness by new standards. Rogge attempts to rescue Siegfried's perfection by having him forget Brunhild. His Volker admires Siegfried and tries to defend him against Hagen's charge of "Verrat," but finally even Volker must admit that although Siegfried had forgotten his previous relationship to Brunhild, he had also acted in a manner unworthy of a hero. A cruder view states flatly that Siegfried "verletzt das Artgesetz" <sup>330</sup> when he gives himself to Kriemhild and the Burgundians. Siegfried has ceased to be an adequate symbol for the strivings and ideals of Germany. Stresau, the only author to give Siegfried unqualified praise and a close relationship to Volker, was born in Milwaukee, and thus

was raised away from immediate contact with the contemporary German national experience.

Contemporary writers found in Hagen the ideal which Siegfried had previously personified. We date the beginning of this development at Jordan's Hildebrants Heimkehr, which portrayed a less than completely villainous Hagen, and demonstrated his human qualities through his relationship to Volker. Bergmann, Herzog, and Werner Jansen picked up this theme, identifying Bismarck with Hagen as the expression of German power and of loyalty to the Reich, and through Volker, his companion, expressing the gratitude of the nation and especially of its poets and educators. In the Weimar Republic, Münchhausen the poet and Zindler the educator<sup>331</sup> began and ended the era seeing Hagen as the true hero of the NI and of Volker's song. Now, in the Third Reich, Hagen has come into his own, and the relationship between him and Volker has taken on dimensions which go beyond previous writers.

In the five plays written before the "Anschluß," Bley sees Volker as gradually coming to see the value of Hagen's "Treue," Bacmeister has him praise Siegfried and condemn Hagen, and Weber and Schöttler have Volker express the minstrel's loyalty to Burgundy through edifying sentences and poems from Geibel and the Edda. Wichmann, like Herzog before him, anticipates the coming Nibelungen experience of Germany in his Volker figure, with his song of the Teutonic fist pounding on the door of history, and of Hagen as the god Thor:

Four novels and four plays containing a Volker figure date from the period between the "Anschluß" and 1945. Two plays celebrate the return of Austria into the German nation, an event which Bismarck would have viewed with alarm, even though the Austria which came "heim ins Reich" was very different from the cosmopolitan empire which Prussia had driven out of Germany seventy years before. But now a new chancellor is at the helm of the German nation, a man to

whom Joseph Goebbels wrote: "At the Munich court you grew before us to the greatness of the Fuehrer. What you said are the greatest words spoken in Germany since Bismarck."<sup>332</sup>

Adolf Hitler was certainly no Bismarck, and although there were points of similarity between the two, this is not the place to discuss them. Suffice it to say that the future minister of propaganda claimed for Hitler the mantle of greatness which up to now had been reserved to Bismarck, and that this identification, wrong-headed though it may have been, must have occurred to others as well. The nation had been nourishing the Bismarck cult ever since the great man's fall from power, and one of the ingredients of this cult was the identification of Bismarck with Hagen. Given the notion that Hitler represented a second Bismarck, it was natural that Hitler should assume Bismarck's role as the Hagen of the NI tradition as well.

Schreyvogel and Buhl, in their novels published during the heyday of Nazi military power, show this identification of Hagen and Hitler most clearly. Schreyvogel shows Hagen as the architect of the new "Drang nach Osten," fulfilling Germany's destiny which he alone recognizes. Buhl's Krone der Frauen sees Hagen in the role familiar to us from Munchhausen's ballad, of taking upon himself the burden of performing an unpleasant but necessary task, in the interest of preserving the Reich. Auf fremdem Thron shows Hagen leading the great nation he has forged to its destiny, ~~sacrificing~~ himself for the glory of Burgundy/Germany.

Beside Hagen stands the loyal minstrel, Volker von Alzey. He too has come a long way from Uhland's outline and Hermann's trilogy, where he incorporated the Germanic tradition and transmitted it to future generations. Volker must now transmit the thoughts of the great chancellor, thoughts which at first he opposes because he does not understand them, just as Goebbels had opposed Hitler to the extent of demanding that this "petty bourgeois" be expelled

from the National Socialist Party.<sup>333</sup> Only at the moment of his death does Schreyvogel's Volker attain the ultimate insight, the knowledge that everything Hagen has done was "notwendig" in accordance with "das Gesetz," and thus Volker dies happily. The fatalistic note, sounded in previous retellings and in the Nibelungen film, becomes dominant during the Third Reich. Hagen is the agent of this fate because he alone comprehends it, and Volker communicates Hagen's knowledge to the rest of the nation.

Buhl shows Volker's development from opposition to comprehension and finally to active cooperation with Hagen in pursuing his great goals. Volker recognizes in Hagen the creator of the Reich, while Hagen sees the poet-minstrel as his right hand. Volker is the only Burgundian who understands Hagen, and Hagen, who knows this, honors him accordingly, revealing to Volker his innermost thoughts and motives. Volker must then translate these great thoughts into language which the other Burgundians can comprehend, and thus, through the use of his poetic gifts, further Hagen's goals. Buhl called his narration of Nl II Roman der Königin Kriemhild as a parallel to his Brunhild novel, but Kriemhild is not a positive figure; Hagen, the chancellor of the Reich, and Volker, are the heroes of the novel. It ends with Ortlieb's death in the banquet hall, provoked by the slaughter of the unarmed Burgundians by the Huns. Buhl may have wished to leave the ending in doubt, rather than showing Hagen being murdered by Kriemhild as tradition demanded, and unlike Baumann, he could not let the Nibelungen march off unscathed. The only solution was to let the reader fill in the ending himself: the previous Nibelungen experience had ended with the "Stab-in-the-back," but now the Nibelungen have the home front behind them, and in 1941, when the novel was published, the army and the Reich stood at the height of their power; perhaps Hagen's genius, as discovered and interpreted by Volker, will be able to write a new ending to the Nibelungen

legend. At any rate, even should they perish, they will have perished in the service of a great idea, with Volker as its principal spokesman.

Poetry plays a greater role in the Volker characterizations than it has at any time since the era of romanticism. More writers have included Volker songs, and more of them, up to four in Baumann's Rüdiger. Loyalty, courage, defiance, and love of the homeland are the themes of his songs, which he sings in Bechlaren or during the night watch. Stresau sees him in his traditional role as bearer of the Teutonic tradition, and he sings of gods and heroes on the way to Albenland. Weber, and Schöttler include Geibel's Volker song, and the portion of the Edda which was considered suitable for honoring the war dead respectively. Otherwise the Volker songs, in Bley, Baumann, Wichmann, Schreyvogel, and Buhl express the aggressive nationalism which was appropriate to contemporary Germany. These writers made Volker the vehicle for their poetry and their ideas regarding the German present.

Thus the poet has become the spokesman for authority, and, according to the novelists at least, this is his proper role. Volker does not find his way to Hagen easily, however, for there is a great deal of mutual misunderstanding to be overcome. Hagen tends to look down on Volker, on account of his poetry, while Volker distrusts Hagen's plans because he does not comprehend them. Translated into contemporary experience, this recalls the experience of the intellectuals in regard to the Third Reich: Hitler distrusted them because he did not understand them while the intellectuals themselves were slow in granting support to Hitler, since he was not one of them. In this respect, Goebbels' experience is typical, and since he was the most highly placed intellectual and poet in the Third Reich, he may well have inspired the delineation of the poet figure in these frankly propagandistic Nibelungen works. Stresau's description of Volker's striking physical appearance together with Buhl's and Schreyvogel's

use of Volker to disseminate Hagen's views suggest that Goebbels may well have provided at least part of the material for their Volker figures.

Mell's Der Nibelunge Not, is an exception to all that has been said thus far. His intention was to counteract the nationalistic distortion of the Germanic tradition by means of a more humane view of the Nl.<sup>334</sup> By 1943, the bankruptcy of Hagen's world view and of Volker's discipleship had become apparent, for Stalingrad had shown the limits of Germany's military capability. Mell's play was surely not inspired by Stalingrad, for there is no mention in it of heroism in the face of certain doom, but represents an attempt at discovering positive human values in the heroic epic. These values are expressed in Part I through Volker's conversation with Alberich on the contrast between human nature and that of the dwarfs, and through Volker's departure for Alzey with the reasons he gives for it. In Part II, Mell has shown human compassion at work in the characters of Hagen and Volker. At the end of the National Socialist period, the Passau cleric has replaced Goebbels and other contemporary intellectuals as the inspiration for the Volker figure.

The end of the Third Reich marks the end of the nationalistic-ideological interpretation of the Nl. If it was correct that part of the "message" of the Nl was to demonstrate that pride and misplaced loyalty lead to destruction, then the popular reception distorted this message by having the Nl glorify what is intended to condemn. The ideology resulting from this misinterpretation led, ironically, to the ending of the Nl: "Diu vil michel ére was dô gelegen tôt."

VI. 1946-1968

1. The drama

Schäfer

Wilhelm Hildebrand Schäfer's Die Nibelungen,<sup>335</sup> is a tragedy in two parts: Volker appears in Part I: "Siegfried," but not in Part II: "Grimhild." He is called "Herr Volker" and "Spielmann" by Hagen, who summons him to tell Gunther about the beautiful Brünhild. Volker affirms that he has been in Isenstein: "Bei meiner Fiedel, ja! Dies Bogenholz / Wuchs dort als Baum" and seen Brünhild, but "Man sagt vom Dichter, seine Kunst sei diese: / Daß er dem Ohr der Lauscher Wimpern schafft. / Zum Auge soll er das Gehör uns machen," but Volker finds words inadequate to describe Brünhild's beauty. Volker's bow knows many a song, not only about pretty young girls, but also about ladies, beautiful, witty, and good, many of whom would be worthy of Gunther's empty throne, but if he must sing of Brünhild, even his fiddle must blush with shame at its inadequacy. Hereupon he shows Gunther her portrait. Its beauty blinds him, but Volker insists it is merely "Ein Schatten dieser Sonne," for Brünhild's hair is spun gold "Und allen Zaubers voll," while the blue of her eyes on the picture is to reality as a glowing coal to a forest fire. Far from reproducing Brünhild's beauty, the painter, whom Volker calls "ein Stümper" has not even approximated it (pp. 25-27).

Hagen encourages Gunther to woo Brünhild, and looks to Volker for assistance, but Volker does not advise pro or con, merely relating what he has heard. On Brünhild's gates he saw the bleached skulls of suitors who had tried to win her. There are three tests which Gunther would have to undergo: riding through fire, doing battle with a gigantic "Mohr" who guards her gate, and finally, if one passes these two

tests "Stellt sie drei Rätsel, die kein Mensch durchdringt. / Durch diese Proben blieb sie bislang Jungfrau." The noise of swordplay interrupts the scene and Siegfried enters, demanding compensation for a wound he received from "Euer Straßenhüter / . . . an dem Zoll bei Alzey" (pp. 28-30). Siegfried helps Gunther win Brünhild, and when they return from Island, Volker announces: "Der König naht, nein, ist am Tor, nein, binnen / Drei Schwingenschlägen eines Rüttelfalken" he will be here. Accompanying him is Brünhild, "ein Glanz, der auch die Steine / An ihrer Krone, schmucklos, überstrahlt" (p. 67).

Volker is once again the poet-minstrel, who brings the picture of Brünhild to Gunther. That he does this at Hagen's request is the extent of the relationship between the two; he does not support Hagen as the latter encourages Gunther to woo Brünhild, nor does he take any further part in the action. To this extent he expresses the author's interpretation of the N1, for Schäfer, whose sympathies are with Brünhild, has the poet Volker praise her and then withdraw from the scene.

## 2. The novel

### Beheim-Schwarzbach

In Der Stern von Burgund,<sup>336</sup> Martin Beheim-Schwarzbach introduces the minstrel as "Herr von Alzey . . . Volker mit Vornamen" (pp. 15-16). After Siegfried has stated his purpose of doing battle with Gunther, the winner being King of Burgundy and Niederland, Volker reacts with: "'Wahrhaftig, das ist aber abenteuerlich,'" and when Siegfried repeats this demand in spite of Gunther's objections, Volker exclaims: "'Wirklich, das ist aber schon außerordentlich abenteuerlich zu nennen! So abenteuerlich, daß es einem fast schon gefällt'" (pp. 24-25). Later, Volker tells Giselher that Siegfried is "'im Grunde, . . . ein ganz netter Kerl,



bloß seine Körperkraft ist ihm zu Kopf gestiegen, und man muß ihn zu nehmen wissen'" (p. 26). After the Burgundians have pacified Siegfried, Volker offers to play for him. The author explains that Volker was considered a "himmlischer Musikant" as they used to say about Orpheus, for he played the "Fidula" and sang as well. He was, however, not merely an artist, but "er hatte bei Hof und im Lard die Aufsicht über die Bauernhöfe und ihre Abgaben inne" which was no easy task. "Und daß bei seinem Gesang und Bogenstrich die wilden Tiere zahm wurden . . . war eine Übertreibung, die man ihm nur ruhmeshalber andichtete" (pp. 28-29). Just as Mell had reduced Volker's prowess in battle to human dimensions, so Beheim, while praising Volker's music, wants to see it in proportion to human accomplishments. Volker likes Siegfried, is not frightened by him, nor does he become angry over Siegfried's behavior. Amidst the passions of the Burgundians, Volker speaks with the voice of common sense.

When messengers from the Angles and Saxons arrive with their Kings' declaration of war, Volker, as the poet, composes the response which the messengers are to take back to their Kings: "'Die hunderttausend Angeln und Sachsen mögen ihre Schritte zum Meer hin lenken und es ganz auslaufen; die edlen Großkönige Lüdiger und Lüdegast aber sind ehrerbietig eingeladen, die Kloaken von Worms zu wischen, nachdem ihnen zuvor die hochwertigen Nasen eingeschlagen worden'" (p. 68). Volker entertains the soldiers with his "Fidula" whenever they rest; his fiddle-bow is curiously bent, so that it looks rather more like a shooting bow. Siegfried's men have never heard such music before, and Volker enjoys playing for them (p. 78).

During the victory celebration in Worms, Volker entertains the company with his music (p. 103), and on the second day, Albrecht vom Stein, Siegfried's herald, recognizes Volker as the Burgundian knight who had saved his life on the battlefield. Since Volker recognizes that Albrecht had

saved his life as well, the two become blood brothers (p. 111), and Volker takes this opportunity to ask whether Siegfried has something on his mind. Albrecht confides to Volker that Siegfried had come to Worms out of love for Kriemhilde. Thus Volker discovers Siegfried's love for Kriemhilde, and becomes the friend of one of Siegfried's men. On the third day of the celebration, Volker suggests that Kriemhilde be invited to participate. After dinner, Volker takes up his fiddle. He is a handsome youth, with a clear forehead, a soft mouth, and sad eyes; to look at him, one could not tell that he was a valiant fighter whom the smell of blood did not frighten. Volker's song praises Siegfried's deeds in the recent war, and includes the lines: "'Den Streit der Königinnen / fochten die Ritter gut.'" Kriemhilde speaks to Siegfried for the first time: "'Das war ein guter Dank, den mein Vetter Volker Euch gespendet hat,'" and thanks him for his assistance in the war. After the festivities, Guntram von Hagenau asks Volker what he meant by the queens' quarrel. Volker answers: "'Ach, es reimte sich so schön,'" and it cannot have been completely meaningless, but some "Weisheit" must have been contained in the lines. His fiddle whispered it, and he sang what it told him (pp. 129-31).

On the day of the fatal hunt, Albrecht vom Stein announces his imminent departure to Volker. He is to ride to Xanten, and thence to "Niblungburg;" where he is to tell Alberich that Siegfried has given the entire hoard to Kriemhilde. Volker calls this a wise decision, as a hoard is just a nuisance, to be got rid of before it causes trouble, but Albrecht disagrees, for a woman will try to increase such a hoard, or else she will squander it, which would be equally foolish. Volker sees his point and is glad that the hoard is none of their concern. Then Albrecht reveals his own difficulty, which must be solved before he leaves: he is in love with Gele, Kriemhilde's lady in waiting. Laughing, Volker tells him that half of Burgundy's knighthood is infatuated

with the girl, and suggests that Albrecht carry her off, since his horse is strong enough to carry both of them. The lovers disappear just as "Knechte eine Bahre aus Ästen, auf der eine Riesengestalt lag, ans Land hoben" (pp. 270-73). Volker's "Fidula" is filled with sadness at Siegfried's death (p. 283) but he does not reproach Hagen or enlarge on the subject to him or to anyone else.

Volker provides six men to the company which will travel to Etzel's court, and he brings his fiddle, about which Beheim explains: "oft ging später noch davon die Rede, wie herrlich er in den Atempausen zwischen den schrecklichsten Waffengängen gespielt habe. Daß er aber seinen Streichbogen als Schwert benutzt und vielen Wilden damit den Schädel eingeschlagen habe, ist nicht wahr" (p. 312). In Gran, Volker joins Hagen for the night watch because he does not feel well and cannot sleep. In the morning a knight in rusty chain mail approaches the two, demanding on behalf of Kriemhilde that Hagen be handed over. When Volker hears that he is called "'Iring von Dänemark,'" the minstrel asks whether the men of Denmark are "'schon den Wilden untertan?'" Before Iring can answer, Gunther appears and reiterates the Burgundians' determination to stand by Hagen. The battle begins immediately, with Hagen and Volker defending the doorway, while the others battle the "Wilden" as they break through the rear of the wooden guest house (pp. 342-44).

During a lull in the fighting Volker takes up his fiddle: since he cannot find his bow, he plucks an accompaniment to "'Viel Wunderdinge melden die Mären alter Zeit von lobesamen Helden und großer Tapferkeit . . .'" becoming once again the Germanic singer who transmits the Nibelungen tradition and gives it form. When Dietrich and his men attack the Burgundians, Volker slays Siegstab, "der sehr jung war und noch nie zuvor gekämpft hatte, ein Tochtersohn Hildebrands." Hildebrand avenges his nephew and slays Volker von Alzey, who is no match for the strength of the well-rested warrior, since

he himself is exhausted, "sein Spiel war verstummt und zum letzten Male klirrten die zwölf Spangen Gotlindens an seinen Armen, als er hinfiel and starb" (pp. 348-49).

Volker's warlike qualities and his friendship with Hagen have been all but eliminated. His principal role is that of minstrel who entertains the Burgundians, integrates contemporary experience into the heroic tradition, giving form to historic events, and whose poetic gift inspires visions of future events which even the poet does not comprehend. The "Sänger" of the philologists has returned, together with the "Spielmann" in the subplot involving Gele and Albrecht vom Stein, reminiscent of the "Spielmannsdichtung" with its "Brautwerbungsmotiv."

### 3. The verse adaptation

#### Rockmann

Vorkuta is a mining town in the Soviet Republic of Komi, north of the polar circle in the midst of the Arctic tundra. There, in a forced-labor camp as a German prisoner of war, Siegfried Rockmann wrote Der Nibelungen Not: Aus tausend Nächten Workuta.<sup>337</sup> Rockmann describes his work as the result of extensive discussions of the Nibelungen material, and its application to the experiences which he and his comrades had shared in the Third Reich and in prison camp: "Längst hatten wir erkannt, daß es nicht genügen würde, dem alten Liede eine neue Form zu geben; sollte es für unsere Zeitgenossen wieder attraktiv werden, brauchte es eine neue Ideologie, um die wir nun rangen. Immer neue Symbole drängten sich auf, bis schließlich die alte Mär zu einem fast aktuellen Geschehen geworden war . . ." (p. xiii). Siegfried and Hagen are seen as the constructive and destructive forces respectively, which are at work everywhere in the world, international understanding opposed by narrow-minded chauvinism;

the hoard becomes the basis for imperialistic wars (capitalism), and Balmung is the "Wunderwaffe" which can be used for good or evil (p. x).

News of Siegfried's humanitarian labors has already reached Worms, where "Herr Volker von Alzey, / vom Geiste adlen Rittertums durchweht" praises the hero who "'den Krieg bekämpft und Friedenswerke baut / und so die Menschheit aus der Not befreit . . ." (p. 45). Volker welcomes the dragon slayer and sings in his honor of "Heimat, Minne, Mai und Abschiedsschmerz" (p. 51). Later, Volker declares his allegiance to Siegfried when the latter asks his newly-found friend to work with him, "'daß die Menschheit sehend wird, / daß sie, was Schönheit schenken kann, erkennt'" (p. 54), for beauty and intellect are the two sources of human well-being, which can transform evil into something pure and good. Volker answers:

"Von ganzem Herzen schließ ich mich dir an,  
und bald wird jeder Gute bei uns sein;  
was gibt es Höheres für einen Mann,  
als seine Kraft der Menschlichkeit zu weihn!" (p. 55)

Volker promises to help Siegfried eliminate war and with it the armaments industry, which consumes our bread before it consumes our blood. To be sure, says Siegfried, we need the sword to kill the dragons among us, those who would wilfully destroy what good men have built. Hagen considers this nonsense, "'Siegfrieds Friedensschwafelei.'" He is not surprised to find a child like Giselher falling for it, and Volker von Alzey has always been "'ein Freund des Pöbels'" (p. 59).

One day, Siegfried and Volker go rowing together. Siegfried requests a song of "'Freundschaft, Vaterland und Maienmond!'" and when it ends, remarks how rich Volker is, for only few have been given the gift of expressing the joys and sorrows that humanity experiences: "'Wir fühlen wohl des Herzens wirres Weben / und unsres Blutes Ruf aus heißer Brunst,'" but only the elect are able to give these sen-

sations form through art. Volker answers that when people respond to his music, he realizes that art is beauty created by man, which will lead him away from deceit and murder to activity in the service of goodness; "'Kunst ist die Seele selbst, die--Form geworden--/ das Saitenspiel der Menschenliebe rührt!'"

Siegfried promises that if the gods send him a son, he will name him Volker, and raise him to be like the minstrel, brave, courageous in battle when it is necessary to fight, the foe of evil and the friend of goodness. Volker shows his gratitude for Siegfried's friendship by taking the hero's hand; "'Nun fällt auf mich, des' Sein dem Schwert nur galt, / vielleicht ein Abglanz doch von jenem Glücke, / das aus den Augen eines Kindes strahlt.'" To Siegfried's suggestion that Volker take a wife and continue his noble race, Volker answers that even though he knows the joys of love, and understands his obligations to the human race, still love and family have thus far had to take second place to "'Dienst an Volk und Vaterland!'" Siegfried then confesses to Volker that he loves Kriemhild, who has "'was gut in mir, zu hellem Brand entfacht'" (pp. 61-63).

When the youth of Burgundy goes hiking, Siegfried and Kriemhild, Giselher and Volker accompany them. Volker sings three songs: the first is a "Morgenlied," telling how the young people are out in nature before sunup, while their elders are still tossing in their beds. Their singing awakens the birds and resounds through the forest like flutes, fiddles, and bassoons, and when they stand on the edge of the mountain, looking into the valley below, "wir grüßen dich, liebes Heimatland, / viel-, vieltausendmal!" (pp. 77-78). His second song, about the joys of Sunday when no one has to work, accompanies a roundelay (p. 78), and his "neues Morgenlied" (p. 79) resounds like a battle song, in which he exhorts the youth of Burgundy to reject the past and usher in the future. Volker proclaims a battle (the words

"Kampf" and "streiten" occur frequently) against the forces of reaction and hatred in favor of progress towards the goals of cooperation and freedom.

Once Siegfried and Volker have announced the new ideology, the minstrel leaves the scene, as the NI follows its course. Volker is not mentioned again until Siegfried dies in his arms. He confesses his guilt to Volker, realizing that his "'Trug . . . am Isenstein'" became his downfall, for "'um was es auch im Leben gehen mag, / rein muß die Waffe unsres Kampfes sein!'" Volker is to carry on his work of peace and reconciliation; Siegfried presses the minstrel's hand, bids farewell to "'Mutter, Liebste, Freunde, Vaterland!'" and expires, his head on Volker's breast. Volker becomes the heir to Siegfried's ideals (pp. 143-44).

Part I of Rockmann's epic was called "Das Licht;" Part II is "Die Finsternis," and Hagen dominates the action as "der Finstere." When Kriemhild leaves Burgundy with Rüdiger to join Etzel, she kisses her mother and gives her hand to Giselher and Volker; the rest she ignores (p. 166). Later, during the debate on whether the Burgundians ought to accept Etzel's invitation, Gunther asks Volker, who has always enjoyed Kriemhild's special favor, whether he believes that any danger threatens them in Hunnenland. The minstrel replies: "'Wir sollten alles tun, was sie erfreut, / klein ist das Opfer gegen unsre Schuld!'" (p. 172).

In Hunnenland, Kriemhild greets her brothers and Volker, but ignores Hagen (p. 182), and in the battle which begins immediately, many Huns fall under Volker's sword, "weil der Held, der so meisterlich geigt, / auch die Klinge gar meisterlich führet" (p. 187), and that evening as he and Hagen stand watch, Volker sings softly, a song of heroism and loyalty (pp. 189-90). The battle between Bechlaren and Burgundy sees Volker and Rüdiger fight and kill each other. As Rüdiger falls, Hagen hails his "Freund Volker" (p. 199) for having slain a traitor. This and the night watch, which is related

quite briefly, are the only remnants of the traditional friendship between Volker and Hagen which Rockmann retains in his poem. Volker defends Rüdiger, by pointing out that he was a soldier, and soldiers must obey their orders, no matter how distasteful they may find them. Orders are the only "Recht" which a warrior knows, the only right he recognizes; "doch: Recht ist, was gut ist, --und gut ist allein, / was im Herzen als gut wir erkennen. . . ." These are Volker's last words; he lies smiling as though dreaming of the peaceful fields of home.

Rockmann's Volker heralds the new order of peace and cooperation among nations, and rejects the old nationalism and militarism. Insofar as the minstrel figure is used as the spokesman for the didactic, ideological purpose behind the author's work, this Volker figure is consistent with those we have studied throughout the past 150 years. Now, however, there is practically no friendship with Hagen, and certainly no understanding of him and his mentality, as we saw in Jordan; Volker is still in the service of propaganda, and his rejection of the old order must be as complete as was his acceptance of it in Buhl's novel. Just before his death, Volker even tries to tell Hagen what he has learned from Siegfried, but the lesson falls onto deaf ears.

#### 4. The retellings in prose

Henniger

Lechner

Rauhof

Klaußmann

Erckmann

Richter

Lentz

Karl Henniger<sup>338</sup> calls Volker "Hagens Freund, der sangeskundige Volker von Alzei" (p. 23) in his retelling, which includes all of the traits of the medieval Volker figure except his killing the margrave as he attempts to help his wounded relative. Henniger emphasizes Volker's



jolliness, calling him "der fröhliche Fiedler" whom Hildebrand slays (p. 82) and having him sing "lustige Lieder" (p. 43) in Bechlaren. He has no use for the Huns: "'Ärgere Feiglinge als die Hunnen haben wir nie gesehen'" (p. 64), and when Hagen asks him to stand watch with him, Volker promises him loyalty and support (p. 58).

Anton Oskar Klausmann<sup>339</sup> has "Volker, der Spielmann von Alzei" (p. 17) weep over having to fight against Rüdiger (p. 82), and it is Volker who takes the initiative in refusing to fight the noble margrave. After Kriemhild discovers that Dietrich has warned the Nibelungen, "Dietrich von Bern reichte dem tapferen Hagen die Hand, und als dritter trat Volker, der tapfere Spielmann, zu ihnen und schüttelte ihm die Hand" (p. 68), thus confirming their friendship and their defiance of Kriemhild. When Volker and Hagen take their places on the bench opposite Kriemhild's apartments, the minstrel promises to stand by Hagen and sits "in nachlässiger Haltung" (p. 70) as Kriemhild approaches. Klausmann omits Volker's ignoble actions, his verbal quarrel with Wolfhart, and his slaying Sigestab. His casual attitude towards Kriemhild very likely expresses the same defiance that he, Dietrich, and Hagen express in the above-mentioned scene.

Auguste Lechner<sup>340</sup> introduces "Volker, der ritterliche Spielmann" together with the rest of the court in Worms (p. 40). He bears the standard in the Saxon war (p. 50), where he fights bravely together with Dankwart (p. 54) and Ortwin (p. 66). Volker is not mentioned again until Rüdiger arrives to woo Kriemhild for Etzel (p. 135), where the Kings, Hagen, Dankwart, Graf Gere, and Volker greet the margrave in the courtyard. After the mermaids' prophecy at the Danube, Hagen asks Volker to be his comrade in the coming danger: "'Was immer geschehen mag, ich bin dein treuer Geselle,' sprach er. Hagen drückte stumm seine Hand" (p. 166). In

Bechlaren, he receives six arm rings for his music, an indication that Lechner used variant \*C as the basis of her retelling.

When they are seated on the bench in Etzel's castle, Volker sees the Huns approaching: "'Schau dir das an, da kommen die tapferen Hunnen wie die Mäuse aus ihren Löchern'" he says to Hagen (p. 178), but takes his fiddle into his hand rather than his sword. He and Hagen drive off a troop of Huns during the night watch, but Volker's music is not mentioned. After the battle in the banquet hall, Volker looks sadly at the approaching Hawart and Irnfried. "'Siehst du' sprach er zu Hagen. 'Das ist der Anfang unseres Unterganges. So lange wir nur Hunnen gegen uns haben, könnten wir vielleicht davorkommen. Aber wenn Männer der gleichen Art, die Freunde sein sollten, sich gegeneinander wenden, so gehen sie zugrunde'" (p. 202). The battle between the Burgundians and the Amelungs is "Volkers letzter Kampf. Dann lag der treue Wächter still unter den anderen Toten" (p. 213). The emphasis in Lechner's Volker figure is on Volker's loyalty to Hagen and on the difference between Germans and non-Germans. Volker expresses contempt for the Huns, and sadness over the fact that they are being opposed by some of their fellow Germans, as this means the beginning of the end.

Rudolf Erckmann mentions Volker only once in Siegfried,<sup>341</sup> calling him "der Spielmann aus Alzey" (p. 5); in Kriemhilds Rache,<sup>342</sup> he brings thirty "Recken" to the Burgundian army and is called "der Sproß edlen Blutes" (p. 11). When Kriemhild hears that he is coming, she remarks that she could do without him (p. 17), and after the Burgundians have crossed the Danube and Hagen has told them that none of them will return alive, only Volker von Alzey "hielt sich wie immer an seiner Seite" (p. 25), when the other heroes began avoiding him after his hard words. In Bechlaren, Volker praises Gotelinde's "Edelmut" and the beauty of her daughter; it is Rüdiger,

however, who gives him the twelve arm rings (p. 41). To Dietrich's warning that Kriemhild is still mourning for Siegfried, Volker answers: "'So laßt dem Schicksal seinen Lauf, wir ändern nichts, was kommen soll. Auf, laßt uns zur Etzelburg reiten, selber zu sehen, wie es dort steht. Sehr bald werden wir am Hofe erkennen, zu welchen Zwecken man hier Könige zu Gästen lädt'" (p. 49).

The rest of the action follows the N1 equally closely: Erckmann combines the night watch with the scene "how they did not rise before the Queen" and omits the detail that Volker is more dangerous than Hagen. He also omits the scene in which Hagen and Volker crowd Kriemhild and the Huns before the minster, Hagen's and Gunther's praise of Volker's fighting during the battle in the banquet hall, and Volker's killing of the margrave as he tries to aid his wounded relative. The picture of Volker is again one of heroic defiance and loyalty to Hagen.

Heinrich Lentz<sup>343</sup> describes Volker as "der kühne und ritterliche Sänger Volker von Alzey" (p. 10), and does not mention him again until Werbel and Schwemmel report to Kriemhild that "Volker, der kühne Fiedler" will be in the company traveling to Etzel's castle, to which Kriemhild answers: "'Auf Volker wollte ich gerne verzichten . . . '" (p. 50) as in the N1. In the remainder of his brief account, Lentz emphasizes Volker's music in Bechlaren, where "vor allen andren war es Volker, der Spielmann, der die Stunden mit heiteren Weisen zur Fiedel verschönte," and upon their departure (pp. 55-56). He omits Volker's profession of loyalty to Hagen, and with the description of his killing the overdressed Hun during the tournament, all of Volker's violent actions. Volker's mockery appears only when Dietrich's men request Rüdiger's body, to which Volker answers: "'Holt ihn euch selbst heraus, wir sind eure Knechte nicht'" (p. 74). The relationship to Hagen is further diminished by having

Volker go of his own accord to assist Dankwart at the door during the battle in the banquet hall.

Carl Peter Rauhof<sup>344</sup> includes all of the N1 traits of the "Spielmann Volker von Alzey" (p. 10) in his brief retelling, except his killing the margrave, the detail that Volker is more dangerous than Hagen, and Hagen's and Gunther's praise of his fighting with the sword-fiddle-bow motif. Volker mocks the Huns for eating Etzel's bread but serving him so badly just as in the N1, but when Kriemhild accuses Rüdiger of having made peace with her enemies, "Da rief Volker, der die Worte gehört hatte, der Königin zu: 'Rüdiger hat ausgekämpft--und mit ihm all die Seinen. Auch dieses Blut komme über Euch!'" (p. 87). In words paraphrased from the Bible, Volker condemns Kriemhild's revenge: the strongest condemnation of Kriemhild we have seen from a Volker figure thus far, for hitherto he has condemned her suspicions only, but now he tells her that all of the blood which has been shed will be held against Kriemhild.

Trude and Felix Richter<sup>345</sup> retell the N1 in a series of drawings accompanied by a brief commentary showing the various laws of the Federal Republic of Germany which are violated by the Nibelungen heroes. The drawings show the Burgundians as Teutonic barbarians with horned helmets, beards, except for Siegfried and the women, and dressed in animal skins. Volker is shown sitting with Hagen in front of the hall during the night watch with his fiddle on his lap. The comment quotes the paragraph from the Strafgesetzbuch on incitement to murder, a reference to Kriemhild's sending the Huns to kill Hagen and Volker. The book is amusing and not too expensive.

5. The essay

Fernau

Joachim Fernau's Disteln für Hagen: Bestandaufnahme der deutschen Seele<sup>346</sup> develops the thesis that the N1 reveals the essence of the German soul. In his review, Peter Wapnewski terms this thesis "blanker Unsinn--so blank, daß man sie gar nicht zu widerlegen braucht,"<sup>347</sup> yet this thesis has in fact provided the impetus for the majority of the works in this study, and it is thus appropriate that a stocktaking be the final work it considers. For Fernau, while purporting to retell the N1, with interpretive commentary which claims to relate the N1 to contemporary experience, commits errors of such magnitude that it would be grotesque to attribute them solely to his faulty comprehension of the medieval original. Fernau tells the N1 as he wishes to tell it, using sources of which the N1 is only one. His treatment of the Volker figure is a case in point.

After the Nibelungen have crossed the Danube, and Hagen has related the mermaids' prophecy, which causes some members of the company to turn pale with fear, Fernau enlarges on the character of Volker, describing him as one of that peculiar variety of human beings, who sense fear, but at the same time enjoy it as an especial delicacy: "Ja, sie haben geradezu Appetit auf Furcht, wie die Glasesser auf einen exquisiten Weißweinkelch" (p. 149). Therefore, when Volker learns that the journey will end in disaster, he is filled with "Heiterkeit," and when Hagen announces that they can expect trouble from the Bavarians, Volker reacts by binding his helmet more securely and tying a red banner to his lance as an expression of "lebhaft Fröhlichkeit" (p. 150).

In Gran, when Hagen does not rise before Kriemhild, Volker becomes "verdattert" (p. 169) when he notices that Kriemhild is wearing her crown, rises before her, and has to

be pulled back to his seat by Hagen. He laughs as he sees the Huns approaching, laughs again as they depart, and later, during the night watch, plays "~~fröhliche~~ Melodien" after which he almost falls asleep (p. 173). After the battle in the hall, Volker suggests that they throw down the bodies of the dead, and kills several Huns as they try to aid wounded relatives (p. 185). Volker becomes, in Fernau's essay, the villain of the piece:

Da stand er oben, der ritterliche Spielmann, der blonde Volker, der unbekümmerte, Tod und Teufel anlachende, der fröhliche, der ewig hilfreiche, der liebenswerte, der hirnlose, gedankenlose, verantwortungslose Landsknecht aller Zeiten und Völker. Und die Moral von der Geschichte? Das Wüten ist das Schlimmste nicht!

Doch wer beim Töten lacht,  
den mache ruhig nieder.  
Auch wenn er sonst schön singt--  
verzicht auf seine Lieder! (p. 186)

The Huns hate Volker, as does Etzel, not because of his mockery, but for his "Würdelosigkeit:" Etzel, who was about to attack Volker, is held back by his men "aus Vernunft und Staatsraison," for kings lead their troops into battle, "aber sie boxen nicht mit Volkers." Finally, after the battle with Rüdiger's men, it is Volker "Hagens verbilligte Volksausgabe" (p. 206) who carries the noble margrave's body to the window for Kriemhild to see.

All of this has, of course, little or no resemblance to the Volker figure of the N1; one could cite further examples, and as many for the other N1 characters as well, and one admires the restraint shown by Wapnewski in not enumerating them in his review. Yet it would also be incorrect to assume that these changes in the picture of Volker are Fernau's inventions. The "Tod und Teufel anlachende" Volker can be found in Herzog's retelling; in Nover's version

of the N1, Volker rises before Kriemhild, while Herzog's Volker laughs at the approaching Huns; Keim tells of Volker's "liebliche Melodien" in the night watch, and the retellings from the mid-twenties describe Volker's music in a way which could have suggested Fernau's "fröhliche Melodien" (p. 173); finally, Vesper has Volker carry Rüdiger's body to the window.

These examples suffice to show that Fernau's idea, not only of Volker, but of the entire N1, was based, not only on the medieval epic, but also on the retellings which were in print and popular during his youth: Fernau, born 1910, must have studied the N1 in 1927, when he would have been in the eleventh class in Gymnasium. Thus a "Bestandaufnahme" of Fernau's Volker has given vivid testimony to the popularity of the retellings, and of their influence upon the generations which read them. We have noted that Stieglitz incorporated them into his instruction and it is not unlikely that other teachers did the same; also, given the tendency of schoolboys to find an easier way to prepare their lessons, it would be unusual if Fernau had not relied on retellings to assist him in studying the N1. Thus it happened, that, when he came to use the N1 as a reflection of the German soul, Fernau recalled the retellings more clearly than the epic and took them for the "deutsche Seele."

This thesis is correct, although certainly not in the sense in which the author intended: the popular reception of the N1 had, as we have seen, used the N1 in the development of a national ideology, to the extent that those who studied it, in Gymnasium or at the university, were accustomed to finding in it a relevance to their contemporary situation. Various political leaders had been identified with Hagen, the virtues of the German nation were variously identified in Siegfried, Brunhild, and Kriemhild; Gunther too had on occasion represented the ills of the German body politic, while the authors identified themselves or, in Lang's film, a famous poet, with Volker. All of this may be,

as Wapnewski insists, pure nonsense, yet, to my knowledge, never before has an eminent Germanist pointed this out. Fernau refers to Hitler as "der letzte hybride Recke" comparing him to Siegfried, a comparison which, in 1967, aroused the indignation of at least one reader of Die Zeit,<sup>348</sup> yet we have seen examples of the Nl as Nazi propoganda from 1933 on, and in 1942 Hans Naumann could compare Hitler to the hero of the Nl.<sup>349</sup> Perhaps a best seller based on this thesis was needed to stimulate the opposition of the Germanisten to it, an opposition which could perhaps have helped prevent some of the excesses committed in the name of the Nibelungen virtues, if it had been voiced when the Nl was being misused in praise of the Germans. Instead, the university Germanisten, with the single exception of Helmut Brackert, silently accepted the popular distortions of the Nl as a reflection of German virtues, until Fernau turned the mirror around and made the Nl into a paradigm for the German catastrophe. In doing so, he applied the lessons he had learned from his teachers of German, who taught that the Nl expresses the essence of the German national experience.

## 6. Summary

The works of the postwar era can be divided into two groups: the first, beginning with Schäfer and ending with Beheim includes the retellings and generally attempts to recreate the Nl in its original spirit, making it accessible and intelligible to the average reader of the time. Schäfer sees Volker as a poet only, and through the minstrel figure presents his view of the poet's function: to make the ear into an eye, using words to achieve the same aesthetic results as the artist does with paints. Beheim's Volker is likewise primarily an artist, the prophetic minstrel of Germanic philology. His role in the romantic subplot enables Beheim to ally Volker with Siegfried's men, and underlines



his noncomplicity in Siegfried's murder. It is significant that both authors set Volker's major role in N1 I, Schäfer eliminating him from N1 II altogether and Beheim reducing his role to a minimum, even to the extent of placing Volker's song in the victory celebration after the Saxon war.

The retellings, all of which were published between 1950 and 1955, were probably intended to fill a need in the public schools. After the "Währungsreform," when Germany began to get back onto her feet, one could also begin to think about preserving German culture, of which the N1 is unquestionably an important part, as Fernau points out. Volker's violent or ignoble actions are largely ignored and his music emphasized. There are no songs, however, not even Geibel's "Nachtgesang," nor do any of the authors dwell on Volker's music during the night watch, the point at which earlier writers inserted their references to home, the Rhine, German women, and the like. They see his music as an expression of his gentleness, not of his nationalism.

Two details stand out, however: Klaußmann's statement that Volker weeps when he realizes that they will have to fight Rüdiger, and Lechner's mentioning that Volker is saddened at having to fight the Danes, since they are "Männer der gleichen Art." Was nationalism raising its head even after the catastrophe of 1945? Probably not, for Volker's sadness and weeping bespeak a different attitude. The authors may be reacting to the proclamation of the Federal Republic in the West, and shortly thereafter of the German Democratic Republic in the East, seeing in the formation of these two states the fact of a further split in the German nation, one perhaps even more tragic than the separation of Austria from Germany.

Rockmann and Fernau belong to the most recent past, and represent two reactions to the ideological exploitation of the Nibelungen saga. Rockmann, whose work was written in 1952-1953 but published in 1968, believes that the poet not

only can but ought to serve the powers that be, but he would like to see the old power structure replaced by a new spirit of freedom, tolerance, and cooperation among peoples and nations. He gives Volker his principal role in N1 I, creating a new Volker out of whole cloth, who is to serve the new ideology. He does not attempt to deny Volker's prowess in battle, describing him as "voll Mut und Kraft, wenn es zum Kampfe geht" (p. 45), and as proficient at fighting as he is at his music, yet the principal emphasis in his Volker figure is on his allegiance to Siegfried, and the new order which he represents. Rockmann rejects the view of the poet as spokesman for aggressive nationalism by placing him in the service of a new humanitarianism.

Fernau, on the other hand, shows the ideological exploitation of the N1 turned in on itself. After generations of schoolteachers and university professors had used the virtues of its heroes as examples of behavior for members of an industrial, technological society to emulate, Fernau uses these same heroes as examples of the Germans' faults. In doing so, he made as little use of the actual N1 as did his predecessors, for his essay, indebted as it is to the tradition of popular reception, tells the N1 as Fernau wishes to tell it. Volker becomes the headstrong, foolhardy second lieutenant, while his minstrelsy consists of "Bellman'sche Lieder, . . . Wirtinnenverse oder 'Am Brunnen vor dem Tore'" (pp. 149-50), an appropriate successor, not to the medieval Volker von Alzey, but to Dahn's Volker, who sang "Sah ein Knab' ein Röslein stehn" for Dietlind and Giselher.

Rockmann projects himself into the Volker figure by having his minstrel accept Siegfried's ideas, work with him, and finally by having Siegfried die in Volker's arms. Fernau's view of Volker may have been colored by his own military experience. Perhaps as a young officer he was as impetuous as he pictures Volker to be, or as is more likely from the tone of his Volker treatment, Fernau had to deal, during the war, with ambitious young men whose bravery exceeded their intelligence.

D. Results: the idea behind the Volker figure in medieval and modern German literature

From the N1 to Rockmann's epic, the authors of the works discussed have expressed their reactions to contemporary events and the men who made them through the figure of Volker and his reactions to the men and women who make the events of the N1. Hatto calls the N1 itself "a poem of dire retribution for proud and arrogant deeds, with physical courage and group loyalty offering some purgation,"<sup>350</sup> and Volker comes to mind as an example. Likewise, when the N1 poet's elevation of the minstrel Volker to the status of a noble lord can be interpreted as the "wistful and perhaps ironic imaginings of a poet on the fringe of high society,"<sup>351</sup> we see that the poet has projected himself into Volker von Alzey. It is natural that he should do so, for the Volker figure as fighter and minstrel invites the author to use it as a reflection of his judgments, attitudes, and values.

When the nineteenth-century philologists rediscovered the N1 and identified the minstrel Volker with the "Hofsänger," they invested him with a twofold function: serving the king by providing entertainment, while at the same time preserving the heroic traditions of the Germans and transmitting them to future generations. The authors of those works which constitute the popular reception of the N1 were the pupils of these philologists. Since they became for the most part schoolteachers, i.e. civil servants, or writers who were to some degree at least dependent upon princely generosity, it is understandable that they should project themselves into both aspects of the Volker figure as they saw it. Thus the treatment of Volker came to reflect the fortunes and attitudes of the middle-class intellectuals in Germany, while his relationship to the figures in the N1 which represent power and authority came to reflect the relationship between the intellectuals and the power structure,

as well as the intensity of national feeling in these writers.

During the era prior to 1849, Volker generally appears in the vassal relationship of the N1, occasionally as in Zarnack and Wurm, becoming a servant. Raupach alone has Volker regret Siegfried's murder, but also emphasizes Volker's loyalty to Hagen. Kopisch implies mild disapproval as Volker intimates that Hagen had exceeded the limits of his commission from Gunther. Otherwise, Volker serves as a vehicle for the authors' poetic ambitions--six Volker-songs appear during this era--while his loyalty to Gunther, Hagen, and Siegfried is no greater and no less than tradition required. In his songs, particularly in Hermann and Raupach, he gives the authors' interpretations of the N1, and his speeches in Müller and Eichhorn do the same. Wurm's Volker alone gives a commentary on contemporary conditions, as he satirizes the uninvolved citizen of this peaceful era. Not until 1845, in Vilmar's retelling, is Volker used as a vehicle for the expression of national enthusiasm, while Müller's Volker is the only one who refers to the Burgundians as "Deutsche." The intellectual middle class had little or no relationship to the power structure during this period, in which national aspirations were effectively subdued by Metternich.

After the National Revolution, which reawakened hopes for national unity, the treatment of the Volker figure takes a dramatic turn. The placid minstrel of the pre-March era becomes Hagen's enthusiastic ally, as the understanding between the two heroes deepens and broadens. This deeper understanding, first indicated by Osterwald, who has Hagen analyze Volker's personality, often grows out of an initial opposition, for Volker usually opposes or at least regrets Siegfried's murder, and Hagen must explain to him why it was necessary. Thus in Glaser, Hagen must teach him the duties of a prudent subject, while Geibel's Volker regrets the murder but, in his "Nachtgesang," greets death joyfully in the service of

his Kings. After 1866 the difference between Volker and Hagen is more fully developed, but this contrast is used to accentuate Volker's loyalty, for it has become a loyalty "trotz allen Unterschieds" as in Hosäus, or in spite of Volker's condemnation of the murder, as in Wegener. The latter two authors, together with Naumann and Jordan's Sigfridsage, in which Volker is the loyal servant of the King, represent a reaction to the Austro-Prussian war of 1866. The authors regret that Austria has been driven out of Germany, but remain loyal to Prussia nevertheless.

In 1871, this Volker-Hagen relationship becomes more clearly delineated. Beginning with Siemssen in 1872, and continuing through Jordan, Arnd, and Dahn, Volker further emphasizes his opposition to killing Siegfried, and introduces the note, which up to this point had only been implicit, that Volker will stand by Hagen in spite of his opposition because the Burgundians must unite against the alien foe. In his songs, Volker begins to sing of the Rhine as the homeland of the Burgundians, and in Dahn he calls the Nibelungen Rhenish heroes. In Jordan, it is Volker's contemptuous satire of the Hunnish minstrels which precipitates the catastrophe, while Dahn's Volker likewise expresses contempt for the Huns. Thus Volker bases his loyalty to Hagen on their common nationality, and on his hostility to alien nations, a loyalty which reflects the development of German hostility to France during this era, and the support which the National Liberals gave to Bismarck in spite of his hostility to liberal ideals. The Franco-Prussian war had led to the foundation of a German national state, at the expense of France, and the intellectual middle class welcomed this state even though Bismarck refused them the liberal constitutional monarchy for which they had been hoping. Volker remains loyal to Hagen nevertheless. The culmination of this development is marked by Wilbrandt's Volker, who supports Siegfried's murder for reasons of state, while rising before Kriemhild

during the confrontation, one of the few Volker figures to do so. His respect for authority has become complete.

After Wilbrandt's drama, Wagner, Stecher, and Schroter continue to emphasize Volker's loyalty to Burgundy and to Hagen, yet the tone shifts somewhat, for Wagner attaches conditions to Volker's loyalty, while Stecher and Schroter, in their retellings, do not take the trouble to explain Volker's loyalty. The national enthusiasm generated by the war is dying down, having flared up for the last time in the impassioned speech by Stecher's Volker in 1881. Thereafter, in the dramas of Veihel-Muller and Siegert, Volker ceases to be Hagen's friend as his allegiance shifts to Siegfried, the symbol of Germanic virtue, as Bismarck deserts his allies in the middle class in favor of the more conservative aristocracy and peasantry.<sup>352</sup> The intellectuals are once more out of touch with the power structure.

During the years 1888-1912, Volker all but disappears from the scene. In Germany this was a time of peace, prosperity, and security,<sup>353</sup> while the Kaiser's authoritarian rule, for which Bismarck had laid the foundation, effectively excluded the middle-class intellectuals from any role in political affairs. Miegel's Volker foretells the coming doom from the author's vantage point in England, for the growth of Germany's navy, the colonial expansion, and the development of the German armaments industry had aroused fear and hostility in her host country. These same developments, however, had brought great wealth to the bourgeoisie, and modest comfort and security even to the middle class and the workers, so that inside Germany, Volker could sing of "Der gute Onkel Hagen" in Oliven's operetta. In 1908, Lublinski's Volkmar is alone in Burgundy; no one listens to his songs and he has no contact with the Burgundian power structure, as Hagen, the object of his loyalty, is absent. We have attributed this decline in the Volker figure to the insight on the part of the authors that there was no center of power

in Germany, for Bismarck was gone and the Bismarck legend was still forming.

By 1912 Volker has found his way back to Hagen, but now on different terms. The Kaiser's gunboat diplomacy, the activity of the Pan-Germanic League, and the colonial expansion had combined to produce an upsurge of national feeling, which led to a formulation of the Hagen-Volker relationship in terms of teacher-pupil. Like Glaser before him, Herzog has Volker learn from Hagen, but now Volker learns loyalty from the man whose loyalty exceeds all others', for he has made Burgundy great. The object of Volker's loyalty is only indirectly Gunther, who is invariably a weak figure. Rather his loyalty is to Hagen, who in turn is loyal to Gunther out of monarchist principles: one must be loyal to the king. If one substitutes the Bismarck of the legend and Wilhelm II for Hagen and Gunther, the equation works out exactly, with Volker in the role of the citizen who must learn this virtue. Werner Jansen's Volker goes through a long development, from initial admiration for Hagen through grief over Siegfried's murder and accompanying doubts regarding Hagen's wisdom to an impassioned commitment to all Hagen stands for. The "nevertheless" of 1871 has returned to the Volker figure in 1912 and 1916, recalling the "Nibelungentreue" of Germany to Austria at the outbreak of World War I. Loyalty to the Kaiser was necessary in order to maintain Germany's strength, which expressed itself in the acts of aggressive nationalism in its unsoundest excesses, which began in Germany ca 1912. In 1914, Hagen is for the first time the title hero of a drama based on the Nl.

After World War I, Ernst blamed Hagen's loyalty for the lost war, and his drama shows Volker blindly following Hagen, just as the academic youth of Germany had rushed to volunteer in the Kaiser's army. Bächtiger's drama, however, blamed the disloyalty of the Burgundians (Germans) for Siegfried's fall, and placed Volker in the role of Siegfried's loyal friend,

who avenged his murder on the treacherous Burgundians. In both cases, the treatment of the Volker figure expresses the author's views on contemporary events in Germany, the one blaming loyalty to the Kaiser, the other the treachery of the home front for Germany's defeat. Münchhausen's Volker, however, is loyal to Hagen not in spite of Siegfried's murder but because of it. This is not a reaction to Germany's defeat, but an extension of the theme of Bergmann's drama, Herzog's retelling, and Jansen's novel, placing loyalty to the monarchy above personal considerations or even questions of right and wrong. In Münchhausen's view loyalty is the highest virtue, and one can best demonstrate it by ignoring all other ethical considerations. The poet is absolutely in the service of power.

During the Weimar Republic, the relationship between Volker and Hagen becomes clouded, since it was Hagen who stabbed Siegfried in the back. The ideological interpretation of the NI continues, however, with Volker as self-projection of the authors, only that now Volker voices admiration for Siegfried and devotion to the Rhine. Where Volker is Hagen's companion, the author, Wolzogen, takes pains to point out, that Hagen killed Siegfried out of loyalty, not out of ambition. Not until 1931, in Zindler's drama, is Volker able to reaffirm his uncomplicated loyalty to Hagen, who becomes again the hero of the piece.

The Third Reich saw the blatant exploitation of the NI for the purposes of nationalist propaganda, with Volker as the spokesman for power. It is important, however, to understand that this was nothing but the logical culmination of a century of misinterpretation, which deliberately distorted the NI by equating its characters and situations with contemporary persons and events. In this scheme, Volker von Alzey had a key role, for as spokesman for the author, it was he who, through his songs and speeches sounded most clearly the message of the work, whether of group loyalty, of courage,



or of joyful acceptance of one's bitter fate. Particularly in the Third Reich does fate play a major role, and words like "Schicksal," "Gesetz," "Müssen," as well as the word "bitter" figure prominently in his and Hagen's speeches. These Volker figures, however, were not creations unique to the Third Reich for the ideological interpretation of Volker von Alzey had been developing in this direction ever since Hermann recommended the Nl as the "eisenhaltigen Fluten" into which the youth of Germany should plunge, to emerge rejuvenated and "der ausheimischen Fessel entwunden."<sup>354</sup> Also significant in the Third Reich is its use of Scandinavian tradition in the plays and retellings for it was in medieval Scandinavia that the Volker figure retained his identification with and loyalty to Hagen, the cause of his destruction. Where aggressive nationalism was most rampant, e.g. Jordan, Bächtiger, and the Third Reich, the authors preferred the Norse to the medieval German sources.

After World War II the authors returned to the medieval Nl as the titles of the retellings show. Rockmann alone felt that it was necessary to continue the ideological use of the Nl and attempted to cast Volker and Siegfried into philanthropic roles, while Fernau began, probably inadvertently, the reaction against and the unmasking of the ideological distortion of the Nl. Wapnewski's reaction to Fernau, and Brackert's valuable essay, have already been mentioned. In the German Democratic Republic, Franz Fühmann has stated that "eine eingefahrene Tradition von falschen Zweckinterpretationen, die war zu durchbrechen. Das Nibelungenlied sollte ja nach dem Willen deutscher Turnlehrer vom ersten Tag seiner Wiederentdeckung an . . . die deutsche Heldensage sein, daß heißt der historische Beleg für das, was man Deutsche Tugenden nannte: Deutsche Treue, Deutsche Tapferkeit, Deutsche Frauenkeuschheit."<sup>355</sup> Hansgünther Heyme's production of Hebbel's Nibelungen, which received unfavorable reviews in Cologne, was intended as an unmasking of the

nineteenth-century NI reception, specifically of Dahn's Markgraf Rüdiger,<sup>356</sup> and in January of this year, Hans Kresnik produced a Nibelungen ballet, which the Inter Nationes' Kulturbrief found "anscheinend ganz ohne Ideologie."<sup>357</sup> The recent film, "Das sagenhafte Liebesleben der Nibelungen" is probably also devoid of political overtones, although the author of the script may have projected himself into the Volker role.

The popular reception of the NI which sought to press the epic into the service of a national German ideology appears to have run its course, and it is unlikely that future writers will use the heroes of the NI as examples for the youth of Germany to follow. Future writers will no longer speak through Volker von Alzey of blind loyalty and fatalistic nihilism as positive values, for aggressive nationalism died in Hitler's holocaust. There remains to the Germanisten the task of examining the misuse of the NI and other literary works for propaganda purposes, and of demonstrating that literary figures exist in a unique historical situation, which cannot be recreated or repeated, but only appreciated as something foreign to our experience, but accessible to our understanding. W. J. Grau to the contrary notwithstanding,<sup>358</sup> Volker von Alzey is not "ein Mensch wie Du und ich."

E. The literary adaptations of the Nibelungen tradition in chronological order: a fever chart of the German soul

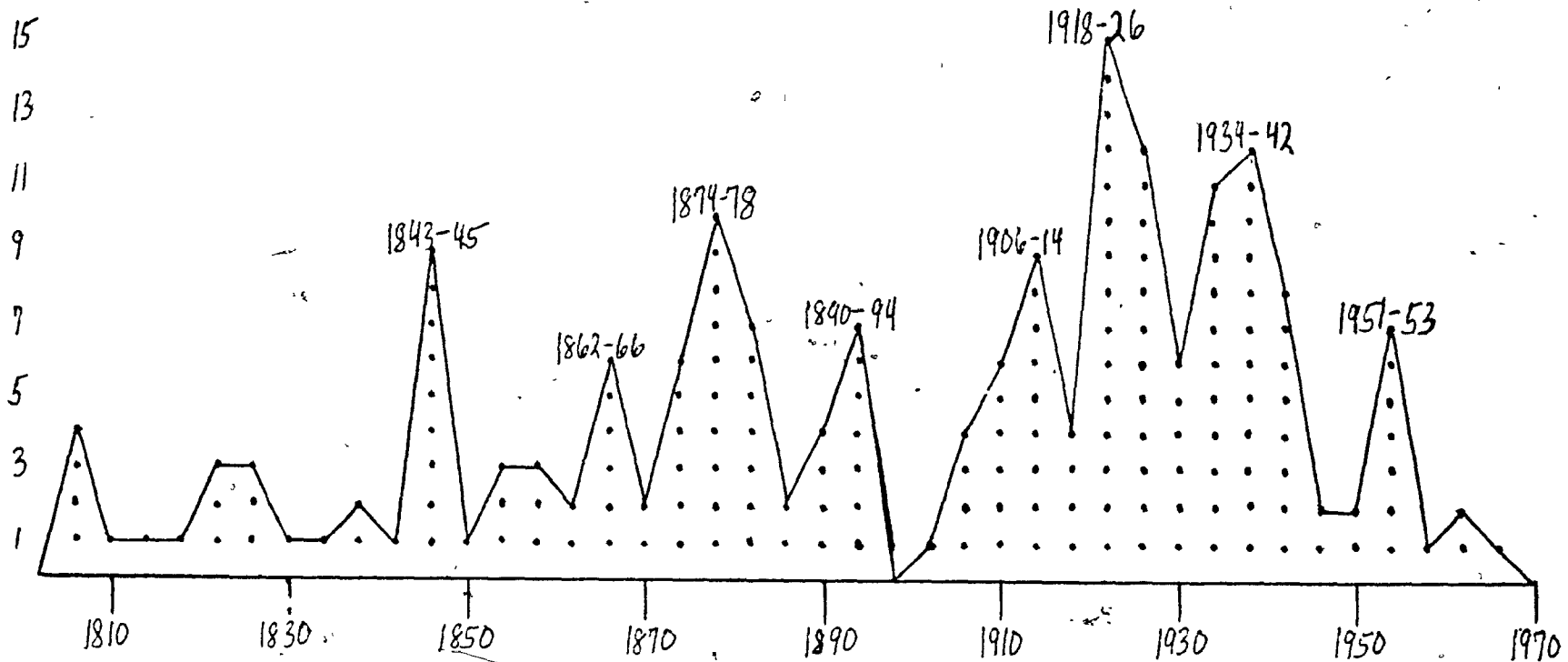
Just as the treatment of the Volker figure provided an index to the attitudes of the intellectuals towards power and authority in contemporary Germany, so also does the year by year production of Nibelungen works indicate the relative intensity of national feeling there (see chart p. 264). The peak before 1848 foreshadows the National Revolution, while the smaller peak in 1866 reflects reaction to the Austro-Prussian war; the sustained surge beginning in 1874 and lasting until after 1880 indicates the reaction to and enthusiasm for the establishment of the Second Reich. After a low during the middle and late eighties, which reflects relative tranquility in domestic and foreign affairs, we see a slight upturn in the early nineties, as enthusiasm mounts for Wilhelm's colonial and naval policies, and probably also in reaction to the military agreements between France and Russia.

The turn of the century is calm: the only work recorded between 1894 and 1903 is Gerhart Hauptmann's fragment. There is some activity before 1910, but only after the "Panther's Leap to Agadir" and the first Balkan war do we see a sustained rise in the production of Nibelungen works, which, after a dip in the war year 1915 surged to the all-time peak ca 1922, as resentment against the Versailles Treaty and the "stab-in-the-back" asserted itself. The average number of works produced per year during the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich is 2.5, or two and one-half times that of the Second Reich, in which an average of only one Nibelungen work per year was published. If these data are an accurate indication of the degree of nationalistic sentiment among German writers and teachers, then it appears that nationalism was more rampant during the Weimar Republic than during the Bismarck era, probably on account of the disappointment over the lost war, and the resentment engendered by Versailles.

The average for the romantic and postwar eras is .5 per year, half of the overall average, and one fifth of that of the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich.

The following chronological list is intended to be complete and represents the most comprehensive bibliography of works based on the Nibelungen tradition to be compiled to date. Those works which were unavailable at the time of writing are marked with asterisks (\*), while works in which Volker does not appear are designated by a minus sign (-).

### Fever Chart



Each dot represents a literary adaptation of the Nibelungen tradition. The vertical lines represent four-year periods beginning at 1802. The dates above the graph indicate peak periods in the production of Nibelungen works. Of the 183 works published in the 150 years, 1819-1968, more than half were published after 1912.

- Fouqué, Friedrich Freiherr de la Motte. "Der gehörnte Siegfried in der Schmiede." Europa, II, Stück 2 (1803), 82-87.
- Tieck, Ludwig. "Das Lied der Nibelungen: Ein altdeutsches episches Gedicht, neu bearbeitet und herausgegeben von L. T. Erstes Buch: Chriemhilde und Brynhilde: In fünf Gesängen: Erster Gesang." Germania, X (1853), 1-4.  
(written 1803-1804)
- Tieck, Ludwig. "Siegfrieds Jugend;" "Siegfried der Drachentöter." Two ballads. Berlin, 1804.
- Fouqué, Friedrich Freiherr de la Motte. "Der Held des Nordens: Drei Theile: Sigurd der Schlangentödter: Ein Heldenspiel in sechs Abentheuern; Sigurds Rache: Ein Heldenspiel in sechs Abentheuern; Aslauga: Ein Heldenspiel in drei Abentheuern." Ausgewählte Werke. I-IV. Halle: Schwetschke, 1841. (first ed. 1808-1810)
- Uhland, Ludwig. "Siegfrieds Schwert." Uhlands Werke. Leipzig: Fock, 1815. II, 257-58. (written 1812)
- Uhland, Ludwig. "Die Nibelungen: 1. Siegfrieds Tod; 2. Chriemhildens Rache." Ed. Adalbert von Keller. Uhland als Dramatiker, mit Benützung seines handschriftlichen Nachlasses dargestellt. Stuttgart: Cotta, 1877, pp. 378-401.  
(written 1817-1818)
- Hermann, Franz Rudolph. Die Nibelungen: I. Der Hort; II. Siegfried; III. Chriemhildens Rache. Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1819.
- Rousseau, Johann Baptist (pseud. F. Saalmüller). Das Lied der Nibelungen: Nun ist es Maie worden. 1820.
- Müller, Johann Wilhelm. Chriemhilds Rache: Trauerspiel in drey Abtheilungen mit dem Chor: Der Schwur; Rüdiger; Chriemhilds Ende. Heidelberg: Groos, 1822.
- Eichhorn, Christian Friedrich. Chriemhildens Rache: Ein Trauerspiel nach dem Nibelungenliede bearbeitet. Göttingen: Rosenbusch, 1824.
- Förster, Friedrich. Dankwärts Heimkehr: Schauspiel in einem Akt. Produced in Berlin, 15 Oct. 1826.

- Zarnack, August Christian. Siegfrieds Tod: Ein Trauerspiel in vier Aufzügen. Potsdam: Horvath, 1826.
- Raupach, Ernst. Der Nibelungen-Hort: Tragödie in fünf Aufzügen mit einem Vorspiel. Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1834. (produced 1828)
- Kopisch, August. "Chrimhild." Gesammelte Werke. Berlin: Weidmann, 1856. IV, 89-175. (first ed. 1830)
- Schwab, Gustav. Der gehörnte Siegfried. Reutlingen: Enzlin und Laiblin, 1836.
- Hagendorff, Hugo. Die Mär vom hürnen Seyfried: 19 Balladen. Zeitz, 1837.
- Wurm, Christian. Die Nibelungen: Siegfrieds Tod: Eine romantische Tragödie in fünf Akten. Erlangen: Palm, 1839.
- Bäßler, Ferdinand. Der Nibelunge Not für die Jugend und das Volk bearbeitet. 4th ed. Rudolstadt: Hartung, 1886. (first ed. 1843)
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Notes

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26

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30

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