

**NIBELUNGS ON THE MARGINS: TRANSFORMATION OF
THE NIBELUNGEN LEGEND IN THE FOLKLORE OF GERMAN-
SCANDINAVIAN FRONTIER**

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Frequent economical, political and cultural exchanges between German and Scandinavian people during the Middle Ages led to the large scale changes that affected many parts of people's lives and resulted in the appearance of German-Scandinavian frontier culture with its specific features.

This article, using the example of Middle German heroic epic "Das Nibelungenlied" ("The Lay of the Nibelungs") and the corpus of adjoining texts that comprise "the legend of Nibelungs / Nibelungenlegend" aims at describing how literature transgresses boundaries, how frontier literature and folklore function in their new space, how canon texts are restructured following the effects of migration and how the ancient and the new plots can be blended in new works of art.

The article begins with a short review of the existing manuscripts of the medieval German heroic epos "Das Nibelungenlied". The most characteristic features of the manuscripts are briefly described. Special attention is paid to the so called m and n-versions dating back to the XIV-XV centuries (Darmstadt manuscripts) of the poem, as they can be regarded the marginal versions, containing a specific mixture of oral and written traditions of the Nibelungen legend.

The article proceeds with description of how Nibelungen legend is reflected and transformed in the folklore of Faeroe Islands. Further the article discusses the contents of medieval Danish ballads of the Hven island "Grimhild's Vengeance" ("Grimhildis Hæven"), the history of creation and the publication of these ballads is briefly described. The content-analysis of texts allows the author to draw a number of conclusions on the sources which formed the basis of these works of folklore, and more widely – about the ways of evolution of Nibelungen legend within the space of medieval German-Scandinavian frontier.

Key words: heroic epic "The Nibelungenlied" ("The Lay of The Nibelungs"), Faeroe islands, Nibelungen legend, Darmstadt manuscripts, ballads of the Hven island, "Grimhild's Vengeance" ("Grimhildis Hæven"), "Thidreks saga", "Edda", German-Scandinavian frontier.

Frequent meetings between medieval and late-medieval Scandinavians and Germans led to exchanges and changes in many forms. European countries that bordered Baltic and North Seas were connected by a broad web of economical, political and personal relations. Migrations waves carried Scandinavians and Germans to and fro. Intermarriages became frequent. Numerous Middle Low German borrowings entered mainland Scandinavian

languages and affected them considerably (Braunmüller 2013). The most striking influence it had on the Danish language due to written exchange and live intercourses with German-speaking people (Poulsen 2013, 31). For instance, in 1420s the administration bodies of the Danish city of Ribe issued their official papers in Low German! (*ibid*). Many forms of administrative, guild, craft organizations were shaped according to German models. As a number of authors show, the process of europeanization brought together people from many countries – England, Scotland, the Low Countries, the countries of Baltic, Russia, Holland etc. (Winter 1973, Naum 2014), still the most stable and frequent exchange was among Germany and Scandinavian countries.

German merchants were visiting Scandinavian countries since the Viking Age, especially those from Saxony and Westphalia. Saxo the Grammatian speaks about a German colony in Danish Roskilde. The presence of German merchants is documented abundantly in many cities of the North. Around 1300 onwards Danish coin was even dominated by German coins. Bjørn Poulsen remarks that, according to cadastral survey from 1377, at least one fourth of Copenhagen's population had German names (Poulsen 2013, 42). The first printed book in Denmark was printed by a German in 1482 and focused on fear of Turks, a common theme for many Europeans. Sofia Gustaffson finds similar tendencies in medieval Swedish urban culture (Gustaffson 2013). Scandinavian influence manifests itself in many elements of medieval technological inventions borrowed by Germany and other countries of Western Europe: windmill (XII century), some iron tools, among which innovative ploughshares, new ship types, like cog (XIII century), stronger iron (around 1350), which had profound effect on warfare, transport and agriculture (Mortensen, Bisgaard 2013, 13).

As all these facts suggest, the encounters between Germans and Scandinavians, important and large-scaled, can be described as a common *German-Scandinavian frontier*. Using B. Poulsen's definition "A true transnational, cultural space" appeared where "thousands of people moved, new cultural patterns were created, networks shaped and integration on various levels took place" (Poulsen 2013, 56). The processes of migrants' integration and the resulting cultural and economical changes brought to existence new forms of material and spiritual life.

Transnational movements of ideas between European intellectual centres and the North contributed to the flourishing of history, literature and sciences in the later periods. German-Scandinavian frontier was, among other things, a dynamic intellectual exchange across national boundaries, cultures and languages. This intellectual exchange affected not only educated people but common folk, as is evident from contemporary literature and folklore.

This article, using the example of Middle German heroic epic “Das Nibelungenlied” (“The Lay of the Nibelungs”) and the corpus of adjoining texts that comprise “the legend of Nibelungs/ Nibelungenlegend”¹ aims at describing how literature transgresses boundaries, how frontier literature and folklore function in their new space, how canon texts are restructured following the effects of migration and how the ancient and the new plots can be blended in new works of art.

For this aim I will examine three pieces that bear clear evidence of intercultural influence of the frontier:

- 1) XIV century Darmstadt manuscripts of the heroic epic “Das Nibelungenlied”, the most marginal among others;
- 2) XII century dancing ballads of the Faeroe islands, the Nibelungen cycle;
- 3) Three ballads of the Hven island about Kriemhild’s revenge as recorded by Danish scholar Andreas Vedel.

The plot twists of the Darmstadt manuscripts

The medieval German heroic epic “Das Nibelungenlied” (“The Lay of The Nibelungs”) created supposedly around Passau at the beginning of the XIII century enjoyed tremendous popularity from the start, as demonstrated by the number of manuscripts preserving the text of the poem. All in all there are 35 manuscripts discovered in monasteries and ancient book collections in various places, mostly around Worms and the southeast of the Danube basin, where the action of the poem takes place and where evidently a strong local tradition of the Nibelungen legend existed through centuries (Heinzle 2002,122).

Manuscripts of the poem are traditionally divided into two large groups, according to the final words of the text:

Nôt-version, with the last sentence being “*daz ist der Nibelunge nôt*” (“that is the downfall of the Nibelungs), to which group two major manuscripts **A** and **B** belong, as well as a number of hybrid versions;

Liet-version, the last words being “*daz ist der Nibelunge leit*” (“that is the song of the Nibelungs”), represented by **C**-manuscript and its satellites.

Another differentiation is according to the way the parchment manuscripts are designated. Capital letters are used to indicate that a manuscript was written down in the XIII-XIV centuries, small letters show that they are written down at the end of XIV and through the XVI century. Thus, there are A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I(J), K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, U, V, X, Y, Z, a,b,c,d,g,h,i, k,

¹ I use this term in this and other works for what Andreas Heusler would call “Nibelungensaga” – the whole corpus of legends and plots about Siegfried’s life and death, Kriemhild’s revenge and the demise of the Burgundians.

l, m,n manuscripts plus a fragment of a Dutch version called T-manuscript (Heinzle 2002,105).

Of all these the most important are **A**, **B**, and **C**-manuscripts for they record the whole text of the poem, while others have less, sometimes only fragments of the original text. The manuscripts differ considerably from one another with respect to the content and the form of the text. The modern researchers believe **B**-version to be the closest to the original text, so the majority of them in their analyses and quotations lean on **B**-manuscript as edited by Helmut de Boor (Das Nibelungenlied. Ed. Helmut de Boor 1963) .

This article studies the peculiarities of two manuscripts, **m** and **n**-versions, know as Darmstadt manuscripts, for they reflect an interesting mixture of the oral and written tradition of the Nibelungen legend.

The **m** and **n**-versions of the text differ from the main tradition of the Nibelungen-manuscripts. They contain considerable changes or rather adaptations of the plot. The scribes and editors of **m** and **n**-versions adhere to the oral tradition of the epic material, which evidently was still very much alive by the time these manuscripts appeared.

The Darmstadt manuscripts (presently kept by the library Hessische Landes- und Hochschulbibliothek, Hs. 3249, Hs 4257) were discovered quite lately, in 1976. The **m**-version dates from the middle or the second half of the XIV century. Unfortunately, the manuscript is almost lost – what remains doesn't preserve the text of the poem; it only has its contents, i.e., a list of *âventiuren* – chapters of the epic, so the manuscript is referred to by the researchers as “Darmstädter Aventiurenverzeichnis” (The Index of the *Âventiuren* from Darmstadt). The most remarkable feature of this index is that among familiar chapters there are four that originated not from the written text of the heroic epic as it was created by *Nibelungenditter*, the unknown author at the beginning of the XIII century, but something totally alien to the original written text – the story how Kriemhild was abducted by a dragon and how Siegfried rescued her through a number of adventures and heroic exploits.

Siegfried's fight with the dragon remains in the outskirts of the plot of the epic. We learn about it from the lips of Hagen who briefly describes this fight among the other heroic deeds of the young protagonist. In the epic the dragon-fight itself seems to be less important than its consequence: after basing in dragon's blood Siegfried becomes invulnerable, his skin impregnable for any weapon.

Yet the dragon-killing has always been one of the most important parts of the legend, it's very core, for it directly reflects the basic proto-myth of the Indo-Arians: the Demiurge fights the chthonic Serpent. Throughout Germanic traditions, the hero is primarily a dragon-slayer who saves peoples and gains treasure by defeating a dragon. As asserted by many researches (Flood 2002,

Sarakaeva 2016 etc), killing a dragon is a basic characteristic of a Germanic hero, it is something The Hero must do and always does. Siegfried is not a hero because he kills a dragon – he is a hero, *therefore* he kills a dragon.

In German Literary tradition this heroic fight was described many times and in many genres, from the lofty songs of the “Elder Edda” to the late medieval comics for the plebs. The fight with the dragon is an essential part of the medieval German poem “Das lied vom hürnen Seyfrid” (The lay of Siegfried with horny skin), the plot of which is believed to be based on the Norwegian “Thidreks saga” rather than “Das Nibelungenlied”. Here the young hero after killing the monster fetches tree-trunks and throws them on the dead body of his enemy. Then he sets it all on fire, and when the horny skin of the monster melts in the heat, he smears his whole body with it so his own skin becomes as hard as horn:

“Das her ward aller hürnen

Dann zwischen den schultern nit

Und an der selben state

Er seynen tode lidt

Als jr in andern dichten

Hernach werdt hören wol.....” (Das Lied vom hürnen Seyfrid, 1958, 106).

But as if fighting one dragon is not enough, the protagonist once more has to face a serpent adversary: Kriemhild, the princess of Burgundy, has been abducted by a dragon so the hero once again sets on a dragon-killing journey. Siegfried doesn’t even have to arrive in Worms to learn about the news – while hunting in the forest he comes upon the beasts’ tracks which lead him to a rock where the beautiful prisoner is kept. A terrible fight ensues and Siegfried does away with one more dragon, brings Kriemhild to her father’s realms and falls in love with her.

The primary myth about the abduction of a fair maiden by a dragon and her rescue by the hero, preserved in folklore and literature tradition of each and every Indo-European nation, finds its way into the Darmstadt **m**-manuscript of “Das Nibelungenlied”. Between the episode in which Siegfried first meets Kriemhild (corresponding to *Âventiure* 5 in **B**-manuscript) and the one where Siegfried leaves the Burgundians in Iceland to fetch his own vassals (*Âventiure* 8) the **m**-version has four chapters with the following headings:

1) *Abinture wie Gunter noch Kriemilde farin wolde und wie sie hinder ein wildir darche*

(How Gunther intended to journey to [Brunhild] and how a ferocious dragon prevented them);

2) *Abinture wie Kriemilde name in wildir drache und furte sie uff einen hohin stein*

(How a ferocious dragon stole Kriemhild and took her to a high rock);

3) *Abinture wie Siferit die juncfrauwe von dem drachin steine gewen mit manchyr groszin arbeit*

(How Siegfried won the maiden back from the dragon's rock with great effort);

4) *Abinture daz Siferit den drachin hatte ubir wondin und fur mit siner juncfrauwe an dem Rin*

(How Siegfried overcame the dragon and journeyed with his maiden to the Rhine).

The second Darmstadt manuscript, **n**-version, also keeps traces of this story. **N**-manuscript, though it doesn't have a whole chapter devoted to the rescue of Kriemhild from the dragon, still contains a passing reference to it. Explaining her love for Siegfried, Kriemhild says:

“Wan er hat mich vß engstlicher not

Vff dem trachen steyn da must ich syn gelegen dot” (Vorderstemann, 1976,121).

N-manuscript was found in 1976 in a codex of texts composed around 1449 (or probably 1470-1480). Apart from the version of “Das Nibelungenlied” the codex contains a Berlin manuscript of “Alfartus Tod” and a text entitled “Wilhelm von Österreich”. The text of the manuscript deals only with the Lay of Burgundians, it describes the demise of the nibelungs as the result of Kriemhild's revenge. The introduction provides a short summary of the preceding events and joins the text (as we know it from the other manuscripts) at the 25th Aventure (how the Burgundians crossed the Danube and travelled to the Hunnish lands and how Hagen met the mermaids). The **n**-manuscript deals with the poem quite liberally, partly following **B**-version, partly preferring **C**-version. The text is restructured, partly abridged, partly expanded.

What makes the **n**-vesrion special is the motives not found in the canon text, but circulating in the oral tradition and the number of literary works of the same plot. Besides the story about Kriemhild's abduction by the dragon, which, though not told explicitly, is referred to in the heroine's speech, we find here the ancient idea of how the murderer dealt with Siegfried's body. The North version, reflected in the songs of the “Elder Edda” speaks of Siegfried being killed in his own bed, so Kriemhild awoke by the side of her dead husband, covered with his blood. The West German tradition has Siegfried killed in the forest, Hagen leaving his body at the widow's doorstep. **N**-manuscript tries to combine both motives: here Siegfried is killed during the hunting expedition in the forest, in accordance with Hagen's elaborate plan, but then Hagen would not only bring his body to Kriemhild's door – he takes troubles to enter the chamber and put the corpse into her bed. This episode in fact corresponds to how the events are

describes in the Norwegian “Thidreks saga” (which never misses a chance to add some gory details to the story).

The third unusual feature of the n-vesrion is the characters’ kinship relations. Here, in accordance with the ancient tradition, Hagen is a half-brother of Kriemhild and the Burgundian kings, so the manuscript speaks of Siegfried murdered by his brother-in-law. Again, this motif is found in the “Edda”, in “Thidreks saga” and in a number of late medieval literary works, such as “The lay of Siegfried with horny skin” and the prosaic “Historia von dem gehörnten Siegfried”.

As my short review shows, the peculiarities of Darmstadt manuscripts can serve as a convincing evidence that the legend of nibelungs, which I consider to be one of the most basic, archetypical myths of the Germanic peoples, have been transmitted both in oral and written tradition beginning from the Dark Ages through High Middle Ages and on into the late Medieval period when it gradually becomes vulgarized, banalized and expired – to triumphantly arise again in our times like a phoenix from the ashes. The transformation of the plot as reflected in Darmstadt manuscripts suggests cultural contacts with other Germanic peoples – the coincidence with the Norwegian “Thidreks saga” prompts influence of the Scandinavian frontier exchanges.

The legend of the Nibelungs in the folklore of Faeroe Islands

Faeroe Islands are a group of eighteen islands belonging to Denmark since 1948. It is an autonomous region inhabited by approximately 50,000 people by now. The islands have a great number of cliffs and are enclosed by Scotland, Iceland and Norway. The population of these islands enjoy the same high standard of living as the rest of Scandinavians. What makes these islands special is an 800 hundred year-old culture of ballad singing and ring dancing, still vividly alive. The rich tradition of folklore ballads attracts the interest of literary scholars, medievalists and musicians.

By nowadays around 250 ancient ballads have been recorded here since 18th century, when the folk culture of Faroe first attracted scholarly attention. The verses are chanted by a leader standing in the middle of the ring of dancers who move round him and sing the refrain which follows each verse. The steps are simple - four to the left, two to the right - but with gestures and bodily movements, as well as with their voices, the dancers enact in mime the story of the ballad. There is no musical accompaniment. During the performance men and women alternately play the role of lead singers and dancers, and the ring joins them. This kind of “square dancing” presumably originated in medieval France, spread all over Europe but survived only in marginal regions (Eder 2002). Outside of the Germanic language family it is known in Balkans and in Greece.

The community dances are held on special occasions, for example, following a whale kill, around religious holidays, at New Year's, and so forth. Lenora Tim suggests that the ring dance is metaphorical (Timm 1982, 688), because dancers - with arms linked as they move, forming nearly parallel rows that wind back and forth through the dance-hall - may be said to symbolize the islands' sinuous topography and the eddies and whorls of the surrounding waters. Moreover, as Jonathon Wylie and David Margolin see it, the dancers' ring represents "the Faroese adaptation of large forms to a land of closely known neighbours and landscapes, the complex inward turnings of culture, and its tortuous sense of wholeness" (Wylie 1981,12).

The ballads, partly Faeroese and partly Danish, have various contents: history, heroic legends, love, magic, social criticism, fairy-tale motifs. Even to the present day the popular tradition keeps such prominent medieval plots as the stories of Siegfried and the Nibelungs, Charlemagne and Roland, Dietrich von Bern and Tristan. The Faeroese ballads were kept alive by the geographical isolation of the islands. Moreover, they survived because they played a very important function - they saved the identity of the small Faeroese people during the Danish occupation and through the years that followed (Eder 2002, 307).

Among the ballads of the Faeroe Islands, three groups of dance ballads roughly based on the Medieval German epic "The Nibelungenlied" survived through the centuries:

- 1) Sjurd-ar kvaed-i (Regir smid-i): ballads telling about the youth and adventures of Sigurd (Siegfried);
- 2) Brynhildar tattu: ballads about Brünhild and the marriage quest;
- 3) Høgna tattu: ballads about Hagen and death of the Nibelungs.

The texts of the comparable ballads exist in Norway, Iceland and Denmark (note for instance one of the most famous pieces, the Danish ballad "Grimhilds Hævn" retelling the demise of the Nibelungs). But the original manuscripts of such ballads have vanished long ago along with the tunes and they do not exist in live folklore tradition, whereas the Nibelungen cycle of the Faeroe Islands is still danced and sung.

The Faeroese ballads recount the Nibelungen legend according to the Norse tradition, beginning with Sigurd's youth and ending with the disaster at king Atli's court, but the lyrics show considerable influence of German epic "Das Nibelungenlied" - chiefly through the Norwegian "Thidreks Saga af Bern" as an intermediary. The performance of all the Nibelungen cycle takes approximately three hours.

Lockwood suggests that the epic ballad reached the Faeroe Islands in the 13th century, when the genre was cultivated in Norway, while a close connection existed between the Norway capital Bergen and the islands, at the time a Norwegian dependency (Lockwood 1979). The XIV and the XV

centuries were probably the classical period of the Faroese ballad, which places the ballads of the Nibelungen cycle among the very earliest of Faroese ballads. However, extraneous matter undoubtedly found its way into the texts as now known, notably verses from an account of Sigurd's meeting with a dwarf's daughter which originally belong to a separate ballad "Dvørgamoy" ("Dwarf Maiden") (Lockwood 1979, 270).

As I have pointed above, with a run of almost seven hundred years or so, Nibelungen ballads in the Faeroe Islands remain as popular as any comparable work of art. Danish priest H.C. Lyngbye, who was one of the first to start collecting the ballads at the Faeroe Islands, describes them as great favourites of the locals. Names and characters of the ballads entered the everyday thesaurus of the Faeroe people and served as a material for proverbs and poetic tropes. For example, the name *Regin* was used figuratively for a deceitful workman. Quotations from the poems could be heard in ordinary conversation, for example Gudrun's words:

*"Elska hann sum annar eigur,
tað man lukkast valla".*

("Love for someone another possesses-that can bring no luck")

Her solicitude for Grani, Sigurd's horse, after the death of his master, was held up as a model for the considerate treatment of animals:

*"Tað er satt, sum talað er,
mong er konan eym;
Guðrum gongur um allan beim,
hon beldurí Grana teym".*

("It is true, as they say, many a woman is pitiful; Gudrun wanders through the wide world, holds fast to Grani's rein).

During his visits to Faeroe Islands at the end of 20th century, Lockwood stayed at Josefina Poulsen's house on Hestur. Josefina, a poor widow in her sixties, was well-versed in the unwritten literature of the Faeroe Islanders and was a remarkable dancer and singer of the ballads, of which the stories of Gudrun and of Sigurd's death were her favourites. While chanting the lyrics, she grieved with Gudrun and sighed over Sigurd cruelly murdered in the woods. While listening to the ballads the scholars "realised we were listening to a voice from the Middle Ages, the authentic voice of the thirteenth century, echoing the Nibelungenlied" (Lockwood 1979, 271-272).

Thus, for the people of the Faeroe Islands the medieval epic ballads still represent life tangibly and credibly. It may be truly said that not only the fabric, but equally the spirit of "Das Nibelungenlied" tradition lives on longest in the Faeroe Islands where, in exceptional isolation, almost stationary social conditions favoured the continuation of an artistic form from the distant past.

Danish Nibelungen ballads

In 1586 the queen of Denmark Sofia, travelling by sea, was overtaken by bad weather near the small Danish island of Hven, so she had to take shelter there for a while. There was an observatory on the island where the famous astronomer Tycho Braga conducted his research. There was one more famous person on the island at that time - the Encyclopaedist and ethnographer Andres Sörenson Vedel (1542-1616), engaged at the preserving masterpieces of Danish medieval history and folklore. Having come to be in one house with these two prominent men, the queen wished to listen to their stories about history of the country, and then Vedel, the collector of national folklore, began to recite Danish folk songs. He had just come across a valuable manuscript containing records of the so-called *kjæmpeviser* – medieval heroic ballads of the XIV-XVI centuries. Some of these songs he recited to the royal listener. The queen was enraptured and immediately ordered him to make a collection of these ballads and prepare them for printing.

Following this order, a selection of hundred ballads was printed in 1591 under the name "*Et Hundred udvalgte danske Viser*" (Weiss 2002, 15). The ballads of this collection, partially based on historical events, were sated with fantastic adventures, magic and formulary elements, traditional for folklore. It is difficult to overestimate Vedel's merits in preservation and the edition of the Danish folk art – his collection stimulated attention to and interest in national heroic poetry, it opened for Europeans a window to the world of the Scandinavian Middle Ages.

Researchers of the German heroic epos "Das Nibelungenlied" and the related corpus of texts owe Vedel special gratitude, as among other things the collection contained three interesting ballads based on Nibelungen legend representing variations of the same plot – "Krimhilde's Revenge" ("Grimhildis Hæven"). We will give below the summary of each ballad:

"Grimhildis Hæven" No 1:

Dame Grimhild prepares a feat and convokes her vassals on a tournament and on a fight with the hero Hagen. Hagen on the seashore meets a mermaid and asks her what waits for him in "Hvenild's lands". The mermaid answers that there he would meet his death, and Hagen beheads her. Further he meets a ferryman and asks to transport him through the sea in exchange for a golden ring. The ferryman too warns him about the trap, Hagen kills him as well and gives a ring to his wife as an atoning gift. Lords Gunter and Gernot push their vessel onto water. A terrible storm breaks the oars, and the travellers use their gilded shields instead. On the bank a beautiful proud maiden meets them, but they go further and at the gate of Nörborogh castle demand to be let in. Hagen says that he is Dame Grimhild 's brother. The gatekeeper reports to the

queen that there are two knights at the gates: one with a violin, another in a gold helmet. The hostess explains that the violinist is not a hired musician - both guests are of royal lineage. She welcomes them in and offers refreshments and entertainment, then goes to a stone hall where her soldiers are hidden, and promises gold and castles as a reward for Hagen's death. A certain baron volunteers to kill the heroes, but Folker kills him with one blow, and 15 warriors more. To overcome Hagen the enemies throw peas on the floor, he slips and falls. Before Hagen bounds up Grimhild reminds him of an old agreement: if he falls to the ground he won't rise again. Hagen agrees to keep his promise and kneels down, a mortal wound is dealt to him, but he manages to kill three more men. Mortally wounded, he goes to Hammeren and opens his chest with treasures. A beauty Hvenild spends night with him and gives birth to their son Ranke. The ballad finishes with the short description of Ranke revenging his father's death -with "gold of nibelungs" he entices Grimhild into a cave and immures her there, she dies of hunger. Ranke goes to Bern and lives among Danes where he earns unfading glory. His mother remains on the island which gets its name from her - Hveen (Borrow 2014, 9-15).

"Grimhildis Hæven" No 2:

Dame Grimhild prepares a feast and convokes her vassals on bloody fight where many will lose their lives. Hagen's mother has an ominous dream: her son's horse stumbles when crossing a stream. She warns Hagen that his sister is sly, he shouldn't trust her. Hagen goes to the sea coast and meets a mermaid who can predict future. Hagen asks whether he will win the prize at the forthcoming tournament. The mermaid dissuades him from the trip, reminding that he has enough riches at home; it is his death that he will win in Hvenland. Hagen kills the mermaid - he knows how to cope with his enemies himself. The narration is transferred to Grimhild's house: two noblemen ride up to her castle and demand that the gatekeeper opens the gates for them. The latter refuses to open and reports about visitors to the queen. She says that these people are her brothers Hero Hagen and Folker the musician. With elegantly dressed ladies she goes down to greet them and demands that they leave their weapons – she can't bear seeing naked blades since king Siegfried's death. Hagen admits that he has killed king Siegfried and king Otelin, the same time when he lost his jacket and a gray stallion, those cold winters "when we stormed Troy". Grimhild escorts them to the hall, then hundred people with naked blades rush towards them. Grimhild promises gold to the one who will kill Hagen. Folker strikes fifteen people straight off, Hagen - twenty. Indignant queen reproaches brothers that they have killed so many soldiers, to which Hagen replies it is her own fault. Excited with the fight, Hagen lifts his helmet – he is tormented by thirst and he quenches it with the blood of the slain enemies *in nomine Domini*. At the end of the fight two heroes kill all the attackers. Dying of his wounds, Hagen thanks

Folker for his courage in fight. Grimhild grieves over the killed vassals, Hagen answers that if only he could have lived through day, he would have burnt her alive. In the last stanza the ballad laconically reports that Grimhild has to pay for the evil she did– Hagen's son caused her to die of starvation inside a hill (Borrow 2014, 16-21).

"Grimhildis Hæven" No 3:

Bodild, Hagen's mother, sobbing, tells about her vision - all horses in the country have died, it means that in Hvenish lands heroes will meet their death. Brave brothers Hagen and Folker go to the river bank and see a sleeping mermaid. They awake her with a question: what dangers wait for them in Hvenish lands. The mermaid advises them to return back, otherwise they will lose their lives. Hagen kills the mermaid, and the brothers go on. They find the house of the ferryman and demand that he transports them to the island in exchange for a golden ring. The ferryman refuses, for his Lady has forbidden him. Hagen, naturally, kills this one too and throws his body into the river Öresund. Lords Gunter and Gernot steer the boat off, a storm overtakes them on the way, the oars break, Hagen rows with his shield and moors ashore. There a certain guard sees them and identifies as "proud Atelings" - Folker is especially distinguished among them. He reports to the queen that the visitors are clad in armour, one of them carries a violin, another - a falcon. Grimhild explains that the violinist is not a hired musician, he is of a noble family, both of them are her brothers. Count Gungelin volunteers to battle against Hagen, promising his retainers to reward them with gold and woods. Hagen accepts the challenge, the fight between guests and hosts begins at once. Folker kills seven with a spear and boasts of how his violin cheerfully dances in the fray. Count Gungelin falls on his knees at Grimhild's feet and begs to exempt him from the fight with the fierce strangers, but she forces him to continue the fight "until Folker lies down dead". Folker addresses her with the speech: the battle continued for seven days, he is emaciated and covered with wounds, his weapon has broken in spills. Young Hubba Yern offers him the sword of his brother, the hero (by that moment two protagonists of the ballad – Hagen and Folker – merge into one) thanks him and promises his eternal friendship for this gift. Fight continues with a new force, the protagonist is ready to die as a hero (Borrow 2014, 21-27). The ballad breaks abruptly.

Even a brief survey of the ballads allows singling out four possible sources which have exerted impact on the plot formation:

1) "The Lay of the Nibelungs" - the text of the poem has served, as we believe, the main source which inspired the anonymous authors. Even without knowing the German language, they could be familiar with the oral retellings of the great heroic poem or they even could read the Danish translation – the so-called manuscript T contains the translation of "Nibelungs" into Danish. The

fact that the authors had some knowledge of the text of "The Lay" is demonstrated by such features as:

- all the three variants of the ballads describe the fighting daring of Folker-the-Musician;

- Hagen drinks blood of the fallen enemies;

- one ballad mentions the wife of the ferryman for whom the gold ring is intended;

- the gift of weapon in the middle of the fight and the unexpected appearance of a strange character called Hebba Yern – this image corresponds, I believe, to Rüdiger of "The Lay";

- before the final fight one of Grimhild's vassals falls on his knees and begs to be exempt from the combat – I believe this motif is also connected with Rüdiger, but the initial motivation of the refusal - unwillingness to take up arms against friends – is lost, and the author of the ballad is forced to replace it with fear of the enemies' strength;

- a vague mention of a certain strange oath which Hagen has to fulfil – I think it is a reflection of his famous oath in "The Lay" not to tell anybody where the treasure is hidden while the Burgundian kings remain alive. In the ballad the kings and the treasure are lost, but the folk memory still keeps some oath and transform it to the strange promise that Hagen gives, somewhere beyond the frames of the ballad: once he falls down he will admit his defeat and not get up.

- the mention of Troy which was besieged by Hagen is connected to his name in "The Lay" – Hagen of Tronje (Trony, Tronege) This name isn't known to the Scandinavian sources, but is repeatedly mentioned in the text of the heroic epos;

- a certain baron, in other version count Gunselin, is in all probability Duke Blödelin, Kriemhild's chief accomplice, who led the attack on the burgundians in "The Lay".

- Otelin killed by Hagen is, most likely, prince Ortlieb who, from an innocent child is transformed into a mighty king after Hagen, the protagonist, changed his status to an unambiguously positive character;

- the mention of certain lords Gunter and Gernot who steamed the boat on water.

2) "Thidreks saga", a prosaic text written by a Norwegian author after he heard – according to his own words – the "Lay of the Nibelungs" retold by Saxon merchants while in Germany. "Thidreks saga" circulated broadly in Scandinavian countries and was translated into Danish. With some changes and additions it circulated in Denmark under the name "Didrik's Chronicles". The ballads possibly borrowed the following motives from the "Saga":

- Hagen, angry about the ominous prediction, kills the mermaid (in "The Lay" he politely thanks prophetic maidens and leaves them in peace);

- fatally wounded Hagen manages to conceive a son with the maiden by the name of Hvenild - her name the ballad inventively connects with the name of the island Hven;

- extended dialogues with the guard of castle gates – the guard himself doesn't play any significant role in the ballads. Yet in Nibelungen tradition Kriemhild's servant meets the Burgundians at the borders of Hunns' kingdom and warns them about the trap. This character, as Andreas Heusler points out (Heusler 1920, 445) is one of the most ancient ones, dating back to the times when Kriemhild (Gudrun) revenged *for* her brothers, not *to* them. Already by the time of "the Lay" the guard – his name is Ekkevert in the epic- lost his function and appears in the text only to oversleep a meeting, to lose his sword and to receive it back from Hagen. His namesake Ekivard in "Saga" warns heroes about a trap which his lady has set for them. In the Danish ballads the guard loses all these functions, but his image remains as a tribute to tradition and is used to characterize by his lips the main characters;

- Hagen before his death goes to "his father's chest of treasures", which is unclear without context. From Norwegian "Saga" we can figure out that it is about treasure of Nibelungs. Hagen gives the treasure to the woman who conceives a child from him and later his son uses the treasure to avenge his father's death.

3) "Edda", both poetic ("Elder") and prosaic ("Younger") - Icelandic heroic songs dating from the X to XIII centuries that contain the most ancient elements of Nibelungen legend which found reflection in the Danish ballads:

- Hagen is Kriemhild's half-brother (same mother, different fathers, according to the Nordic tradition);

- Hagen's mother sees a prophetic dream, and she dissuades heroes from their visiting trip;

- one of the reasons of the attack is a desire to acquire the visitors' gold;

- the heroes' demise is followed by the revenge to the murderers carried out by the representative(s) of the younger generation.

4) "Chronicles of the Hven island" - a prosaic compilation in Latin, tying the legend of Burgundians' death to Hven, the island where the ballads were recorded. Chronicles were written down in Latin in the XVI century and translated into Danish in XVII. Certainly, the influence could very well have gone in the opposite direction: the local folklore could have impact on the pseudo-historical chronicle. Anyway, I believe that local traditions of the island gave the ballads their toponyms – the names of the island, its rivers, castles and straits.

Of particular interest is the transformation of "The Lay" plot in national folk poetry. Cutting longueurs, deleting the unclear and the ambivalent, the creators of the ballads reduce the intricate plots of written works to a set of

recognizable formulas, at the same time creating their own, new works of art that have their own artistic merits. Thus, the Burgundian kings drop out of the folk ballads: their names remain as a tribute to tradition, but they become superfluous for the development of the plot. The format of the ballad allows only several key heroes, thus, Hagen and Kriemhild's terrible and awesome confrontation in the second part of "The Lay" leads to delineation of two antagonists: proud Dame Grimhild and Hero Hagen. The causes of the conflict between the two are paradoxically taken out from the plot framework. Siegfried is casually mentioned in the second ballad; however the reader or the listener unfamiliar with the Nibelungen legend will hardly understand that it is *his* death that caused the whole conflict. Siegfried isn't even mentioned in two other versions of the ballad, it is not explained what the heroine revenges upon the hero for.

An obvious influence of the German poem is demonstrated by the image of Folker. This character, as A. Heusler believes (Heusler 1920), appears at the latest stages of the legend's development, the very *Nibelungenditter*, the author of the "Lay", probably gave life to this character. However the image of the daring violinist who is equally good with his violin string and his sword was a lucky find indeed – his touching friendship with fierce Hagen introduces into the poem the motives of individual choice, personal attachments, warfare camaraderie and gives humanity to the heroes. The creators of the Danish ballads like this image so much that it occupies the central place in the plot alongside with Hagen, and even pushes Hagen into the background in the third version. Folker in the ballads is the younger brother of Hagen, however the hostility of the heroine isn't addressed to him. Thus, the plot of the Danish ballads spins around and returns back to the initial Scandinavian model – two brothers and a sister, the fatal gold and bloodbath in foreign lands.

Summing it up, Scandinavian ballads about Krimhild's revenge not only in themselves are outstanding samples of oral national poetry - they also show two paradoxical features of archaic consciousness and archaic historical memory. On the one hand, here the general dominates over the particulars; a literary formula – over the subject and psychological depths of belles lettres, an archetype – over a historical event. But at the same time we can observe how carefully national poetics treats names and some details, especially those that amazed and impressed the listeners and the storytellers.

In my opinion, it speaks about creative and mental attitudes of the medieval folklore authors essentially different from those of modern writers. Composing new songs on the basis of old classical works, they didn't consider themselves innovators, on the contrary, they believed that they translate real facts about real people and their deeds. That is the reason of their aspiration to keep the names and details that have already lost their meaning or plot values in

a new context. In other words, the anonymous folk poets of German-Scandinavian frontier created new works and new plots unbeknownst to themselves; involuntarily they submitted to the imperceptible pressure of culture and transformed initial plots according to the ancient, archetypical models.

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НИБЕЛУНГИ НА ОКРАИНАХ: ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ ЛЕГЕНДЫ О НИБЕЛУНГАХ В ФОЛКЛЬОРЕ ГЕРМАНО- СКАНДИНАВСКОГО ФРОНТИРА

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Многочисленные экономические, политические и культурные контакты между жителями германских земель и скандинавских стран, имевшие место в Средние века, оказали значительное влияние на жизнь средневекового общества и привели к возникновению особого германо-скандинавского фронта.

Настоящая статья ставит задачей, на примере средненемецкой героической поэмы «Песнь о нибелунгах» и широкого корпуса примыкающих к ней текстов, содержащих легенду о нибелунгах в разных ее формах, рассмотреть, как литература и фольклор перешагивают границы в условиях фронта, как они функционируют в новых пространствах, как канонические тексты и сюжеты реструктурируются под влиянием миграционных процессов, как древние и новые сюжеты сливаются в ткани новых художественных произведений.

В первой части работы приводится краткий обзор рукописей средневековой германской эпической поэмы «Песнь о нибелунгах» и перечисляются их отличительные черты. Особое внимание автор уделяет так называемым m и n-манускриптам, датируемым XIV-XV вв. (Дармштадским рукописям) в связи с оригинальной смесью письменной и устной традиций бытования легенды о нибелунгах, которую они содержат. Статья переходит к устному народному творчеству, автор приводит краткий обзор баллад Фарерских островов и рассматривает, какие изменения устная традиция внесла в сюжет. Далее рассматривается содержание средневековых датских баллад острова Хвен «Месть Кримхильды», кратко излагается история создания и публикации баллад. Контент-анализ текстов позволяет автору сделать ряд выводов об источниках, легших в основу этих произведений устного народного творчества, и шире – о путях эволюции легенд «нибелунговского» цикла в пространстве средневекового германо-скандинавского фронта.

Ключевые слова: героический эпос «Песнь о нибелунгах», Фарерские острова, легенда о нибелунгах, Дармштадские рукописи, баллады острова Хвен, «Месть Гримхильды», «Сага о Тидреке», «Эдда», германо-скандинавский фронт

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