Creativity of the mythical world image in medieval German epics
— about Cordula Kropik's *Gemachte Welten* (Created worlds, 2018) —

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1. Paradoxical process of the "mythical" world in a medieval literary work

This essay deals with the book *Gemachte Welten* of Cordula Kropik[1] which focuses on the relation between authorship and mythology in medieval literature. The main topic of her book seems to show what role the authors of German medieval epics, especially of those which were written around 1200, played in realizing their unique mythical atmosphere in the story.

I would like to clarify how Kropik is focusing on the mentality of a medieval author and his or her role as the creator of an epic which has a profound historical background and was always associated with it. Her book aims, in short, to show that not only modern works, but also medieval works artificially provided an image of the mythical world. This thought may be a little controversial, because not all the scholars accepted the originality or artificial elements in the medieval epics, especially in terms of heroic epics which were born from old German legend.

Kropik presents her interpretation not about these heroic epics, but about chivalry epics like *Tristan* or *Erec*, whose original source was French Court literature. Yes, the German authors of these epics used their creativity to produce their works. It is very clear that they depended on the basis of French literature which had nothing to do with their own ethnical history as well as legends. The most important part of her thesis is a paradox that authors successfully made a mythical atmosphere in their artificial works although a mythos is often thought to belong to archaic folklore or legend. To explain this kind of paradox Kropik relies on the philosophical thought of Cassirer.

Kropik unfolds her interpretation on *Tristan* and *Erec* after she examines how

the story had changed in the French folklore before they were completed as literary works. She aims to make it clearer how the last German Authors (Gottfried von Straßburg and Hartmann von Aue) added their own image to the old French versions.

She describes how both authors artificially created a mythical world in their works and enabled the readers to meditate on the central issue hidden in the texts.[2] Kropik relies on Cassirer's discourse to explain why something mythical can be made within a work artificially, not only in modern works, but also in medieval works.

I will at first describe her thought and also consider how it should be positioned in the history of the medieval German epic studies, as well as the recent discourse about the relationship between an individual author and his or her external narrative source or materials. But the other purpose of this essay will be rather to consider whether her thought can also be applied to the study of *Nibelungenlied*. This has always been regarded as the representative of the heroic epics, which seem much more dependent on the narrative tradition than on the creativity of an individual author. The focus of my consideration would be on how the author added the mythical atmosphere to the former version, which ought to have had a different content from the latest, current version we can really read. This hypothesis must be based on the assumption that *Nibelungenlied* was meticulously written and produced by an author just as *Tristan* or *Erec* were. This creativity of the *Nibelungenlied* author was almost denied or ignored in the 1970s and 80s, but estimated again in the 1990s, for example, by Ursula Schulze. She improved the motive studies in the 70s and 80s which extremely estimated the roles of the text extern materials in the production of *Nibelungenlied* and rather emphasized the interpretability of the text of *Nibelungenlied*.[3] To show the significance of the thoughts of Kropik as well as Schulze, I will roughly look back on the history of medieval German philology.

2. The discourse about the authorship of medieval German epics

In medieval times, there was not such a strong tendency to respect the originality of an author as in modern times. Since the beginning of medieval

German literature studies in the 18th century, it was often thought that the value of the work could be judged mainly according to how much or deeply it was based on the traditions of old myths. The historical events which took place at the end of the ancient Roman Empire (or at the beginning of the medieval ages following it) became songs. These songs were later reformed with a mythical tone and then eventually made into literary works. This image of the epic development remains basically unchanged until today. Those medieval works have always been thought to be something dependent on the mythical image of the world, which must transcend the creativity of individual authors. That is why people have recognized the historical as well as mythical truth and value in those epics and respected them as a common national heritage.

In fact, for example, *Nibelungenlied* and *Tristan*, which I will mainly discuss in this essay, have been respected as "legends" and re-told for a wider range of readers. There was a recognition that they could share their worldview and also peripheral knowledge for their story with the medieval people who really lived hundreds of years ago.

Despite or because of this general tendency characterized by the thought of German Romantics since the 19th century, the creative activities of the medieval authors have always been controversial issues.[4]

The approach to focus on the creativity and originality of medieval authors spread into the field of medieval literary studies in the 1920s and 30s. The scholars began to think that a highly artistic story like *Nibelungenlied*, for example, must have reflected the individual image and perception of the world and society at the beginning of the 13th century, not of the ancient times, say, between the 4th and 8th centuries. According to this change of mode in the field of medieval German literary studies, the interpretations of some prominent scholars became the standard and authority for understanding this "literary work", which was thought to represent the courtesy of the chivalry society in the 12th and 13th centuries.

However, due to the student movement in Europe around 1968 and the university reforms connected with it, the studies of German medieval literature changed drastically, and it led to the situation in which the absolutism of the authority's interpretations on the literary works was often denied. The idea became

more general that the content as well as expressions of medieval work, especially heroic epics like *Nibelungenlied*, was not completed by an individual writer, but by an unspecified number of recipients. This way of thinking was related to the new tendency in academics that interpretation of a literary work should not be decided by an authoritative scholar, but in the open discussion made by the wider range of academic persons.

Because of this new tendency in the academic field after the 1970s, the external elements surrounding the literary texts were emphasized in the understanding of medieval epics. In a certain sense, this new tendency seems to have inherited the characteristic understanding of the works and legends presented by the German Romantic scholars in the first half of the 19th century. However, there is a difference between the two. The studies of the medieval literary work in 1970s and 80s tended to be based more or less on various forms of "Rezeptionstheorie" (Reception Theory), which is decisively different from the image of romantic scholars on medieval works, who did not always stick to a rule or theory, but aimed to regain the old German legend, and adapt it into their own literature as well as world view based on the romantic philosophical way of thinking.

Romantics generally sought the authentic legends of their own nation, and emphasized their connection with "historical truth." In other words, they respected medieval legends as the basis for the historical legitimacy of their own culture. In contrast with them, scholars based on the "Rezeptionstheorie" since the 1970s have rather rejected the image of a medieval "legend" as such an authoritative entity. The medieval philology from the 1970s, which had before focused on the production of the critical editions for masterpieces such as *Nibelungenlied*, began to shift to the photographic printing and publication of the manuscripts, which enabled us to know exactly what the real texts looked like and were read by the medieval readers.[5]

In this new mode of the academic method, many studies of literary reception through the latter part of the middle ages were published. If there was a common basis among them, it was a reception "theory" or intertextuality rather than a "legendary" idea. Anyway, in this kind of image about the literary production, the existence of an individual author had to be disregarded.

However, in the 1990s, the tendency to emphasize the author reappeared, which enables us to interpret the text as the autonomous expression of an individual author. Kropik's book, with which I'm now dealing, finds its own position in this new trend. However, is there any new thought involved in this "new" trend which depends on the image of an individual author of medieval literature? Is it not a mere repeat of the literary interpretations on the medieval epics published in the first half of the 20th century? How do they harmonize the elements external to the author with creativity as well as originality in a new way?

3. Kropik's understanding of epics based on Cassirer

Kropik's approach relies strongly on the idea of Cassirer who left many philosophical works dealing with the human perception of the universe or cosmos. A study of German medieval literature in the 20th century has been rarely based on modern philosophical thought. The central issue in her analysis is the subjective and creative authorship that produced a mythical worldview in medieval epic works.

This essay firstly aims to focus on the position of her book in the history of the studies about German medieval epics, especially by summarizing and analyzing her interpretation of *Erec* and *Tristan*. To make its character more visible, I will also analyze her approach in comparison with studies and interpretations about *Nibelungenlied* which belongs to another genre and is in general regarded as the representative of German medieval literature.

Of particular note in this paper would be the issue of cosmology which is firmly connected with the thought of Cassirer who offers her a theoretical base. The word cosmology deals with the world image unfolded in an individual spirit which is influenced by external stimulus or information. The cosmology of Cassirer involves also the analysis of the religious as well as semantic universe, which is after all strongly related to the epistemological debate since the latter half of the 19th century. The world is, he thinks, the imaginary representation which is composed of symbols in the human spirit and is formed through the information of external materials perceived and reconstructed by human cognitive organs or system. According to Cassirer the world image is constructed subjectively through

the cognitive process of the individual psychological activity which connects external information with certain symbolic elements.[6)]

Kropik attaches great importance to the "artificial" mythical world in an epic work created by the strong subjective activity of the author. She attempts to clarify Cassirer's image of a mythic work, in contrast to Lugowski as a contradictory example, who believed that the mythical world cannot be created artificially. By contrast, Cassirer found it possible for both modern and medieval authors to artificially produce a mythical world. He argued his theory not only about a certain field or genre, but in general.[7)]

According to Kropik's explanation, Lugowski's theory about the production process of literary works had a fatal deficit from an academic point of view. Lugowski emphasized the role of reason in the production of modern literary works. He thought he shared a common image of the literary works with Cassirer in terms of the creativity connected with a rational sense. Although Lugowski regarded Cassirer's ideas as the basis for his theory, Kropik thinks he seems to have misunderstood Cassirer's ideas.

Lugowski thought that the cognitive process of the human mind is fundamentally controlled by reason. He relied on Cassirer to reinforce his theory, but the latter regarded the human worldview, for all literary works in general, as a subjective and more or less artificial product, while Lugowski was trying to see objective reason only in the modern literary texts, not in the old ones.[8)]

Lugowski, interestingly, did not consider the world expressed within the work of modern "rational" literature to be perfect or positive, but rather negative because, according to him, it was set apart from the harmony of the ancient mythical world. He thought the ancient narrative world did not deviate from the mythical whole because it was naive, whereas modern literature is described by the rational author's wisdom and so tragically loses the connection with the wholeness and consistency of the mythical world. [9)]

Cassirer thought the mythical world can be created artificially. Kropik points out that they had different understandings of Kant whom they both relied on. Cassirer thought the essential element of Kant's theory was subjectivism, while Lugowski found the reason in the essence of Kant's philosophy.

So far, I have tried to trace Kropiks's explanation, but I would also like to mention something with which Kropik did not deal. Cassirer also wrote a book about cultural continuity or discontinuity between the Middle Ages and the early modern period. He saw only a gradual cultural shift from the late Middle Ages to the Renaissance in his *Individium und Kosmos*.[10] He regarded a medieval philosopher, Cusanus, as one of the pioneers of modern thought. Cassirer seems to have found a cultural and philosophical continuity between the Middle Ages and the early modern period, which is clearly to be noticed in his approach to the literature. He finds "creativity" in both the mythical works of old times and modern works.

Cassirer does not see a qualitative difference between the Middle Ages and the modern era especially in terms of the image of the world expressed in literary works. It is his consistent thought that the world image is subjectively formed through the combination of symbolic elements, whether it is a medieval work or a modern work.

4. *Nibelungenlied* as the essence of the German medieval court literature and the chivalry culture

August Wilhelm Schlegel is regarded as one of the earliest scholars who studied *Nibelungenlied* in a so-called academic method. But his approach to the text was very much influenced by the ideological mode of German Romanticism those days. He tried to study the text precisely in a modern philological way, but at the same time, he tried to grasp the ideological essence in it.

So-called heroic epics such as *Nibelungenlied* have already been regarded as the important object of discussion from the earliest stages of modern philological studies. Especially the *Nibelungenlied* was the center of discussion as to the problem about author originality and narrative tradition surrounding as well as influencing it. *Nibelungenlied* was treated as a natural or national heritage of the people, but at the same time also as an artificial product created by individual authors or an individual author.[11] This debate is still continuing today.

Karl Lachmann is the first and greatest specialized scholar in the field of *Nibelungenlied* studies. He is famous for the "Lieder-Theorie" presented in his

essay (1816), the theory of collected songs, whose method aimed to separate the real and false parts of the text. The parts which he found inconsistent were regarded as not original and added later. He thought the original parts had to be consistent and without contradiction.[12]

This method depends on the idea that the original legend based on historical facts was free from contradictions, and as the times went by, the content of the story became inconsistent, the perfect connection between the whole myth and its details broke down. According to Lachmann, the author of *Nibelungenlied* did not show strong creativity, but only played the role of an editor who combined the songs orally handed down to him.

In this regard, works imported from French literature, such as *Erec*, *Parzival*, and *Tristan*, were already literary works when they were imported to the German-speaking regions. There is no need nor room to assume that they were naturally handed down among people on German soil. It is much easier for us to focus on the originality of an epic author as to these literary works.

But how is it with *Nibelungenlied* ?

In the middle of the 19th century, the creativity in *Nibelungenlied* was emphasized and the idea became common that it shared the same cultural essence of court literature with Arthurian romance and *Tristan*. Helmut de Boor, for example, was a representative scholar who interpreted *Nibelungenlied* as a typical literary work under the Hohenstaufen dynasty.[13]

When discussing *Nibelungenlied* in terms of the idea of court literature, the keywords often mentioned are "Ehre" (honor), "Minne" (love), and "Treue" (faith). The keywords mentioned here are essential concepts for understanding both of *Nibelungenlied* and *Tristan*. These are important concepts that appear written in the text, but even when they are not clearly argued, they are often embodied in the depiction of characters impliedly.

Literary studies, which were very popular in the middle of the 20th century, pursued how the author embodied such a concept that symbolizes court culture. The transformation and connection of narrative materials into an epic was no longer central issues. More important was how authors autonomously created a cosmological world in their works. As Kropik mentions, the most important base

study for the interpretation of *Tristan* is Friedrich Ranke's essay in 1925, in which he argues that "Minnegrotte" (Cave of Love) seems at first glance reminiscent of a Christian temple and love is implied behind the concrete depiction as the supreme ideal. He suggested that the love described in *Tristan* of Gottfried is rather influenced by the antique tradition of love (whose example we can see in the love encouraged by Venus) than by Christian tradition. [14]

Kropik attaches great importance to the use of symbols, and, as mentioned above, relies on Cassirer's theory which clarifies how a human being perceives the world as a symbol and actively composes it in a subjective way. A symbolic understanding of the world became more popular and important those days in the field of medieval studies. Huizinga's *The Autumn of the Middle Ages* (1919, originally published in Dutch) became famous for the symbolic understanding of the medieval world. The book is also mentioned by Friedrich Ranke in his other *Tristan* essay.[15]

As I mentioned above, medieval literature has always had the tendency to emphasize the importance of traditional materials. The author created his own narrative world by combining them in a mosaic manner. It is generally assumed that the materials that had existed beforehand were used to write an epic. The focus of the discussion is on how it was possible to combine them in this way and make use of them to create a new work.

It is no exaggeration to say that Karl Lachmann's essay (1816) mentioned above represented and determined the direction of the study of *Nibelungenlied* and the other heroic epics throughout the 19th century. On the other hand, Heusler published an antithesis in 1920, which made it possible to understand that *Nibelungenlied* was created or completed by the individual author around 1200.[16]

Since *Tristan* is apparently a love story, it is natural to put love at the center of understanding the work. As we have already seen above, Ranke found symbolic meanings in the depiction of "the cave of love" and presented the profound world image and its idea. But positioning *Nibelungenlied* as the story of love was not so easy. It wasn't until the 1950s that it came to be treated in the same line as Arthurian romance or *Tristan* which deal with courtly love.

De Boor, who was known as the great interpreter of *Nibelungenlied,* had

already argued the essence of love described in *Tristan* in 1940 and insisted that the love of *Tristan* had a similar quality to the lyric love expressed by the famous poet Reinmar who emphasized ideological love.[17]

Love was not only supposed to be an essential driving and developing force in both *Tristan* and *Nibelungenlied*, but also a dooming one. Macroscopically seen, we might be able to assume that the writings and activities of Freud were influential to this new tendency in the interpretations. In the 1910s and 20s spread the idea that the invisible power of sexual instinct influences as well as determines human behavior and spirit. The relationship between "Eros" (love) and "Thanatos" (death) appeared as an important theme for understanding human behaviors. Now love was often connected with death.

Love was supposed to be one of the most powerful driving forces of the tragic structure in which the entire court society once flourishes, but also could eventually perish while each person acts according to his or her own ideal. It would be important to think about the historic background for this kind of dark image about the love and death described in the epics. The interpretations published in the 1950s seem to have been more or less influenced by the hard experiences of their authors in World Wars I and II.

5. Kropik's interpretation of *Erec* and *Tristan*

5. 1 *Erec*

Kropik first introduces the interpretations of scholars in the middle of the 20th century regarding the understanding of *Erec*.

Hugo Kuhn thought this epic is a "Thesenroman" (themes roman)[18] which aims to describe the relationship between the individual and society by reminding the readers of general lessons through it. By repeating similar courses and experiences, the relation between the individual and society is shown symbolically through the series of events which the protagonist encounters in the story, without an explanation or narration by the author. In other words, this story is based on the premise that the recipients grasp the central theme or implicit message only by following the actions of the main character throughout the work, rather than given by the author, Hartmann, telling the theme descriptively. It means that the readers

are given enough room or multiple possibilities for understanding the work.

Walter Haug also thinks that the symbolic depiction of *Erec* shows the correlation between the growth of the main character and the change of the world. These descriptions can be associated with certain messages or profound thoughts only when they are valued by the recipients sharing a common code.[19]

Kropik also tries to show the direct connection between the idealistic concept and the concrete messages hidden in the detailed description of *Erec* as a Thesenroman. However, her interest is directed not at the macro structure of the work, but at the creativity of the author who strategically narrates the story and tries to present an implicit meaning relying on the common association of the recipients.

She also illustrates Friedlich Ohly's interpretation like following: He insisted that the transition of land and place in the work expresses the growth of the protagonist and the increasing profoundness of the narrative world. He argued that the transition of "Ort" (place, land) can be combined with "Erörterung" (mentioning, reference) and the image of Er-*ört*-erung implies that the moral development of the protagonist is shown to the recipients through the change of the topographic scenes. He thought that the story goes forwards by the traveling of the protagonist, and the series of the external descriptions contributes to furthering and deepening the story. From this viewpoint of Ohly, Kropik thinks, active creativity of the author could be emphasized who produces a cosmos by connecting the narrative materials.

Kropik agrees further with the Kuhn's thought that various episodes are repeatedly told in pairs, which shows the gradual development of the protagonist who at first makes mistakes, and later acts correctly in facing similar hardships. But she thinks they repeatedly imply one fundamental problem in different forms.[20] It should not be overlooked that she always emphasizes the creativity of the author in an epic work.

Kropik positions herself as the successor and challenger of Jan-Dirk Müller who uses his original terminology "Erzählkern" (the core of the narrative) instead of "Motiv" (motif) for the narrative materials of which a story is composed. When it is called the "Erzählkern", the emphasis is on the act of narrating, while the

word "motif" indicates rather the content itself, according to Müller.[21] Kropik also consciously emphasizes the author's narrative attitudes or activities.

By the way, Müller thought that the "Erzählkern" is influenced by the cultural mode, therefore it can be understood and valued only in the historical context. It is not an autonomously closed mass, but always in the mutual influence with the semantic code of other cultural fields. He emphasizes that the association with the various cultural themes can provide the opportunities to reflect on what should be told in the story. He thought the author wrote his story in constant reflective consideration in the latent, mutual influences with the recipients.

Regarding this image of the author's activity, there is something in common with the motif image of Ursula Schulze as to the study of *Nibelungenlied*. She argued that the value of motif fluctuates flexibly within the work; it changes accordingly depending on in what context it is taken, so as a result, various ways of understanding and interpretations of the work were possible. (In contrast with her, Joachim Heinzle, who represents the mainstream of the *Nibelungenlied* studies in the 1980s and 90s, had found *Nibelungenlied* as the combination of the various motives which often exclude each other and explained the contradictions in the story due to it.[22])

Kropik's view of epic formation is mainly based on the author's strategy, that is, the author's narrative with a compound-eye perspective to maintain the ambiguity and openness of the interpretation. Kropik is conscious of a cosmological image in each of the epics and sees there the author adding a mythical atmosphere to it. This basic viewpoint of hers is also applied to her interpretation of *Tristan*.

5. 2 *Tristan*

Kropik thinks that in order to understand *Tristan*, it should be traced back to the French folklore that provided the narrative materials to the German author, Gottfried von Straßburg. Based on previous studies, Kropik argues that the story was made more rationally interpretable as it was rewritten in German by Gottfried and was deepened with somehow mythical quality. Kropik argues about it as follows.

First of all, when or how Tristan and Isolde fell in love remains the key

issue for the interpretation of *Tristan*. Kropik thinks that a myth must contain something which is not to be inquired, as she expresses it with a German adjective "unbefragbar". It means that the characters often act without any reason in the myth, which makes recipients feel something mysterious or mythical.

Kropik thinks that the original stories in French, that is, so-called "estoire" (c.1150) or Thoma's version, had already contained the descriptions which made it possible for recipients to find the process of love between Tristan and Isolde natural and understandable. In them, we can find the reasons for their love in some materials or circumstances around, for example, the aphrodisiac (a drink of love) which the two lovers drink together to fall in love without knowing the effect of it, and also the narrative motif of the trip for searching the bride of the King ("Brautwerbungsmotiv"), which seem to have been popular and widely shared in the audience in the Middle Ages. Kropik is of the opinion that Tristan can successfully win in the fight and show himself as the legitimate and sufficiently qualified candidate for the bridegroom of Isolde, which must have been associated with this motif.

Then, according to Kropik, Gottfried intended to further deepen the narrated world by adding something mythical to it. The love story of the parents of Tristan was added by Gottfried to the content of the older French versions, through which Tristan is now destined to be a love seeker because of his family tradition determined by the Goddess of Love ("diu minne"), not because of the aphrodisiac they take together. Kropik insists that through this change of the content, something transcendental and irresistible, or say, a mythical atmosphere was added to the story.[23)]

The childhood of Tristan and also the love and tragedy of his parents do not exist in the French versions known to us today, and Kropik seems to think that Gottfried's originality is fully demonstrated in these parts written in his German version. Kropik finds here the coercive force of the transcendental mythical world in which Tristan was destined to experience tragic love even before his birth.

The main issue of the debate about the occurrence of love between Tristan and Isolde has been whether they fall in love after they take the aphrodisiac, or they loved each other before it. Kropik's idea does not seem to answer directly, but

in any case, seems to assert that the composition of the whole work implies the inevitability of the love between them. She emphasizes "something mythological" in the story, and tries to connect with Cassirer's ideas through it. She emphasizes on the basis of Cassirer's thesis that the mythical authenticity in a story can be created only through high artistry of the author.

6. Conclusion- A Perspective on the Study of *Nibelungenlied*

Unlike medieval German epics such as *Erec* and *Tristan* whose original contents are based on French court literature as their sources, *Nibelungenlied* is based on the old Germanic folklore. At the same time, it is of course not to be forgotten that this epic is one of the best literary masterworks of court literature written in Middle High German. The scholars often thought that the mythical atmosphere of archaic German heroic myths was incorporated into this medieval story written in a Christian society almost unchanged.

There are many studies that point out various small contradictions about the content of *Nibelungenlied*, but even so, it can be said that the whole story is so rationally composed that it is worth interpreting in detail. As described by Ursula Schulze mentioned above, the ambiguity of the motif used in *Nibelungenlied* allows for various reading lines, which means that it contains many rational semantic associations. This epic is composed of various motifs shared among the recipients. These motifs could be given various connotations by an author as well as the audience.

Can we find the creative activity of an author to realize something unquestionable or irresistible ("unbefragbar") in *Nibelungenlied* ? According to the famous Heusler's theory (so-called "Lied-Theorie", or gradual development theory as it actually means), before the final *Nibelungenlied* was completed, Kriemhild had already been the main character in the story of revenge. However, the opponent of her revenge was not Hagen as written in our *Nibelungenlied*, but Attila, king of Hun, who tried to force her brother Gunnar (Gunther) and half-brother Hogni (Hagen) to tell him where the treasure was hidden. Attila showed Gunnar the heart cut out of Hogni and ordered him to reveal the secret. Gunnar refused it and was killed.[24] Later, this legend of the revenge against Attila (The downfall of the

Burgund tribe) was connected with the assassination against Siegfried (The legend of Brünhild). Now Siegfried is killed by Hagen, who was asked by Brünhild to do it, then Hagen must be killed by Kriemhild, who is the former wife of Siegfried and now the new wife of King Etzel (Attila), after Hagen refused to tell her where he had hidden the treasure which she should inherit from Siegfried.

(The series of events described in this epic can be seen differently, for a example, as a tragic chain of political conflicts, or revenge out of love, depending on how the readers understand them. The acts of the characters could be explained according to their motivations such as greed for treasure or love to someone.) Schulze sees the artistic intention of the epic author in this mythical ambiguity which enables us multiple interpretations.

Now let's remember Kropik's interpretation of *Tristan*. She thinks that Gottfried von Straßburg added something mythical to the former French version. His text implies now a certain mythical power of love which is repeatedly described in the episodes of the parents and also in those of their son Tristan. Kropik sees something "unbefragbar" (irresistible) in the destiny of their love. She regards it as an artistic performance of Gottfried.

If we also try to find something "unbefragbar" in *Nibelungenlied*, it would be the power of Nibelungs treasure. Heusler thought that the last epic author wrote the part in which Hagen sacrificed his own feudal lord (Gunther) to keep the hiding place of the treasure secret forever. This so-called completed version of the *Nibelungenlied* is written in a courtly way and the manners. This epic is said to reflect the mode of the medieval court at the beginning of the 13th century. Hagen is also a member of the court, but he still remains somehow archaic as well as heroic or barbaric. At the very end of the story, he gives up his role as a courtier and does not save his own lord. He decides to die not for his lord, but for the secret of the Nibelungs treasure. I assume that a creative and artistic author of this last version enabled us to explain this controversial act of Hagen with the "unbefragbar", irresistible power of treasure as well as heroic morals. (Heusler criticized this description of Hagen in terms of the artistic quality, though.[25]) In this way, we could probably see an example of the artificial reproduction of mythical elements in our *Nibelungenlied*.

Notes

1) Cordula Kropik, *Gemachte Welten -Form und Sinn im höfischen Roman* (Tübingen 2018).

2) *Ibid.*, p.298-299.

3) Ursula Schulze, *Das Nibelungenlied* (Stuttgart 1997), p.254-264. Idem, Gunther sî mîn herre, und ich sî sîn man. Bedeutung und Deutung der Standeslüge und die Interpretierbarkeit des „Nibelungenliedes". In: *Nibelungenlied und Nibelungenklage (Neue Wege der Forschung)*, edited by Christoph Fasbender (Darmstadt 2005), p.98-99. (first published in *ZfdA 126 (1997)*, p.32- 52.)

4) Otfrid Ehrismann, *Das Nibelungenlied in Deutschland, Studien zur Rezeption des Nibelungenliedes von der Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg* (München 1975), p.181.

5) For examples the critical editions of various versions of *Nibelungenlied* have been published recent years like following: *Augsburger Nibelungenlied und – klage, Edition und Untersuchung*, edited by Michaela Eser (Regensburg 2015), *Nibelungenlied Redaktion D*, edited by Walter Kofler (Stuttgart 2012).

6) Kropik, p.67-71.

7) *Ibid.*, p.85-89.

8) *Ibid.*, p.64.

9) *Ibid.*, p.34-35.

10) Cassirer, Ernst: Individiuum und Kosmos, Darmstadt 1987 (6. unveränderte Auflage, 1. Auflage 1927).

11) Ehrismann, p.63.

12) Karl Lachmann, "Über die Ursprüngliche Gestalt des Gedichts von der Nibelungen Noth" in *Das deutsche versepos* ed.W.J.Schröder (Darmstadt 1969), p.1-82. This thesis was first published in 1816 in Berlin.

13) Helmut de Boor, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur 2*, (München 1953), p.159.

14) Friedrich Ranke, Die Allegorie der Minnegrotte in Gottfrieds Tristan. In: *Friedrich Ranke Kleinere Schriften*, edited by Heinz Rupp and Eduard Studer (Bern and München 1971), S.13-30 (first published 1925), especially p.28-30.

15) *Ibid.*, p.38. (Ranke, Zur Rolle der Minneallegorie).

16) Andreas Heusler, *Nibelungensage und Nibelungenlied*, (Darmstadt 1973, Unchanged reprint of 6th edition of 1965, first published in 1920).

17) Helmut de Boor, Die Grundauffassung von Gottfrieds Tristan. In: *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Gesitesgeschichte 18* (Halle 1940), p.262-306, especially p.271.

18) Kropik, p.167.

19) *Ibid.*, p.169.

20) *Ibid.*, p.208.

21) Jan-Dirk Müller, *Höfische Kompromisse – Acht Kapitel zur höfischen Epik* (Tübingen 2007), p.22.

22) Joachim Heinzle, *Das Nibelungenlied* (Frankfurt am Main 1994), p.93-95.

23) Kropik, p.226-230.

24) Heusler, *Ibid.*, p.145-149.

25) *Ibid.*, p.147.