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## ***The Nibelungenlied: with The Klage*, translated by William T. Whobrey**

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universe in ways that DC simply hasn't been able to seriously compete with yet (142-144). The second I read this, it seemed like such a simple and important insight, but I have not encountered anyone save Black putting it in these terms, which is commendable. In addition, too, Black's insight here also gestures toward the ways in which a popular culture mytharc—and its success—are now inescapably influenced by the technology, timing, and talent available with which to tell it.

Overall, Black's *Myth-building in Modern Media* is well worth the read, whether its audience is looking for an interesting personal journey into ways of thinking about popular culture or else seeking scholarly ways of analyzing pop culture's structures and narratives.

—Maria Alberto



**THE NIBELUNGENLIED: WITH THE KLAGE.** William T. Whobrey. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2018. 308 p. 978-1624666759. \$16.00.

THIS WORK IS A WELCOME ADDITION TO *NIBELUNGENLIED* STUDIES. There are several reasons for this, related below. First though, for those who may not be familiar the lay retells the story of Sigfried and Kriemhelt (known from Norse as Sigurd and Gudrun), how Sigfried won his wife, how he lost his life through treachery, and how Kriemhelt gets her revenge. Wrapped up in this tale are other heroic characters such as Ditrich of Bern (also known in other tales and history as Theodric the Great), Hildebrand, Attila the Hun (rendered as Etzel in Middle High German and Atli in Old Norse). The tales of Sigfried/Sigurd were well known in twelfth century NW Europe: long before the *Nibelungenlied* was composed circa 1200 CE Sigfried/Sigurd appears in art work in Scandinavia bearing witness to his popularity there already. The second part of this edition contains the first-ever in English translation of *The Klage*, a poem that takes the task of completing the tale of *Nibelungenlied*, the latter ending abruptly and without telling the audience what has happened to the characters. *The Klage* is rarely included in editions or translations of the *Nibelungenlied*, deemed by many as of less literary value. Certainly to modern readers' tastes an extended poem of lament is not desirable reading. *The Klage*, however, is included with the *Nibelungenlied* in most of the major manuscripts indicating that for the medieval audience, the poem was of interest and a necessary part of *Nibelungenlied*. In my view, modern audiences lose something by not reading these texts together.

The *Nibelungenlied* and *The Klage* originate at cultural crossroads and give us a glimpse into a world of changing tastes. The transformation of heroic epic to Romance is evident in these poems especially at points where an element that fits perfectly well in a heroic epic is ill at ease in the anachronistic chivalric culture. One example of this is a regular change in Siegfried from member of a court, first his father and then Gunther, and then in other circumstances he is presented (or claims for himself) the status of the lone warrior. The latter category seems derived from the heroic ethos of the early Germanic Middle Ages in which the lone warrior, sometimes in exile, who “adventures” like Beowulf, Grettir, or even Walter of Aquitaine to name a few examples. But the chivalric warrior is a member of a court and is expected to conduct himself not as a lone adventurer but according to the manners of the court. The love “affair” conducted between Siegfried and Kriemhild is very much a product of the chivalric court. So, the cultural crossroads are evident in the text as in the 12<sup>th</sup> century

Whobry presents his readers with a prose text rather than poetic. This is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, such an approach makes for an easily accessible work that students and others not having access to the original language will welcome. On the other hand, there are translation choices that, well, lose something in translation. One such example is when journeying to King Etzel, the Burgundians stop for the night; the text of Whobry’s prose has merely “the moonlight was partly visible through the clouds” which is not inaccurate but is certainly a prosaic rendering (Adventure 26, Para. 1620). This may be compared with Daniel Shumway’s 1909 effort: “Through the clouds there partly broke the gleam of the shining moon.” Another earlier twentieth century translation by George Henry Needler renders the line “From out the clouds of heaven / a space the bright moon shone.” Slightly earlier is Alice Horton’s “metrical translation” of 1898: “Just then a gleam of moonlight between the clouds did break.” Hatto’s Penguin translation from the early 1960s renders the line, “Then as a gleam of the bright moon peeped above the clouds.” Finally, Cyril Edwards’s translation for the Oxford Classics edition has “Part of the bright moon broke out of the clouds.” Picking on such a line that is not overly important to the episode simply illustrates the difficulty of combining approachability and accuracy. Nonetheless, the translation offered by Whobry, in spite of occasional prosaic moments, captures the beauty, excitement, and sorrow of the original for the most part.

As a final note, Whobry offers a very useful introduction that informs the reader on historical and literary backgrounds for the poem but also includes information on genre, meter, form and related matters. He also discusses his translation style and choices for a prose rendering. The explanatory notes are very useful; and Whobry offers translations of variants in the manuscript

tradition giving readers insight into the transmission history of the text. In addition, Whobry provides indices of personal and place names as well as an inventory of the manuscripts and versions, and a brief bibliography of key scholarship. This is a very readable translation of a vitally important medieval text with valuable helps and information for student and scholar alike.

—Larry J. Swain

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**THE WORLDS OF J.R.R. TOLKIEN: THE PLACES THAT INSPIRED MIDDLE-EARTH.** John Garth. Princeton University Press: Princeton and Oxford. 2020. 208 pages. ISBN 978-0-691-19694-7. Hardcover \$29.95

JOHN GARTH'S MASTERFUL STUDY BELONGS on every Middle-earth scholar's shelf. Encyclopedic in its scope, it melds Tolkien's biography with his imagined worlds. From Morgoth to the Mewlips, no sub-created stone is left unturned. Lavishly illustrated with photographs, maps of both real and imagined lands, and art and illustrations by Tolkien and others, many hitherto unpublished, Garth's guidebook to the geography and history of Middle-earth is boggling in its breadth and depth. Its command of scholarship enhances it immeasurably. Each page illuminates with insights and dazzles with details. Time and again, the reader will marvel at how much knowledge Garth fits into 208 pages. The large (eight by ten inches) format amplifies the impact of the illustrations, whose reproductions here are of the highest quality. The two-column layout enhances readability. A weighty tome at two and three-quarters pounds, *The Worlds of J.R.R. Tolkien* does not skimp on words or pictures.

One virtue is stand-alone passages that those of us who share a newspaper background with Garth would call sidebars. "Tales That Grew in the Telling" traces the evolution of Tolkien's Middle-earth maps. "A Hostile World" shows his debt to Anglo-Saxon cosmology. "Where On Earth Is Dorwinion?" "Forest Of Thunder," "Elvish And Welsh," "A Mythology For England," "Forests And Cathedrals," "The Marsh Of Tode," "What's In A Name? Luthien And Leithian," "Hollin And The Doors Of Durin," "Radagast And Medwed," "The Curse Of Porlock," "Doom Rings," "A Battlefield Both Ancient And