

The Nibelungenlied is the example of a well examined and studied literature piece, which any interested person knows well and about which everyone claims that it is nothing to add to this topic. Notwithstanding a long list of studies dedicated to the Nibelungenlied and almost all aspects one can think of, there are still few issues that need further clarification. One of these issues is the murder of Siegfried by Hagen von Tronje in the 16th Chapter (Aventüre). It seems to be so clear and so straightforward, that many authors do not pay much attention to the event, which becomes a breeding ground for unwrapping of the further plot.

The aim of the present report is to demonstrate that the murder of Siegfried is not a mere murder of a protagonist by an antagonist, it is more about ritual scarification than about a simple act which the author needed for the development of the story or a simple reflection of any historical event.

On one hand, the murder of Siegfried can be classified as a typical episode of struggle. The episode of struggle in the Nibelungenlied is one of the episode types wide spread in this piece. Depiction of struggle in the Nibelungenlied is a depiction of a ritual, which is just one of those in the piece (see A. Gurevich, 1976). On the other hand, the episode in Chapter 16 does not include any features typical for the struggle episodes. Reader does not find presentation of heroes fighting here, their characteristics or any details of fight. There is no fight at all – it is a mere murder.

If one considered this fact thoroughly, he would find that it is the most unusual and the most illogical act in the whole Lied. Chapter 16 finds Siegfried, a typical medieval protagonist with the knight's biography and a long list of defeated heroes and even one dragon, coming to drink water in the forest without any hunting weapons. In fact, he is naked. (Hagen von Tronje takes his weapons aside – this is an attempt to explain it to the reader; but does anybody believe that Siegfried let Hagen do this without asking for the reasons?) Siegfried is killed. Gunther, who has drunk from the spring in a moment before Siegfried, is standing nearby (as he "trat beiseite") – and what is he doing? He is not responding to the act of Hagen anyway. It seems that when Gunther comes to the spring, he knows what is going to happen. Two explanations are possible: He is in the plot with Hagen against Siegfried, or – and it is more likely to be true, - it is a ritual with every participant knowing well his functions and the range of actions.

The present report includes analysis of the Chapter 16 of the Nibelungenlied from the ritual point of view. I base on other rituals depicted in this piece (ritual of struggle and ritual of fest) to showcase that the murder of Siegfried is another ritual. The methods used are comparing method, historic and cultural method as well as language analysis method.

The results contained in the last part of the present report give deeper insight of the Nibelungenlied as a central piece of the medieval German literature. The whole story in the Nibelungenlied should be looked at from the different angle, and thus we can come closer to the original idea of the piece's author.

1. Gurevich, A. Medieval Literature and its Reception Nowadays. On Translation of the Nibelungenlied. Moscow, 1976. Pp. 276 – 314.