Book Reviews

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Edward R. Haymes. *The Nibelungenlied: History and Interpretation.* Illinois Medieval Monographs, 2. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986. Pp. ix + 145 .

Reading Edward Haymes' book on the *Nibelungenlied* is a process of coming to know the text as a product of its time and, therefore, to appreciate it as a work of art for its time. This is the author's stated intention, but he has also succeeded in providing a welcome introduction to the critical reception of the *Nibelungenlied,* which has now become part of its history.

Addressing a scholarly audience, but not exclusively medievalists or Germanists, Haymes touches on the major interpretative problems in *Nibelungenlied* scholarship since Andreas Heusler, so that the reader is provided not only with an introduction to the historical and literary-historical contexts of the *Nibelungenlied* but also with an informal review of scholarship. This he accomplishes by avoiding jargon, strict adherence to a single method, and "prescriptive" interpretation, as he calls it, because that would limit our understanding of the work itself. One might criticize Haymes precisely for this approach, namely for being "eclectic" and for not offering yet another "definitive" interpretation. However, one must recognize that Haymes offers fresh views on some long-standing, troublesome points of interpretation and that his view is a valid one. He has allied himself with Hans Robert Jauss and Hans Georg Gadamer in his role as a contributor to the ongoing process of criticism in which literary historians take part.

What Haymes considers background necessary for understanding the *Nibelungenlied* is determined by the

complementary methodological approaches to the text: socio-historical, hermeneutic, and structural. These taken together support an argument that is stated clearly and concisely in nine chapters. The first contains an introduction to contemporary literary criticism and to the special nature of medieval texts. Chapter 2 supplies the social and political context in which the *Nibelungenlied* was written. The third chapter deals with the interaction of the oral and written traditions and points out that in the case of the *Nibelungenlied* the oral-formulaic genre has been imitated by a literate poet. The *Nibelungen* poet's most important reason for this is the ready reception of a familiar genre and, along with it, the ready acceptance of the traditional set of values associated with it

In the fourth chapter the author argues that, from a structural point of view, two genres are juxtaposed in the *Nibelungenlied* and measured against each other for the purpose of evaluating the set of social values each represents. This means that the *Nibelungenlied* contains the oral-formulaic elements but does not fulfill audience expectations. Oral epic contains a traditional epic hero, but here Siegfried has been formed into a model knight-errant who performs the kind of love service that is typical of the courtly romance and love poetry. Thus, the poet has wedged into the oral epic foreign generic forms and motifs. By using the oral genre representing traditional values for the foundation of the poem, the poet is able to criticize the newly imported courtly values promulgated by the French courtly romance.

In chapter 5 the author outlines the extent to which the Siegfried role has been recast in comparison to the several versions of the Siegfried matter. The text itself as well as a comparison with Hartmann von Aue's romance about the kingdom-conquering knight, Iwein, and a lexical comparison with courtly lover lyric support his view of a courtly Siegfried who serves Gunther in order to win lady Kriemhild. This reading of Siegfried as *Minneritter* has not been recognized before because literary historians have been seeking in Siegfried the archaic hero of Norse tradition. However, Haymes bases his insight on the premise—and this is the unstated but most important premise of the book—that traditional matter

changes from generation to generation as the social and political reality changes. This means that Haymes is willing to discover a Siegfried who is formed according to a new, yet clearly recognized, literary model: the knight-errant of romance.

The advantage of this reading is that it explains many incongruent elements in the *Nibelungenlied.* Haymes points out that Siegfried's courtly ethic and willingness to serve Gunther as a vassal leads Gunther to follow Siegfried's manner of courting to win Brünhild (i.e., proving prowess in order to win land and lady). In the process, the Burgundians and Siegfried enter a set of relationships based on pretense and misinformation. Siegfried pretends before Brünhild that he is Gunther's vassal and Gunther pretends to succeed at the bride-winning contests. Since Siegfried's courtly role disrupts the stability of the Burgundian court to the extent that it can no longer tolerate two realities, he must die. The implication here is that the courtly code is disruptive to society and not to be adopted.

In discussing the versions of the Siegfried and Burgundian matter, the author makes clear that not only do the several versions deviate (i.e., Ältere Not, Rosengarten, Thidrekssaga), but that these deviations represent interpretive trends on the part of the several different poets and generations.

The remaining chapters deal essentially with the problematic relationship between the two parts of the poem. In part one the two sets of norms are pitted against each other. These Haymes defines as Siegfried's courtly behavior and Gunther's traditional, hereditary monarchy that maintains the status quo through diplomacy and adherence to custom. If one accepts the fact that in part one of the *Nibelungenlied* an opposition exists between the two generic models and their social code of behavior, then one must also accept the second half of Haymes' thesis, that in part two the original contrast between courtly norms and traditional ones is replaced by a further qualification of what the traditional norms actually are. Haymes distinguishes between the Burgundian values and the heroic ethic. This he determines by examining a new contrast, a tension between

the two central characters of part two of the *Nibelungenlied:* Hagen portrays the archaic hero and Dietrich the new peacemaker. Because oral epic contains the archaic hero, the traditional values expected to be professed and emulated are the heroic traits of honor and unflinching courage. Haymes suggests that the poet, by having Hagen fulfill the heroic role perfectly, demonstrates how devastating the heroic ethic can be. Therefore, the poet, by using the epic genre actually intends to ally himself not with the heroic, but with another set of traditional values: the values of Gunther's hereditary monarchy and attempts at diplomacy to settle differences. According to the author, the poet further develops this ethic in the role of Dietrich of Bern. An example of this ethic occurs in part one when Siegfried arrives in Worms and challenges Gunther to stake his kingdom on the outcome of a combat between them, and Gernot successfully skirts the challenge.

Finding a similar attempt at peace negotiations in part two is evidence for the author that the poet supports attempts at reconcilation, and in part two Dietrich is the alternative hero who embodies those values. Although the adversaries are Hagen and Kriemhild, their struggle merely sets the plot. The primary tension that develops the "how" of the poem is between Hagen's warrior ethic and Deitrich's efforts to remove himself from that ethic. Dietrich is the one who attempts, even if in vain, to follow the path of diplomacy and reason in order to keep himself and his men out of a conflict based on pride and vengeance. Even after all his men have been killed by the Burgundians, Dietrich still tries to save Gunther and Hagen by offering them safe conduct. Haymes' clear presentation of Dietrich's peacemaking efforts leaves no doubt that this is indeed what the *Nibelungen* poet intended. Thus Haymes concludes that the *Nibelungenlied* is a political work, showing the adverse effects of the courtly approach and the disastrous effects of archaic heroism and revenge: "The ethical stance of the *Nibelungen* poet is clearly on the side of hereditary authority and diplomatic solutions to conflict." (p. 112)

The book lacks the usual footnotes. The running commentary in lieu of footnotes is more readable than the usual

format, but is disadvantageous for those who would like to use it as an introduction to the specific problems discussed. But since recent annotated bibliographies of *Nibelungenlied* research are available, Haymes' omission is no doubt intended to avoid repetition. Occasionally, however, a work referred to in the text proper (e.g., Stephen Jaeger, p. 65) is not listed in either the notes or the bibliography. Consequently, the reader does not know which article or book is meant.

Medievalists will find that Edward Haymes' book is a reliable and welcome introduction to the *Nibelungenlied* and Germanists will find that his contribution lies in the fact that he provides meaningful alternatives to many an impasse in *Nibelungenlied* criticism.

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Christiane Marchello-Nizia. *Dire le vrai: l'adverbe "si" en français médiéval, essai de linguistique historique*. Publications Romanes et Françaises 168. Genève: Droz, 1985. Pp. 256.

Just about the first thing one has to tell the beginner in Old French is that the normal word for "if is *se* and that the form *si* tends to mean "and" or "thus." But probably one of the last things most of us would want to undertake is a thorough grammatical and syntactical analysis of *se* and *si.* A glance at a few concordances reveals why. Joseph Duggan's concordance to the *Chanson de Roland* reveals 299 cases of the form *si,* from which one has to sort

out the examples in which *si* is a possessive adjective ("Josqu'a la tere si chevoel li balient," v. 976). There are also in the *Roland* 191 occurrences of the form *se* amongst which one has to distinguish the subordinating conjunction "if from the reflexive pronoun ("Sur un perron de marbre bloi se culchet," v. 12). Here, as in other texts, the student of *si* and *se* has to be on the lookout for concealed examples in the forms of *s', sel, sil, sim, ses* and *sem* ("Sem creisez, venuz i fust mi sire," v. 1728). The *Charroi de Nîmes* contains 97 cases of the adverb *si* and 38 of the conjunction *se.* The concordance to the *Charroi* by G. De Poerck and others (Saint-Aquilin-de-Pacy: Librairie-Editions Mallier, 1970) is helpful in that it distinguishes the forms grammatically and even points out when *sel* reflects an adverbial *se = si* ("Quant il le vit, sel prist a ledengier," v. 736, ed. D. McMillan). From concordances to thirteenth-century texts, one can note that *Galeran de Bretagne* (ed. L. Foulet) contains 615 examples of *si* and 311 of *se.* The *Mort le roi Artu* (ed. J. Frappier) has even more examples, 1733 of *si* and 1478 of *se* (844 of which are the reflexive pronoun). When pointing out how rare negation is with *si,* Marchello-Nizia observes that Chrétien de Troyes has 2300 cases in which the verb is "négativable" (p. 179).

The courage of the present writer in tackling such an awkward subject has paid off handsomely and she has produced an excellent book. Dr. Marchello-Nizia is able to distinguish eighteen categories for the forms *si*, *se*, and *s'*. Three of these are conjunctions (the ubiquitous "if," the rarer "whether," and the formula *se/si m'aïst Diex),* one a substantive meaning "condition" (in *sans nul si)* and the rest some form or other of adverb. This volume in fact, as the title indicates, concentrates on adverbial uses of *si.* But it is certainly not easy to know in every case how to classify *se/si* or even know whether the two forms should be considered as independent words. G. Moignet has actually suggested that *"si* et *se* sont deux formes du même mot, comme il en est du couple *non/ e,* du couple *quoi/que,* du couple *moi/me* " *(Travaux de Linguistique et de Littérature.. .de l'Université de Strasbourg* 15, [1977]: 273). The De Poerck concordance to the *Charroi* categorizes *se* in "se Deus m'aïst" (vv. 382, 639) as a conjunction, presumably to be interpreted as "if God helps me." The

present writer takes it as an adverb *("si* marqueur d'assertion et de jugement," p. 53) and subjects the phrase and its paraphrases or variants to a lengthy (and fascinating) analysis (pp. 53-57, 73-92, 206-08, 220-21).

The student of the chanson de geste will note with interest that several epics are called upon regulary to provide examples, in particular the *Roland*, the *Charroi*, the *Prise d'Orange,* and *Fierabras.* But one chanson de geste which is not much cited (only on three occasions) is the *Pèlerinage de Charlemagne.* Having recently completed an edition of this poem, I offer the following observations. The unique manuscript of this text (former British Museum, Royal Library, 16.E.VIII) contains 119 examples of *si,* three of *sil,* one of *sin,* three of *sis,* and five of the conjunction *se.*[1] One notices immediately that any initial statement about "if in Old French being *se* turns put to be more or less invalid for *the Pèlerinage*. *Se* in this function (vv. 24, 34, 52, 721, 741) is outshone by *si,* with 26 examples (vv. 23, 150, 313, 322, 327, 354, etc.; see Marcello-Nizia, category nine, p. 13), One can compare this with the *Roland* manuscript, Digby 23, which offers for "if mainly *se,* with only eight cases of *si* (vv. 316, 423, 475, 928, 3011, 3081, 3169, 3557). The figures for the *Pèlerinage* include one occurrence of the phrase *si Deu pleist* (v. 68) and three of *si vus plaist* (vv. 160, 216, 251). This text has three occurrences of *si* "whether" (vv. 731, 734, 758, category eleven, p. 13).

There are also fifty-two examples in which *si* can safely be translated as "and," "thus," or (especially vv. 20, 231, 618, 658) "then" (category one, p. 11). Here *si* is an "adverbe de phrase" which opens a clause and comes before the verb. It links two independent clauses: "il peut se traduire par «et,» «pourtant,» «puis,».. .ou par rien du tout." I cannot in fact find an example in the *Pèlerinage* in which *si* is strong enough to warrant the translation "pourtant." There are in the text three cases of *e si* (vv. 88, 133,

[1] Glyn S. Burgess and Anne Elizabeth Cobby, eds. and trans. *The Pilgrimage of Charlemagne and Aucassin and Nicolette.* Garland Library of Medieval Literature 47 (New York: Garland, 1987).

656), which, before reading the present volume, I would have been tempted to place in this same "and" or untranslatable category. The *e si* type, however, is the present author's third category (p. 11) in which *si* is, as in category one, an "adverbe de phase" occurring before the verb and linking two independent clauses. But in this category the *si* is preceded by another element *(puis, neporquant,* etc.). To *e si* one can thus add *pus si:*. ("Pus si m'en irrai la fors en cel plain," v. 472) and *purquant si* ("Purquant si fud curteise, gente parole ad dite," v. 710). The preceding element is seen as making the adverb *si* "intraduisible" (p. 11). In category two *si* links a subordinate clause to a main clause. Three examples of *quant ...si* in the *Pèlerinage* can be included here: "Quant l'ot li patriarche, si s'en vait cunreer" (v. 141, see vv. 648, 865). This syntax occurs in one of the famous lines from the *Roland:* "Quant l'ot Rollant, si cumençat a rire" (v. 302). The *Pèlerinage* also has an occurrence of *cum ...si* in this usage: "Cum il l'unt entendut, si orent le queres mult leez" (v. 238) and v. 853 ("La u veil Oliver, sil prent par sun gerun") presents a similar syntax. *Si* in these cases is also said to be "intraduisible" (p. 11).

There is certainly a delicate line between the "and, thus, then" category and the untranslatable categories. Should we in fact just make two categories here, one in which *si* has a clear semantic function within the statement, and one in which it acts as an intensive and has no semantic function? Where does one place v. 60 ("A la sale de Parys si s'en est retornez"), v. 755 ("Pur la fei que si dei nen est bel ne gentilz") or v. 718 ("Pureoc si dis mun gab, ja mar vus en crendrez")? Probably in the untranslatable category *(pureoc si* in v. 718 seems actually to mean "even if). Things get even more complex when we reach categories four and five (pp. 11-12). In category five *si* is an adverb followed *by faire, estre,* or *avoir:* "On le traduit par «si» ou par «le faire» dans une réponse, par «faire de même» dans une reprise dans le récit" (p. 12). In the *Pèlerinage,* when *si* is followed *by faire,* it falls safely into the "and" category (vv. 115, 297, 570, 808, 821) and there are cases when, followed by *estre* or *aveir,* it does not need to be translated. Verse 710 ("Purquant si fud curteise, gente parole ad dite") and v. 866 ("Le clou e la corone si ad mis sur l'auter") would also fall under

category three. The *Pèlerinage* has two examples of *si com* (category fifteen, p. 14) and one of *cum ...si* (vv. 173, 632; 238). But not all examples of *si* + *estre* fall into category five. Category four is when the *si* is preceded by a "groupe nominal sujet": "Teibauz tes peres si est preuz et gentis" *(Prise d'Orange,* v. 1508). Is this the same in v. 307 of the *Pèlerinage,* which is actually quoted by the present author: "Jo ai a nun Carlemaines, Rolland si est mis nes"? Here *si* is rightly said to highlight the subject (it "extrapose le sujet, le thématise," p. 169). In this case one can certainly translate *si* as "and," whereas in v. 1508 of the *Prise* it is, as Dr. Marchello-Nizia says, "intraduisible, sauf par un pronom de reprise" (i.e. "Thibaut ton père, lui, est noble et courageux," p. 11). How, in the light of categories one, two, four and five, does one classify *si* in the well-known statement: 'Marie ai num, si sui France" *(Fables,* Epilogue, v. 4, ed. Warnke)?

After the mental and syntactical gymnastics forced upon us by such examples, it is a relief to arrive at category seventeen in which *si* means "so" or "such" (Modern French "tant, tellement" or—and it is nice to see that *si* has a small survival rate—"si"). There are sixteen examples of this usage in the *Pèlerinage:* e.g. "Mais n'est mie si pruz ni si bons chevalers" (v. 28), "Nel dusez ja penser par si grant legerie" (v. 645). There are two occurrences of *si cum* "just as" (vv. 173, 632, category fifteen), one of *si que* "so that" (+ indicative, v. 596-97, category sixteen), but none of *si cum si* (category eighteen) or of *si* used as a substantive (category thirteen). There are also none of the expression *se... non* (category ten) or of *si* used as an interrogative (as in "Dame, fet il, s'il vos remanbre / Del nain qui hier vos correça?" *Erec et Enide,* ed. M. Roques, vv. 1110-11, category twelve). But there is one of *si* meaning "until" (category six): "Ja n'en descendrai, si l'averai comandet" (v. 561). There remains the question of v. 588: "La verrez barbes traire e gernuns si peler." This line is discussed in a section devoted to "SI de répartition complémentaire: le boire et le manger, la barbe et les moustaches" (pp. 174-75). The explanation given is that beards and moustaches form a "couple obligé" (p. 174). Verse 371 of the *Prise* is quoted in support: "Ne si ne puis boivre ne mengier" (eating and drinking is another such couple).

This is not a particularly convincing explanation. The *si* might actually again be an intensive (like "actually"!) or it might be regarded as *e ... si*, a variant on *e si (ne si* in the *Prise* would be another variant). An additional example of an intensive *si* is v. 555: "Veistes cele grant ewe qui si brut a cel guet?" *Si* probably does not need to be translated here, but it could be regarded as an example of category fourteen *("si,* adverbe incident à un verbe, un adverbe, un adjectif.. .on le traduit par «si,» ou «ainsi,» p. 14).

Whatever the difficulties involved in classifying a given example, Dr. Marchello-Nizia's volume provides a superb basis for discussion. Perhaps it could have benefited from a more coherent link between the eighteen categories outlined at the beginning of the book and the argument used in the body of the work to support them. The study of *si* in one specific text shows not only the scope of the material with which the student of *si* has to cope, but also raises the question of the possible stylistic usage to which a word such as *si* could be put. My own interest in *si* was stimulated recently when analysing several scenes in *Aucassin et Nicolette.* Lines 14-20 of section XII contain thirteen examples of *si* and none *of et,* whereas Aucassin's speech on hell has twenty-three cases of *et* (VI, 20-28).[2] The use of an exceptionally large number of *et* and *si* forms serves to link the two passages in which Nicolette escapes, from Beaucaire in section XII and from Carthage (XXXVIII, 10-18).[3] Is the author *of Aucassin* parodying the narrative technique of contemporary or earlier writers or specifically using *et* and *si* to call attention to structural parallels? The best person to answer such questions would be the author of the volume reviewed here.

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[2] Edited by Cobby (see note 1).

[3] See my note to *Aucassin* in the above edition (pp. 179-80).