

Nibelungenlied and Parzival

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Nibelungenlied and Parzival

Although both the Nibelungenlied and Parzival were composed around the same time (c. 1200), they are vastly different in certain respects—namely concerning the matters of diplomacy, redemption, revenge, and deceit. Some striking similarities do exist among the two texts—concepts of honor (êre), loyalty (triuwe), [moderation](#) (mâze) and knightly deeds (âventiure) are valued highly by both societies. However, each notion is accomplished through different measures in each work. In fact, societal values are taken more to the extreme in Nibelungenlied, and [deceit](#) is often used to obtain them.

For example, honor manifests itself similarly in each work, but is acted on to a different extent. In both works, honor is clearly a good characteristic to have, and maintaining it is a cornerstone to both societies. Conversely, being shamed in the eyes of society—and thus [losing](#) honor—requires retribution. However, in Nibelungenlied, some characters enact any and all means to redeem their lost honor, including unknighly deeds and deceit (such as murdering Siegfried, or Kriemhild's wrath murdering her family), and also have no problem lying in order to gain more honor (the wooing of Brunhilde). In Parzival, however, lost honor can only be met with knightly deeds and repentance to God, and gained honor can

only be a product of knightly deeds. In the world of the Nibelungs, repentance to God does not even enter into the equation, as there is no concept of forgiveness interwoven into the story. For example, Kriemhild cannot forgive her brothers for murdering Siegfried—and perhaps rightly so, since they show no signs of remorse, and do not put themselves at God's mercy. Every earthly sin enacted must be...

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... to an extreme. To regain lost honor, inordinate measures are taken to rectify it. And even loyalty—whose different breeds (loyalty to vassal, to guest, to spouse) seem to clash at every possible occasion—can be viewed as a bit over the top.

It is often speculated that the author of the Nibelunglied wrote about brutal, harsh reality as it actually was, hate and revenge interwoven, while Eschenbach wrote about his ideal of what society should be—a veritable utopia drawing upon a chivalric age which had ended some years past. However, the Nibelungenlied lacks moderation in nearly all regards, and for that reason the work is distanced from modern society (and perhaps medieval society), which tends towards a middle ground, more so than the world portrayed in Parzival.

Works Cited

Eschenbach, Wolfram von. Parzival. Trans. A.T. Hatto. New York: Penguin, 1980.

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