

The Female Lament:
Agency and Gender in Medieval German Literature

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ABSTRACT

APRIL LYNN HENRY: The Female Lament: Agency and Gender in Medieval German Literature

(Under the direction of Kathryn Starkey)

This dissertation examines the conventional motif of the female lament in Hartmann von Aue's *Erec* and the anonymous works *Nibelungenlied* and *Nibelungenklage*. I explain how these authors use the motif as a space within which fictitious female figures can gain or have access to agency. This dissertation contributes to the larger context of literary and gender studies by demonstrating that literature prescribes behavior and it fulfills a pedagogical function. In the introduction, I set up the theoretical framework for my three chapters. In chapter two, I argue that Hartmann von Aue revises the classical genre of the lament that dates back to antiquity to create a space for a female voice. Chapter three shows that the *Nibelungenlied* responds to Hartmann's new gender construct by presenting Kriemhild, a grieving widow, who oversteps gender boundaries by instrumentalizing her grief and using it to legitimize her revenge. In this chapter, I compare the three main thirteenth-century manuscripts to illustrate that the representation of Kriemhild's grief is a problematic aspect of the story. My fourth chapter concentrates on the *Nibelungenklage*, a companion text to the *Nibelungenlied*. Here I explain that the B and C redactions of the *Nibelungenklage* respond to the *Nibelungenlied* by recasting Kriemhild as a victim acting out of loyalty to her dead husband and by recontextualizing the individual lamentations as either productive or unproductive, but not destructive for society.

To the powerful female agents in my life: my mother, Ann Marie, Gwen, Jenny, Kathryn,
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Chapter 1

Introduction: The Lament and Female Agency

The Motif of the Female Lament

Near the beginning of Heinrich von Veldeke's mid-twelfth century courtly epic *Eneasroman* there is an elaborate lamentation scene. Dido, the queen of Carthage, has publicly declared her marriage to Aeneas. Aeneas, having received bad tidings from the gods, decides to leave her. Dido, grief-stricken when she hears the news, nearly dies of grief, loses her mind, cries, faints, threatens suicide, and laments Aeneas's inevitable departure (v. 1975-2096). But Aeneas sails away, to which the narrator remarks:

daz was der leidiste tach,
den frou Dîdô ie gesach.
si was vil ubele bedaht.
sie viel dicke in unmaht
die rouwe gienk ir vil nâ. (v. 2245-49)¹

[That was the most sorrowful day that Lady Dido ever saw. She was in a terrible state. She fell often into unconsciousness; the sorrow affected her very greatly.]²

Filled with anguish, Dido burns all of Aeneas's gifts, and then speaks to him as if he were present (v. 2345-47). She avows: "ich mûz dorchstechen / daz herze, daz mich verriet" (v. 2406-07). ("I must pierce the heart that betrayed me.") Referring here to her own heart, Dido ultimately commits suicide, using the sword Aeneas left behind (v. 2423-25).

¹Heinrich von Veldeke, *Eneasroman*, ed. Dieter Kartschoke (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1986).

²All translations of *Eneasroman* are my own.

Unable to suppress her pain at her lost love, Dido embodies immense grief and suffering and becomes the paradigmatic lamenting lady of medieval German literature.

The lamenting lady is a very popular motif in Middle High German literature. Taking on a new dimension at the turn of the thirteenth century, representations of mourning females vary dramatically beginning with Heinrich von Veldeke's description of Dido (1170) and Eilhart von Olberg's representation of Isolde (1170), and ending with Gottfried von Straßburg's *Tristan* (1210).³ Other examples include Wolfram von Eschenbach's depiction of Sigune, who, due to the demise of her suitor Schionatulander, rips out her hair and mutilates her body to such extremes that the protagonist Parzival does not recognize her when he encounters her in the forest.⁴ Sigune, like Isolde, dies on account of her grief. In Hartmann von Aue's *Iwein*, Laudine laments the death of her husband publicly before her court and enacts her own self-destruction as she tears at her hair and her wimple to such extremes that she temporarily loses her hearing and her voice.⁵ In contrast to Dido, Isolde, and Sigune, Laudine does not succumb to her grief but instead remarries. Nonetheless, Laudine's lament establishes her as a feminine paragon of courtly virtue. Gottfried accentuates the corporeal nature of the female gendered lament in *Tristan* in his depiction of Blanscheflur when her beloved Rivalin dies: She beats herself again and again, faints, and dies in childbirth.⁶ As these examples illustrate, the poets of the turn of the thirteenth century explored diverse

³Eilhart von Oberg, *Tristrant und Isalde*, ed. Danielle Buschinger and Wolfgang Spiewok (Greifswald: Reineke, 1993).

⁴Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, ed. Peter Knecht (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 138, 17-19; 249, 21-22.

⁵ Hartmann von Aue, *Iwein*, ed. Thomas Cramer (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), v. 1321-30.

⁶ Gottfried von Straßburg, *Tristan*, ed. Rüdiger Krohn (Stuttgart, Reclam: 2001), v. 1172-1184; v. 1290-1307; v. 1737-1741.

aspects of the motif of the lamenting lady. How are we to make sense of this fascination with the female lament? Why do representations of the lament vary so dramatically? What can these mourning women tell us about grief and gender? What role does the lament play in the larger context of these narratives?

While some poets only describe the lament briefly, others make the lament an integral part of their narrative. Regardless whether the lament is described in a few lines or in many, it provides a stage on which the female characters are the focus. This dissertation argues that several poets explicitly use the motif of the lament to explore the notion of female agency, and in so doing they participated in a discourse on gender.

When we compare the role of the aforementioned lamenting women against those seen in Hartmann von Aue's *Erec* and in the anonymous works *Nibelungenlied*, and *Nibelungenklage*, it becomes apparent that the female lament in the latter three poems plays a particularly central and intriguing role throughout. The lament is integral to the female protagonists' development in *Erec* and the *Nibelungenlied*; it is space (a context or circumstance) within which a female figure can speak and/or act; it even motivates the action or plot.

In the Arthurian romance *Erec*, composed in 1170, Hartmann uses the motif of the lament as a space within which the female protagonist is able to become the active subject of the poem and develop her voice as a queen. Initially Enite engages in typical self-destructive gestures (weeping, pulling her hair, beating the breasts, etc.) when her husband, Erec, dies. Her lamentation then transforms into a lengthy monologue, in which she interrupts the linear narrative to reflect and speak.

The poet of *Nibelungenlied* (1200) constructs the widow Kriemhild's lament as a path to power and presents her expression and enactment of grief as highly threatening, particularly when we compare her lament to that of Enite. While it may seem unusual to compare the heroic epic with the romance, they are thematically linked in their exploration of female agency within the space of the lament. In contrast to Enite, Kriemhild transgresses the conventional boundaries of the lamenting lady to express her desire and power in the world of men, and she is consequently depicted as a dangerous she-devil who must be destroyed.

In *Nibelungenklage* (1200-1220) the author contextualizes Kriemhild's perilous lament as a justifiable, albeit excessive, reaction of a loyal grieving wife. He further presents his audience with different models of the lament. Lamentation may become a productive space, or an unproductive one. The productive potential of the lament is linked in a predictable manner to the gender of the person lamenting: The lamenting lady is not productive for the rebuilding of society, while the lamenting man tempers his grief and takes action. As we will see, however, two characters go against this new gendered construct. Rüdiger's daughter Dietlinde overcomes her grief and becomes the new ruler, while King Etzel laments like a lady and loses his honor.

What is the Lament?

In this examination, I define the lament as a grief-stricken and pain-filled reaction to the loss of a loved one. As Urban Küsters points out the courtly lament in twelfth and thirteenth century German narratives is "aus der Verlusttrauer geboren und veräußert sich in Reden und Gebären. Sie verhandelt in ihren Kernformen die beiden tragischen

Grundsituationen menschlicher Existenz: die unglücklich Liebe und den Tod.”⁷ The definition of the “Totenklage” in Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm’s *Deutsches Wörterbuch* provides a useful synopsis of the traditional form of the lament, while also suggesting its ritualistic and communal nature:

eigentlich wehgeschrei über den todtten, dann wehklage mit wolgesetzter rede und gewissen gebärden, wozu die verwandtern helfen muszten, zur bezeugung ihrer treue (*pietas*), auch sich selbst raufen und schlagen der brust erscheint bei der klage, selbst abreißen der kleider,[...]. Die klage gewann damit die form eines ceremoniellen vorgangs, den man nachher hie und da als lästige pflicht dazu bestellen und bezahlten leuten überliesz (s. klageweib).⁸

The motif of the lament crosses genres and encompasses seemingly endless variations that date back to ancient Greece.⁹ The lament, a form of intense mourning, is, as Dido illustrates, both an action and a state of mind, a physical and mental entity. Typically triggered by some type of loss (death, identity, honor, etc.), the lament may take several different forms: beating the breasts, ripping the hair, fainting, crying, weeping, and screaming.¹⁰ It may be public or

⁷ Urban Küsters, “Klagefiguren: Vom höfischen Umgang mit der Trauer,” in *An den Grenzen höfischer Kultur: Anfechtungen der Lebensordnung in der deutschen Erzähldichtung des hohen Mittelalters*, ed. Gert Kaiser (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1991), 12.

⁸Jakob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (München:Deutscher Taschenbuch, 1984), column 908.

⁹See Richard Leicher, *Die Totenklage in der deutschen Epik: Von der ältesten Zeit bis zur Nibelungen-Klage* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1977) for a discussion of lamentations from the Stone Age to the Middle Ages.

¹⁰For studies on gestures and expressions of grief from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, see Wilhelm Frenzen, “Klagebilder und Klagegebärden in der deutschen Dichtung des höfischen Mittelalters,” PhD diss., Rheinisch-Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, 1936; Carl Sittl, *Die Gebärden der Griechen und Römer* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1890); and Erhard Lommatzsch, “Darstellung von Trauer und Schmerz in der alfranzösischen Literatur,” *ZRPh* 43 (1923): 20-67. According to Frenzen, “die Klagegebärde ist zum mindesten in der höfischen Epik immer noch die durchaus stärkste, häufigste und bestausgebildete, oft sogar die einzig vorkommende Gebärde.” “Klagebilder und Klagegebärden,” 15.

semi-private and it may involve one person or a community of people. In *Erec*, the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Nibelungenklage*, women initially engage in the more extreme gestures of grief. Their lament arises out of grief, pain and loss; loss that I will show is not just due to the death of a person, but a loss of status, power, and honor. However, I will also reveal that the female figures in these poems are also able to gain from their loss. In the absence of their husbands or loved ones, women can develop their voices through the lament, use their grief secretly and powerfully and/or to gain new powerful positions. In short, in the absence of the male protagonists, female agency is possible.

What is Female Agency?

It is through the absence of their husbands and/or family members and the socially constructed space for expressing their grief that the female figures Enite, Kriemhild and Dietlinde are able to emerge as subjects. In *Erec*, Enite is subject to her husband Erec's control until he 'dies' at which point she speaks while lamenting his death. Her grief gives her the power of speech. Similarly, Kriemhild in the *Nibelungenlied* slowly gains agency when her husband Siegfried dies. The *Nibelungenklage's* Dietlinde acquires agency when all of her relatives die, including her betrothed, and no one else is left to rule the kingdom. She helps her people to grieve the death of her father and becomes the new ruler. These female figures' agency depends on their social relations, and is at least partially formed through the socially constructed conventions of grieving widows.

The subject, also known as the agent, according to Butler, represents a diverse reshaping of power relations from which she (the subject) cannot move away. She argues:

“The paradox of subjectivation (*assujétissement*) is precisely that the subject who would resist such norms is itself enabled, if not produced, by such norms. Although this constitutive constraint does not foreclose the possibility of agency, it does locate agency as a reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent to power and not a relation of external opposition to power.”¹¹

Enite, Kriemhild and Dietlinde do not resist patriarchal control. It is within the convention of the lament and the socially defined role of the lamenting lady that they are able to gain access to agency. In her analysis of the subject, Butler argues that gender is performative and socially constructed. If we take the King Etzel from the *Nibelungenklage* into consideration, her argument rings true. When he grieves, he performs like a woman. Butler’s examination of the subject and her work on gender help us to understand that the norms and gender identities within the fictional societies of *Erec*, the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Nibelungenklage* shape the female subject.

Female Agency in Medieval German Literature

The topic of female agency in history and literature from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century has received considerable scholarly attention.¹² The anthology “Gendering the Master Narrative,” offers diverse and representative perspectives on how and when medieval women were able to act.¹³ The historian Dyan Elliot argues that with the rise of

¹¹ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 15.

¹² For a good summary of scholarship on the representation of women in medieval German literature see Albrecht Classen, “The Implication of Feminist Theory on the Study of Medieval German Literature: Also an Introduction,” in *Women as Protagonists and Poets in the German Middle Ages: An Anthology of Feminist Approaches in Middle High German Literature*, ed., Albrecht Classen (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1991), xvii-xx.

¹³ Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski, “Introduction: A New Economy of Power Relations: Female Agency in the Middle Ages,” in *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Ithaca: Cornell, 2003), 5. See a similar discussion in Jennifer

Christianity in the thirteenth century, women took on the role of confessors, which was a potential source of empowerment. A Beguine named Isabella, for instance, used confession in a manner that allowed her “to control and time her intervention in public affairs.”¹⁴ Joan Ferrante asserts that many female characters in history “[o]utwardly [...] accept the role society expects them to play, that of the quiet figure with no public voice, but secretly they subvert it often to serious effects.”¹⁵ Helga Druxes traces “a progression of female protagonists as mute exchange objects to vocal agents in exchange” in twentieth century women’s fiction using a variety of theories including both Foucault and Butler’s.¹⁶ In these illuminating discussions, the representation of female agency in medieval German literature is, however, absent. While many scholars have looked at the various roles that women play in medieval German texts, no one has looked at how the lament grants women access to agency.¹⁷

Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean ed., *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1995).

¹⁴ Dyan Elliot, “Women and Confession: From Empowerment to Pathology,” in *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Ithaca: Cornell, 2003), 38.

¹⁵ Joan Ferrante, “Public Postures and Private Maneuvers: Roles Medieval Women Play,” in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 213.

¹⁶ Helga Druxes, *Resisting Bodies: The Negotiation of Female Agency in Twentieth-Century Women’s Fiction* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 13.

¹⁷ Marion Mälzer argues that the figure of Isolde in the medieval German Tristan poems maintains power (i.e. agency) through her magical abilities despite her husband and father. *Die Isolde-Gestalten in den mittelalterlichen deutschen Tristan-Dichtungen: Ein Beitrag zum diachronischen Wandel* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1991), 39. Similarly, Albrecht Classen examines the different aspects of Queen Isolde’s agency and power in Gottfried’s *Tristan*. “Female Agency and Power in Gottfried von Strassburg’s *Tristan*: The Irish Queen Isolde: New Perspectives,” in *Tristania: A Journal of the Tristan Society devoted to Tristan Studies* 23 (2004): 39-60.

Although she does not address the lament specifically, in her book *Mothers and Daughters in Medieval German Literature*, Ann Marie Rasmussen provides a useful understanding of female agency within German narratives. She contends “Under certain circumstance, medieval woman, both in history and in fiction, were heroes; that is to say, they came to occupy the subject position for shorter or longer periods of time. When they did so, it was often *in place of men*.”¹⁸ Such female figures’ power was, to use the words of Mary Erler “a function of male absence.”¹⁹ This claim indeed holds true for the *Nibelungenklage*’s Dietlinde, but to a lesser extent for Hartmann’s Enite and *Nibelungenlied*’s Kriemhild. In chapter two I will show that Enite is actually able to maintain her agency in the presence of some men, albeit not her husband. Chapter three illustrates that Kriemhild also occupies agency in the presence of men. Nonetheless, Rasmussen’s claim is a productive one for examining these figures’ agency in the context of the lament. Moreover, Rasmussen argues that even though female figures may occupy the subject position momentarily, their gender does not allow them to completely take on the role. Thus powerful female characters, such as Kriemhild in the *Nibelungenlied*, waver between both the object and subject position. However, as I will show, Kriemhild as well as other figures are able to acquire the subject position. Nevertheless, Rasmussen’s claims are important to my discussion of grief as a space for female agency.

E. Jane Burns offers another especially useful strategy for understanding female agency in literature. In her book *Bodytalk* Burns suggests a reading strategy of old French

¹⁸ Ann Marie Rasmussen, *Mothers and Daughters in Medieval German Literature* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 80.

¹⁹ Mary Erler, “Upon my Husband’s Death: Widows in Literature and Histories of Medieval Europe,” *Medieval Feminist Newsletter* 14 (Fall): 30-31.

texts that moves away from hierarchical oppositions and avoids reducing the text to a male author.²⁰ She explores and discovers partial feminine voices within misogynist stereotypes of femininity. It is within this reconceived notion of voices that female literary figures resist stereotypes thus gaining partial subjectivity (agency). Burns argues that Enide's speech in Chrétien de Troyes's *Erec et Enide* reconfigures the notion of the "desiring lady" and points out that "romances do not effectively colonize the women's speech."²¹ Burns comes to the following conclusions about Chrétien's Enide:

What we hear is Enide speaking not from the masculinized "head" that would underwrite chivalric norms but from a female body that actively resists them. We hear, in effect, this heroine rewriting the very adventure story that contains and constructs her, outlining the possibility of other versions that traditionally have gone untold and unrecorded.²²

Whereas Burns focuses on the body and voice, this examination deals primarily with the lament. It is within the space of the lament that Hartmann's Enite self-reflects and develops her voice to embody her role as a queen. Kriemhild, on the other hand, uses her grief as a foil through which she speaks in order to manipulate men to help her to avenge her husband Siegfried's death. Dietlinde in the *Nibelungenklage* vocalizes her grief overcomes her sorrow and then becomes a ruling queen.

²⁰ E. Jane Burns, *Bodytalk: When Women Speak in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

²¹ Ibid., 196.

²² Ibid., 172.

The Lament

The female lament in medieval German literature has received some scholarly attention. Older scholarship on the lament has identified it as a popular motif, but failed to recognize its importance for the female protagonists.²³ Wilhelm Frenzen, for instance, surveys the various depictions of the lament in works such as *Eneasroman* and Herbert von Fritzlar's *Trojaroman*, and then traces the lament through courtly epics, heroic epics and finally Spielmann epics.²⁴ In his investigation he argues that German poets of the twelfth and thirteenth century often portrayed the lament as a woman's destiny and duty. For Frenzen the female lament is "durchweg zu mehr oder weniger vollendeter Gestaltung, zu einer in Gebärden und Haltung abgeschlossenen plastischen Bildhaftigkeit und Anschaulichkeit gelangen, während die Klagen der Männer sich mehr in ungestümen und formal ungebändigten Ausbrüchen ergehen."²⁵ In his examination of Gottfried's *Tristan*, the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Nibelungenklage*, Frenzen highlights the differences between how female and male characters lament. However, Frenzen's investigation falls short despite being comprehensive. He makes sweeping generalizations about the gender specific nature of

²³Some scholars have investigated gestures in medieval literature and art. For instance, D. Peil compares German and French Arthurian romances whereas J. A. Burrow examines what St. Augustine calls 'given' non-natural gestures in variety of medieval narratives. M. Barasch, furthermore, looks at gestures of despair in art. D. Peil, *Die Gebärde be Chrétien, Hartmann und Wolfram: Erec-Iwein-Parzival* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1975); J.A. Burrow, *Gestures and Looks in Medieval Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2002); and M. Barasch, *Gestures of Despair in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art* (New York: New York University, 1967).

²⁴Frenzen, "Klagebilder und Klagegebärden." For a review of the female gestures in Middle High German Literature from antiquity to Christian tradition see Gisela Gehards, "Das Bild der Witwe in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters," PhD diss., Bonn, 1992. For a review of male and female forms of grief see: Hannes Stubbe, *Formen der Trauer* (Berlin: Broschier, 1985).

²⁵Frenzen, "Klagebilder und Klagegebärden," 27.

gestures. Frenzen further does not engage in close readings of the works, but instead regards the lament as a static motif with little variation.

John Greenfield's work on the lament similarly fails to recognize the motif as a vehicle for female agency. Instead, he argues that the *Frauenklage* functions to help construct the identity of the male hero.²⁶ "Im klassischen höfischen Roman erschienen so viele klagende Frauen, daß sie fast als eine obligatorische Komponente im konventionellen, höfischen Poetikinventar fungieren."²⁷ Greenfield, like other scholars thus considers the female lament to be a static motif. Furthermore, his assumption that it is part of the male hero's trajectory, is at odds with this dissertation.

In his ground-breaking essay on lamentations in Medieval German literature, Urban Küsters discusses how the lament was initially an archaic way of expressing feelings that then develops into a cultural courtly form.²⁸ Küsters moves beyond a mere survey to show that authors participated in a discourse on the courtly lament in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries:²⁹ "Die epischen Klagen eröffnen untereinander einen Diskurs über die rechte Form, die Folgen und die gedankliche Durchdringung der Verlusttrauer, vergleichbar den Minneliedern, die zwischen einzelnen Texten und Autoren auf vielfältige Art Bezüge und

²⁶John Greenfield, "Frau, Tod und Trauer im *Nibelungenlied*: Überlegungen zu Kriemhilt," in *Das Nibelungenlied: Actas do Simpósio Internacional 27 de Outubro de 2000*, ed. John Greenfield (Porto: Universidade do Porto, 2001), 97-106.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 103.

²⁸Küsters, "Klagefiguren," 74.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 9-75.

Querverbindung herstellen.”³⁰ He seeks to unveil the historical significance of grief through an analysis of what he deems typical lamenting figures in courtly epics from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: the ‘grieving ruler’, the ‘lamenting female’, and the ‘collective lament.’ Grieving, Küsters points out, is primarily a women’s task and often complements a knight’s duty to bear arms. Furthermore, the lamenting woman reflects the horrific consequence of knightly battle. Also important for my discussion is the grieving ruler, who according to Küsters, “wird bestätigt durch eine ganze reihe von melancholischen Königsfiguren in der klassischen höfischen Epik.”³¹ Melancholy, Küsters states, is a state of mind or disposition of loneliness that emerges from grief.³² In chapter four King Etzel in the *Nibelungenklage* serves as an example of a melancholic ruling figure. While Küsters is interesting in tracing tradition and identifying types, my concern lies with examining the variation in medieval German representations of the female lament and exploring the ways in which poets grappled with their female protagonists’ agency within the popular motif. In my in depth analysis of three primary texts (*Erec*, *Nibelungenlied*, *Nibelungenklage*) I illustrate that the lament provides the opportunity for poets to create a context within which the female protagonists become the subjects of their texts. I also, in contrast to Küsters, argue that lament plays a primary narrative role within these poems.

In a volume entitled “Making Silence Speak,” scholars examine women’s speech, in a variety of situations including the lament, and its political and social implications as

³⁰ Ibid., 71.

³¹ Ibid., 30, 48-75. Küsters mentions Etzel and Dietrich in the *Nibelungenlied* as examples of ‘lamenting rulers,’ but he does not provide an in depth analysis of their grief.

³² Ibid., 26.

represented in ancient Greek literature and society.³³ Ritual lamentations comprise the predominant although not exclusive space within which a female figure can speak in Greek literature and society. In fact, as this volume points out, in the “Republik” Socrates comments that the lament is a feminine discursive practice inappropriate for men. Throughout Greek tradition “the ritual lament remained the province and prerogative of women in whom it was believed that there was an innate affinity for weeping and sorrowful songs.”³⁴ Nevertheless, the voice, even in the lament, serves to negotiate complex issues. For example, according to André Lardinois the lament allows women in society to voice a certain level of ‘social protest.’ “They could express in a lament their displeasure with their lot as well as with the lot of their relative, who was taken away from them by war or distance.”³⁵ The lament in ancient Greek society and literature was thus considered a vehicle for women to express themselves in public. It is surprising that more scholars working on medieval literature have not explored the lament from a similar standpoint. Instead, as the brief synopses of the main scholarly approaches to the medieval female lament have shown, the female lament at the turn of the thirteenth century is generally regarded as a literary flourish, a static motif that has little substantive relevance for the poems in which they appear. This dissertation therefore draws on the fruitful discussion in “Making Silence Speak,” but looks

³³ André Lardinois and Laura McClure, ed., *Making Silence Speak: Women’s Voices in Greek Literature and Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

³⁴ Laura McClure, an introduction to *Making Silence Speak: Women’s Voices in Greek Literature and Society*, ed., André Lardinois and Laura McClure (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 10.

³⁵ André Lardinois, “Keening Sappho: Female Speech Genres in Sappho’s Poetry” in *Making Silence Speak: Women’s Voices in Greek Literature and Society*, ed., André Lardinois and Laura McClure, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 88.

at a different corpus of material to show that the motif as it is used in medieval literature, has similar potential as a site of female power and agency.

Emotion

In the last ten years emotion has become a central focus of scholarly debate on medieval sources. Much of the recent scholarship on emotion in medieval literature and historical sources suggests that grief does not occur as a personal, subjective response to any one situation: It is culturally determined, has a communicative function, and it is performed. Many scholars have taken issue with the work of Norbert Elias who claimed that a civil society emerged only after the Middle Ages when people began to discipline themselves by controlling and suppressing their emotions.³⁶ At the basis of this argument was an understanding of emotions as hydraulic forces that welled up in the body. Barbara Rosenwein has summarized this hydraulic notion of emotions and its importance for the earliest discussions on the representation of emotion in medieval texts.³⁷ Recent work criticizes the assessment of the Middle Ages as a barbaric and impulsive period and instead examines cultural codes of emotion from the perspective of performance theory and cultural anthropology.

The work of Gerd Althoff has been ground-breaking in steering the debate about emotions away from this hydraulic model. He discusses the social functions of emotions in order to emphasize that the displays of emotions follow certain rules and are part of a system

³⁶Norbert Elias, *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation: Soziogenetische und Psychogenetische Untersuchungen* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1997).

³⁷ Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotion in History," *The American Historical Review* 107 (2002): 821-845.

of courtly communication.³⁸ In the Middle Ages emotions not only serve as a site to negotiate power, but also, according to Althoff, assist in stabilizing the political structures that were so fragile. His work suggests that lamentation possessed a political, ceremonial, and demonstrative function for the nobility at the court.³⁹ Similarly, but from a modern perspective, the sociologist Kenneth J. Gergen, postulates that emotion in general is not the internal experience of one person, but rather a culturally conventional act. Emotions do not lead us into action, but rather we enact emotions.⁴⁰

With regard to modern societies, James R. Averill postulates “Every society possesses certain mores, beliefs and customs concerning the appropriate behavior to be displayed upon the death of a significant individual.”⁴¹ Averill follows Emile Durkheim, who wrote: “mourning is not a natural movement of private feelings wounded by a cruel loss; it is a duty imposed by the group. One weeps, not simply because he is sad, but because he is forced to weep. It is a ritual attitude which he is forced to adopt out of respect for custom, but which is, in a large measure, independent of his affective state.”⁴² Certainly the communal nature of

³⁸ On the public performance of emotion, see the collection of essays by Gerd Althoff, ed., *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter: Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde* (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 1997).

³⁹ Gerd Althoff, “Der König weint: Rituelle Tränen in öffentlicher Kommunikation,” in *‘Aufführung’ und ‘Schrift’ in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, ed. Jan-Dirk Müller (Stuttgart: Verlag J.B. Metzler), 239-52.

⁴⁰ Kenneth J. Gergen, *Realities and Relationships: Soundings in Social Construction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994). Gergen’s theory on emotions relate closely to Judith Butler’s theory of performance in which she claims that performance is not an intentional action, which is contrary to Richard Schechner, who claims that performance is conscious (i.e. realized) and then implemented into public. Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter*; and Richard Schechner, *Performance theory* (New York: Routledge, 1988).

⁴¹ James Averill, “Grief: Its Nature and Significance,” *Psychological Bulletin* 70, no 6 (1968): 721-722. Moreover, he states “The prescribed behavior, whether sincere or not, must be followed if social censure is to be avoided” (727).

⁴² *Ibid.*, 722.

the lament and the strict conventions governing its expression are crucial for medieval German literary texts as well. It is shown repeatedly in *Erec*, the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Nibelungenklage* that when people behave according to social conventions, mourning rituals assist in strengthening the religious and/or social configurations of the group, and “help assuage the emotions of the bereaved.”⁴³

Elke Koch’s examination of grief and identity entitled *Trauer und Identität: Inszenierungen von Emotion in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters* is the most innovative and theoretical approach to the emotion of grief to date.⁴⁴ In this study, she argues that sorrow, in the twelfth and thirteenth Medieval German High narratives *Wilhelm*, *Erec*, and *Tristan*, is differently accentuated, yet functions in all three texts to construct identity.⁴⁵ Using contemporary theory on emotion and performance from Freud to Butler, Koch sets up a theoretical framework with which to analyze Medieval German texts. She then sets out to explore and show how grief is constituted, how it is performed, and also to explain the societal function it fulfills.⁴⁶ This dissertation draws on Koch’s thorough examination of grief; the lament is undoubtedly the most common expression of grief. But the emotive quality of the lament is not the focus of this dissertation. Instead, I am interested in the narrative role that the lament plays, and the way in which poets resist the conventions to

⁴³ Averill, “Grief: Its Nature,” 727.

⁴⁴ Elke Koch, *Trauer und Identität: Inszenierungen von Emotion in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 79.

⁴⁵ In a similar examination, Koch argues that Gahmuret in *Parzival* removes his identity when he grieves. Grief for men is an illness that is eventually rectified. Women (i.e. Herzeloide, Sigune), on the other hand destroy their identities when their husbands die. “Inszenierungen von Trauer, Körper und Geschlecht: im *Parzival* Wolframs von Eschenbach,” in *Codierungen von Emotion im Mittelalter/Emotions and Sensibilities in the Middle Ages*, ed. C. Stephen Jaeger and Ingrid Kasten (Walter de Gruyter: Berlin, 2003), 143-158.

⁴⁶ Koch, *Trauer und Identität*, 19.

portray both the potential and the limitations of the female lament as a space of feminine action. Furthermore, whereas Koch remains within the genre of the romance when analyzing the female lament, this study looks across genres to identify broader discourses of gender, lamentation, and agency.

The Lament: A Context for Female Agency

This dissertation contributes to scholarship on performance, agency and gender in medieval German Literature by thoroughly examining the crucial role the female lament plays in the works *Erec*, the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Nibelungenklage*. My dissertation adds first to current scholarship on *Erec*, the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Nibelungenklage* by illustrating that the lament is an extremely important narrative device in these three courtly epics. Instead of depicting brief conventional scenes of female lamentations, the poets of these works use the motif to develop their protagonists in different ways. This dissertation furthermore contributes to an understanding of gender that is multifaceted. The older scholarship tends to overwhelmingly argue that illustrations of the lament are part of a clearly defined gender-specific convention. In contrast, I contend that gender as it pertains to the lament is not black and white; it is constantly evolving in each of the works. In addition this dissertation adds to the larger context of literary and gender studies by demonstrating that literature is a template for emotions; it prescribes behavior; it fulfills a pedagogical function; and it illustrates that ideas about gender and agency are not static. Drawing on on-going scholarly debates on agency, performance, and gender this dissertation develops a productive theoretical framework for discussing female grief.

The motif of the female lament, as it is illustrated in twelfth and thirteenth century medieval German texts, arguably begins with Heinrich von Veldeke's depiction of Dido. Indeed, Dido is a paradigmatic example of a lamenting lady. Dido serves as an example against which other medieval German poets, especially Hartman and the anonymous authors of the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Nibelungenklage*, measured their own lamenting ladies. Heinrich portrays his female protagonist engaging in gestures of the lament that become typical for women figures in twelfth and thirteenth century works. However, he also uses the lament as a means to further illustrate her agency as a queen. Dido achieves the ultimate form of agency when she kills herself: She decides her own fate. For Heinrich female agency is a self-destructive force. It is this agency within the context of the lament that the twelfth and thirteenth century poets contend with.

Heinrich's portrayal of Dido sets up the corporeality of the female lament seen in twelfth and thirteenth century German narratives. When Aeneas finally departs, Dido has physical reactions to her loss. Dido, as I mentioned earlier, faints, cries out and then talks about her visceral reactions to her loss:

mîn ungemach is sô gram,
ichn mach gegên noch gestân
geligen noch gesitzen.
ich sterbe vor hitzen
und quele iedoch vor kalde.
ichn weiz was des gewalde,
mir is vreislicher vergeben,
sus einwil ich niht langer leben. (v. 2387-94)

[“My suffering is so terrible that I can neither walk, nor stand nor lie nor sit. I am dying of heat but am tortured by the cold. I do not know anything of this power. I have been dreadfully poisoned and thus will not live much longer.”]

The loss of Aeneas's love creates a corporeal response that severely incapacitates Dido. She loses nearly all her physical abilities. The reference she makes to her body temperature

alludes to the four humors, which, in the Middle Ages, is directly related to a person's temperament. Dido is both sad (melancholic/cold) and angry (choleric/warm). The poison—of which she refers—is presumably her love for Aeneas. It could also be a reference to black and yellow bile, both of which seem to fill her. Despite all of this, Dido is able to communicate her anguish through her own words—not just the narrator's words or descriptions of her reaction.⁴⁷

As she is left to cope with her losses, Dido also expresses and self-reflects on her actions and grief in a long monologue, which illustrates her agency. Urban Küsters argues that as she laments, Dido become more aware of the role she played in her loss of honor and eventually accepts responsibility. Dido is an example of what Küsters calls “einen fortschreitenden Prozeß der Selbstaufklärung.”⁴⁸ Indeed she illustrates “Selbstaufklärung” when she highlights her lack of moderation in her love for him:

“ouwê, hêre Ênêas,
wie gewaldech ich was,
dô ich ûch êrst erkande
und gesach in disem lande,
des mûz ich sêre engelden.
ichn wil ûch niht schilden,
wande ir sît es âne scholt,
ir wâret mir genûch holt,
ich minnete ûch zumâzen.” (v. 2355-65)

[“Alas, Lord Aeneas, how powerful I was when I first met you and saw you in this country. For this I must pay. I will not blame you, because you are not at fault. You loved me enough, but I loved you immoderately.”]

⁴⁷ Wilhelm Frenzen argues that “Die Gestalt- und Ausdruckslosigkeit dieser Klage hat ihren Grund darin, daß sie nicht auf Gestaltung, sondern auf analytische Zerlegung des Gefühls ausgeht.” “Klagebilder und Klagegebärden,” 7.

⁴⁸ Küsters, “Klagefiguren,” 52.

Having relinquished her honor the moment she fell in love with Aeneas, Heinrich underscores that Dido's loss of honor is even a bigger issue than Aeneas's abandonment. In Aeneas's absence Dido reevaluates her power as queen through her voice. She accepts responsibility for her own actions. Interestingly it is the loss of her honor that plays a more decisive role in Dido's final actions. Dido states:

“ouwî, unsenfte minne,
wie dû mich hâst bedwungen!
ichn mach mit mîner zungen
nicht gesagen mînen mût.
ouwî êre und gût,
wunne und wîstûm,
gewalt und rîchtûm,
des hete ich alles mîn teil.
daz is ein michel unheil,
daz ich ez sus mûz enden
ze mînen missewenden
und alsus grôzem mînem schaden.” (v. 2374-85)

[Alas awful love, how you defeated me! I cannot express my thoughts with language. Alas, honor and possessions, happiness and wisdom, power and wealth—I had all of that. It is great misfortune that I must end it thus to my great dishonor and my equally great shame.]

Without a husband, protection, and honor, Dido, once a great queen, appears hopeless. Unwilling to reestablish herself as a powerful ruling queen, Dido takes her own life by driving Aeneas's sword through her chest (v. 2424-25). Using Aeneas's sword implies that he is the one that kills her in the end. Even though she dies on account of her losses, Dido takes an active role in deciding her own fate, which illustrates a powerful form of agency. She makes a choice. Dido's final actions are, however, according to the narrator, extreme:

al ware sie ein wise wîb,
si was dô vil sinne lôs.
daz si den tôt alsô kôs,
daz quam von unsinne.
ez waz unrehtiu minne,
diu sie daz zû dwanc,

mit dem stiche sie spranc
unde vile in die glut. (v. 2426-33)

[Although she was a wise woman, she lost her mind there. That she chose death was madness. It was unjust love that forced her to it. With the wound, she jumped and fell into the flames.]

Dido's grief embodies not only corporeal characteristics, but also psychological aspects. As far as the narrator is concerned, grief hinders Dido's rational capacity and takes complete control. Her decision to take her life is, at least according to the narrator, not a reasonable solution to her losses. Her grief is nevertheless intriguing because Dido speaks about the role she personally played in her fate. Furthermore, she decides to take her own life. By accepting responsibility for her actions (i.e. falling love and marrying Aeneas), Dido illustrates self-knowledge and independence, forms of agency. This agency, however, is a self-destructive force.

Heinrich takes the classical motif of the lament seen in antiquity and incorporates it into a Middle High German narrative. Heinrich's Dido resembles Virgil's Dido in her corporeal gestures.⁴⁹ However, Heinrich's Dido, unlike Virgil's Dido, takes responsibility for her immoderate love for Aeneas. Furthermore, she does not exude the same amount of anger as Virgil's Dido. She does not curse Aeneas for his abandonment. Instead she avenges loss by killing herself.

The motif of the lament in twelfth and thirteenth century German narratives begins with Heinrich, but other authors, as I will show, build on his idea, altering it to develop their own stories and ideas. Hartmann's Enite, similar to Dido, speaks in a long monologue while she laments the loss of her husband. Enite then in contrast to Dido uses her lament to remain a loyal widow. Hartmann takes Enite's agency further than Heinrich does with Dido. Enite

⁴⁹ *Vergil's Aeneid: Book I-VI*, ed. Clyde Pharr, revised ed. (Wauconda: Bochazy-Carducci, 1998).

illustrates her agency through her lament in the court. Agency, for Hartmann, is not a self-destructive force. In the *Nibelungenlied* Kriemhild uses her grief (a destructive force for society) to avenge her husband's death whereas Dietlinde in the *Nibelungenklage* takes on the role of ruling queen in the wake of her grief. Dietlinde's agency, similar to Enite's, is not a destructive force.

Dissertation Outline

In contrast to the *Eneasroman*, the lament in *Erec*, the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Nibelungenklage* plays an intriguing role throughout. Hartmann von Aue draws on the figure of Dido in his depiction of Enite, who also attempts suicide. However, Enite's lamentation plays an integral role in her development into a queen and agent. It is through her lament that Enite acquires agency (i.e. learns to speak). In the *Nibelungenlied* the author portrays the lament as a space within which Kriemhild, a widow, is able to act out and transgress gender boundaries. The anonymous author of *Nibelungenklage* underlines concerns with the depiction of Kriemhild's lament and the repercussions of her grief in the *Nibelungenlied* and didactically presents his audience with an array of socially productive and unproductive models of lamentation.

In spite of Hartmann's attempt to delineate the commonality of Enite's mourning by describing the defacement of her body, I argue in chapter two that Enite's lament embodies aspects that are atypical of other lamenting ladies. Enite, whose husband, Erec forbids her to speak, is suddenly able to speak out to God and the animals without restrictions once Erec is 'dead.' By reflecting on her struggles as a woman, wife and a widow, Enite is able to transform into an agent, a queen with a voice. Hartmann uses the motif of the lament as a

space for Enite, a female figure, to acquire agency. This space causes a rupture in the dominant narrative that can be better understood by drawing on Hélène Cixous' notion of *écriture féminine*, also known as “writing the body.” The notion of “writing the body” suggests a new way to read the female voice.⁵⁰ *Écriture féminine* is a form of writing that literally embodies femininity and in turn creates a subjective and textual place for women. *Écriture féminine* refers not to the actual physical body, but rather a type of writing that *produces* difference, difference that is specifically feminine.⁵¹ Such a modern notion of difference allows the reader to see the lament as a means through which Enite can gain access to agency.⁵²

The third chapter argues that the anonymous author of *Nibelungenlied* is interested in exploring the powerful and dangerous potential of the female lament. Kriemhild's initial lament is decidedly conventional and feminine—she weeps uncontrollably and falls to the ground in despair when she discovers her husband Siegfried's lifeless body outside her quarters. However, Kriemhild soon starts to plot her vengeance within the context of her lament. For example, she uses her grief to manipulate men by soliciting them to avenge the wrong that has been done to her. Her persistence on revenge against her husband's killer, Hagen, throughout the second half of the *Nibelungenlied* leads to the destruction of society

⁵⁰ Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa,” trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*, eds. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), 243-264.

⁵¹ Burns, *Bodytalk*, 8. Burns further contends “By putting the female body back into play, proponent of *écriture féminine* remind us that we cannot fully distinguish the cultural and ideological determinators of the feminine from the ‘real’ woman” (9).

⁵² Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1988), 102. According to Moi, the term *écriture féminine*, also known as ‘writing the body,’ refers to a notion of feminine writing or texts that generates difference, particularly sexual difference (femininity) through writing and not through biology or binary oppositions (108). In “The Laugh of the Medusa,” Hélène Cixous does not actually give a specific definition of *écriture féminine*, but she does give various examples of what she would consider to be feminine writing (243-264).

and the death of many noble heroes. Kriemhild not only steps outside the conventions of the female lament, but also transgresses gender boundaries. Whereas Enite is reintegrated into society in the end; Kriemhild goes decidedly too far for the medieval narrator to reincorporate her into courtly society. That there are variations in the three main thirteenth-century redactions further suggests that there were conflicting medieval notions regarding the representation of Kriemhild's lament. I look at the ways in which the redactors attempt to account for Kriemhild's actions.

Although *Nibelungenlied*'s depiction of Kriemhild serves as a warning against the threatening potential of the female lament, the problems created by the powerful figure of Kriemhild go beyond the final tragedy in the text and are taken into consideration in *Nibelungenklage*, where the poet justifies Kriemhild's enactment of her grief as a form of "triuwe" (loyalty). In chapter four I argue that the narrator's emphasis on the extreme importance of "triuwe" in courtly culture recasts Kriemhild's lament in the *Nibelungenlied* as an expression of excessive femininity. Furthermore the *Nibelungenklage* poet constructs different models of grief in response to Kriemhild's immoderate sorrow in the *Nibelungenlied* to illustrate which forms of grief are productive or unproductive for society. Similar to the previous chapter, I examine the two main manuscripts of the *Nibelungenklage* to conclude there are slight differences in the representations of grief and Kriemhild's culpability.

Chapter 2

The Female Lament: A Space for Female Agency in Hartmann's *Erec*

Introduction

In *Erec*, Hartmann von Aue offers a new perspective of the female lament while adhering to the gender specificity of the literary convention. In his portrayal of Cadoc's wife, Enite, and the eighty mourning widows at the court of Brandigan, Hartmann draws on classical depictions of the female lament well known in the Middle Ages from works such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. That Hartmann was familiar with these stories is apparent through his depictions of both Dido and Aeneas (v. 7545-62) and Thisbe and Pyramus (v. 7705-13) on the saddle of Enite's horse. As this chapter will show, however, Hartmann also explores the conventional female lament as a space within which the female protagonist is able to become the acting subject of the poem. Enite's lamentation of Erec's supposed death begins with a traditional female-gendered reaction: She takes vengeance on her own body by beating her breasts and tearing at her hair. However, her lamentation then transforms into a monologue, possibly the longest female monologue in all of medieval German literature, in which she argues, pleads, fights, expresses her desires, and even attempts suicide. Enite differs significantly from other grieving literary widows in that she uses the motif of the lament to develop her own voice and becomes an active participant in the story. Ultimately, Enite agency results in her

becoming a better queen whereas Dido's agency in the *Eneasroman* ends with her death. Furthermore, in contrast to the *Eneasroman*, the lament is an important narrative motif that permeates throughout the entire story.

In this chapter I argue that Enite develops agency through the use of her voice. Until her husband Erec 'dies', Enite is subject to his control and power. In his absence and through her lamentation of his death she emerges as the subject of the poem. Her newly acquired independence and grief gives her the power of speech. Hartman illustrates that the lament is a context in which a grieving widow, here Enite, can embody agency.¹ The motif of the lament, in Hartmann's narrative, has powerful potential for a female figure.

Several scholars have argued that, rather than represent an innovative reworking of the lament, Enite's grief is nothing more than a literary or liturgical convention. F. P. Knapp, for example, points out that Hartmann alters Chrétien's original depiction of Enite's "Totenklage" in such a way that emphasizes Christianity and emulates ancient classical works.² Urban Küsters draws parallels between the figure of Job in the Old Testament and Enite.³ Franz Josef Worstbrock places Enite's lament in the context of the courtly virtue of

¹E. Jane Burns articulates that Enide's speech in Chrétien's text reconfigures the notion of the "desiring lady." *Bodytalk: When Women Speak in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 196.

² F. P. Knapp, "Enites Totenklage und Selbstmordversuch in Hartmanns *Erec*," *GRM* 26 (1976): 83-90.

³ Urban Küsters, "Klagefiguren: Vom höfischen Umgang mit der Trauer," in *An den Grenzen höfischer Kultur: Anfechtungen der Lebensordnung in der deutschen Erzähldichtung des hohen Mittelalters*, ed. Gert Kaiser (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1991), 55. Küsters also reads Enite's lament as Hartmann's theological reflection.

“triuwe” (loyalty), thus placing it in a long literary tradition.⁴ As we will see in chapter three, the poet of the *Nibelungenlied* works with a gendered notion of “triuwe” in his representation of Kriemhild’s lament. Similarly in *Erec*, “triuwe” plays an important role in Enite’s characterization as a grieving widow. Worstbrock neglects, however, to address the issue of gender.

Other scholars have similarly ignored the significance of Enite’s lament for questions regarding gender in Hartmann’s romance. Patrick M. McConeghy, for example, interprets Enite’s lament as integral to the development of the male protagonist, but not particularly significant for the female protagonist. McConeghy explains that Enite’s lament is a means to preserve Erec’s status.⁵ Most recently (and most pertinently with respect to the present study) Elke Koch has argued that Enite’s lament serves to enhance and develop her own identity.⁶ While Koch’s study is groundbreaking for our understanding of sorrow, and clearly has implications for this study, she does not analyze Enite’s monologue in detail nor in the context in the female agency. Scott E. Pincikowski examines Enite’s physical pain in Hartmann’s *Erec*. He argues that Enite gains agency and self-control through her self-

⁴ Franz-Josef Worstbrock, “Dilatation materiae: Zur Poetik des Erec Hartmanns von Aue,” *FMST* 19 (1985): 1-30.

⁵ Patrick M. McConeghy, “Women’s Speech and Silence in Hartmann von Aue’s *Erec*,” *PMLA* 102 (1987): 772-783. McConeghy bases his analysis on Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson’s sociolinguistical approach to women’s use of language in speech. Brown and Levinson argue that women maintain their relationships through certain speech patterns.

⁶ Elke Koch, *Trauer und Identität: Inszenierungen von Emotionen in der deutschen Literaturen des Mittelalters*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 159-204. Koch argues that “Das Motiv der Trauer ist im Erec funktional, um Modelle von Weiblichkeit und Männlichkeit zu konstituieren” (168). However, Koch does not go into detail about gender and grief in Hartmann’s *Erec*. See Koch, 160-168 for a comprehensive summary of the scholarship on Enite’s grief.

inflicted pain. This agency, however, is limited because Enite's pain also reflects Erec's pain.⁷

As of yet, no one has examined the centrality of Enite's lament for the poem as a whole or for Enite in particular. I argue here that Hartmann works within the tradition of the lament to construct a new model of gender in his reworking of Enite. He expands Enite's central scene in which she laments Erec's supposed death, and makes it into a critical turning point in the poem. Hartmann also contrasts Enite's extensive lamentation with that of other female characters, so that its unique qualities come into high relief.

The lament is only one step in Erec and Enite's development as the ideal ruling couple, but it is arguably the most significant step for Enite.⁸ Hartmann's notion of gender, and specifically the way in which he uses the motif of the lament as a means to showcase his female protagonist, is both innovative and significant for our understanding of the medieval discourse on women and agency. Hartmann's innovations also provide an important backdrop for my discussion of the lamentations in the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Nibelungenklage*. We will see in chapters three and four that the potential for feminine agency that Hartmann identifies in Enite's lament is addressed in both the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Nibelungenklage*, but that the authors of these poems view this agency as destructive for society as a whole.

In the first part of this chapter, I compare male and female responses to grief to show that, in *Erec* the lament is gendered female. Male characters, by contrast, respond to grief by

⁷ Scott E. Pincikowski, *Bodies of Pain: Suffering in the Works of Hartmann von Aue* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

⁸ According to Peter Wapnewski, Erec and Enite must practice their integration into society as a ruling couple. *Hartmann von Aue*, 7th ed. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1979), 54. They must, however, first, I contend, each individually prove that they are worthy of high acclaim.

engaging in chivalrous actions.⁹ Part two argues that *Erec* breaks from tradition by allowing Enite to express herself, albeit only within her lament. Hartmann uses the lament as an opportunity to stop the linear progression of Erec's adventures and create a space within which Enite is the subject. Her ability to express herself within this context stands in contrast to the male figures who express themselves whenever it pleases them. In the final section I argue that Enite's lament plays a crucial role for both Enite and Erec and has repercussions throughout the narrative.

Responses to Grief: Female Lamentation and Male Action

In *Erec*, Hartmann adopts the traditional dichotomy between male and female responses to loss or grief, in which women are helpless and self-destructive and men seek vengeance. Similar to Ovid's Thisbe and Virgil's Dido, the lamenting female figures in *Erec*—Enite, Cadoc's wife, and the eighty mourning widows—grieve by weeping, screaming, fainting, pulling at their hair, and/or beating their breasts.¹⁰ Confronted with the loss or life-threatening injury of a husband or lover, Hartmann's women cry out in agony and engage in various forms of self-mutilation.¹¹ Unable to avenge or restore their loss of their husbands and implicitly therefore also their social status, these female figures are helpless

⁹ Alexandra Sterling-Hellenbrand states "As gender is an integral part of social performance, romance poets illustrate the continuous process of defining gender through a variety of roles, emotions and relationships." "Gender and Love in the Epic Romances of Hartmann von Aue," in *A Companion to the Works of Hartmann von Aue*, ed. Francis G. Gentry (Rochester: Camden House), 71.

¹⁰ In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Thisbe screams, beats her breasts and cries while embracing her dead lover Pyramus' body. *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*, trans. and ed. Michael Simpson (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2001). Virgil's Dido responds similarly, and ultimately kills herself when her lover Aeneas abandons her. *Virgil's Aeneid: Book I-VI*, ed. Clyde Pharr, revised ed. (Wauconda: Bochazy-Carducci, 1998).

¹¹ According to Pincikowski, female figures' pain in Hartmann's works reflects their passive role. *Bodies of Pain*, 112. He does not recognize Enite's active role within her lamentation.

and need assistance from male heroes.¹² They also have a social duty to lament such loss both publicly and privately, and to remarry in order to reestablish social stability.

Directly before Enite's lament, Hartmann sets the stage by presenting the audience with a paradigmatic example of a lamenting woman. While riding with Enite through the forest, Erec hears Cadoc's wife crying out in despair because her husband's life is endangered when two giants take him captive. Responding to her cry of distress, Erec discovers her in a typical lamenting fashion:

ir riuwigen hende
hâten daz gebende
unschône abe gestroufet:
zerkratzet und zeroufet
hete sich daz lîplôse wîp,
daz ir diu wât und der lîp
mit bluote was berunnen. (v. 5320-26)¹³

[Her grieving hands had unsparingly ripped down her headdress. The half-dead woman had scratched and torn at herself such that her clothes and body were covered with blood.]¹⁴

In this scene, Hartmann paints a powerful image of the expression and experience of female grief. Even Cadoc's wife's individual body parts grieve.¹⁵ Her grieving hands that destroy

¹² Marriage determines a woman's social status whereas property and honor determine a man's station.

¹³ All Middle High German quotations of *Erec* are from Hartmann von Aue, *Erec*, ed. Thomas Cramer (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1972).

¹⁴ All quoted English translations of *Erec* are from Frank Tobin, Kim Vivian and Richard H. Lawson, *Arthurian Romances, Tales, and Lyric Poetry: The Complete Works of Hartmann von Aue* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001).

¹⁵ In Chrétien's text, the female figures' body parts do not grieve. Hartmann intensifies the depiction of Enite's grief through her body, which implies that grief plays a different role for Hartmann. Chrétien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances*, trans with intro. William W. Kibler (New York: Penguin, 1991).

her headdress suggest an array of emotions connected to loss: sadness, frustration, and possibly even anger.¹⁶ The intensity of the lament is further conveyed when she takes vengeance against her body by destroying it, making it almost unrecognizable as a beautiful courtly body. Such actions against one's body are characteristic of the corporeal, emotional and self-abusing nature of grief for women in medieval German courtly literature in general.¹⁷ By tearing her headdress, which marks her social and marital status, Cadoc's wife also highlights her loss of her station.¹⁸ She displays such suffering, remarks Pincikowski, because her fate and well-being are so closely connected to her husband.¹⁹ By failing to give her a name throughout the narrative, but referring to her as Cadoc's wife Hartmann suggests that her identity, unlike Enite's, is based on that of husband. Cadoc's wife's lamentation does not help her to develop her own identity, but instead emphasizes her lack of agency.

Hartmann identifies self-destructive gestures as being specifically feminine later in the narrative, when Enite is faced with Erec's supposed death after he has suffered too many

¹⁶ According to Carol K. Bang, Hartmann uses more words to convey sorrow in his description of Cadoc's wife. A variety of words that illustrate sorrow ("jammerlîchen grimme, wüefen, erbarmelîchen rüefen, bekumbert, klage, riuwigen hende, swaere, smerzen, weinen, süft") appears sixteen times in Hartmann's text in opposition to eight times in Chretien's. "Emotions and Attitudes in Chrétien de Troyes' *Erec et Enide* and Hartmann von Aue's *Êrec der Wunderaere*," *PMLA* 58 (1942): 311.

¹⁷ The many other examples include Heinrich von Veldeke's Dido in his *Eneasroman*, Hartmann's Laudine who grieves the death of her husband Askalon in *Iwein*, and Wolfram von Eschenbach's Sigune in *Parzival*, who grieves the death of her lover Schionatulander. Heinrich von Veldeke, *Eneasroman*, ed., Dieter Kartschoke (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1986); Hartmann von Aue, *Iwein*, ed. Thomas Cramer (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001); and Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, ed. Wolfgang Spiewok (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1992).

¹⁸ Pincikowski, *Bodies of Pain*, 109.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 92, 109.

blows from saving Cadoc from the giants.²⁰ Believing that her husband is dead Enite torments herself:

dar nâch sluoc si sich zen brusten
und kuste in aber unde schrê.
ir ander wort was, “wê, ouwê.”
daz hâr si vaste ûz brach,
an ir lîbe si sich rach
nâch wîplîchem site,
wan hie rehent si sich mite.
swaz in ze leide geschiht,
dâ wider entuont die guoten niht,
wan daz siz phlegent enblanden
ougen unde handen
mit trehenen und mit hantslegen,
wan si anders niht enmegen. (v. 5757-69)

[Then she struck her breast, kissed him [Erec] again, and cried out. Every other word was “woe, oh, woe is me!” She tore mightily at her hair and took revenge on her body, as women are wont to for this is how they take revenge. Whatever they suffer, the good ladies do nothing about it, but only set their eyes and hands to work at crying and beating themselves, for they can do nothing else.]

Unable to restore and avenge their loss, women’s lamentations are turned in on themselves.²¹

According to the narrator, they can do nothing except weep and take vengeance against their own bodies, for they are utterly helpless and hopeless. Pincikowski argues that such gestures exhibit how women’s fate and health are connected to their lovers: “Self-inflicted pain allows the courtly lady symbolically to suffer as her lover does, to externalize the psychological distress she experiences, and substitute her pain for the pain that a knight would inflict upon

²⁰ Count Oringles also identifies Enite’s lament as being feminine: “ich muoz iu des von schulden jehen, / daz ir wîplîchen tuot, / und dunket mich von herzen guot, / daz ir klaget iuvern man, / wan dâ schînet iuwer triuwe an” (v. 6223-27). (“I must admit that you are behaving like a woman, and in my heart it seems right to me that you lament your husband, for that shows your loyalty.”)

²¹ H.B. Willson argues that Enite behaves in a disgraceful way when she tears at her and beats her breasts, but her lack of courtly “maze” conveys her “triuwe” to Erec (12). “*Triuwe and Untriuwe in Hartmanns Erec*,” *German Quarterly* 43 (1970): 5-23. However, as I demonstrate, Enite’s self-destructive behavior is not only in accordance with the courtly expectations, but exemplifies an ideal female response to grief.

another in retribution for a crime or cultural trespass.”²² The self-destructive and corporeal nature of the lament is gendered in *Erec* as being specifically feminine.

Enite and Cadoc’s wife’s lamentations are part of a female ritual in the fictional courtly society of Hartmann’s poem. The court expects women to employ such gestures even at the court. As Enite and Erec enter Brandigan in the *Joie de la Court* episode, the knights and ladies take pity on Enite because they assume Erec will lose his life. They whisper:

“ouwê, dû vil armez wîp!
wie dû queltest dînen lîp,
ob dû möhtest wizzen wol,
waz dir hie geschehen sol!
wie dîniu liehtiu ougen
mit trûebe suln verlougen,
daz si sô spillîchen stânt
unde kumbers niht enhânt,
unde dîn vil rôter munt,
der die liute hie zestunt
dir engegen lachen tuot!
und wie dû dînen gelphen muot
mit leide verkiusest
sô dû dînen man verliusest!” (v. 8094-107)

[“Alas, you poor woman! How you would torture yourself if you knew what is to happen to you here! How misery will cause your bright eyes deny that they are now so beaming and know no care, and will change your very red lips that now make people smile at you! And how you will have to give up your cheerful spirit for sorrow when you lose your husband!”]

The courtiers thus acknowledge the self-destructive actions of grieving women as a convention of the female lament.

²² *Bodies of Pain*, 114. Similarly, Andreas Kraß claims that Enite identifies with Erec when she grieves. Her lament expresses her ability to suffer, identify with the hero and it illustrates compassion. “Die Mitleidfähigkeit des Helden: Zum Motiv der *compassio* im höfischen Roman des 12. Jahrhunderts (*Eneit, Erec, Iwein*),” in *Aspekte des 12. Jahrhunderts: Freisinger Kolloquium 1998*, ed. Wolfgang Haubrichs, Eckhart C. Lutz, and Gisela Vollmann-Profe (Berlin: E. Schmidt, 2000), 282-304. Similar to other scholars who interpret Enite as a mere reflection of the male protagonist, Liebertz-Grün argues that Erec’s injury is displaced onto Enite, who mimics his pain. “Kampf, Herrschaft, Liebe: Chretiens und Hartmanns Erec- und Iweinromane als Modelle gelungener Sozialisation im 12. Jahrhundert,” in *The Graph of Sex and the German Text: Gendered Culture in Early Modern Germany 1500-1700*, ed. Lynne Tatlock (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), 325.

Hartmann emphasizes the importance of lamentation as a whole in the narrative and associates it explicitly and thoroughly with women through his depiction of the eighty mourning widows, who are missing from Chrétien's version of the story.²³ Indeed, the female plays a much more significant role in Hartmann's story. The eighty widows further exemplify the courtly conventions of female grief through their clothing:

si hâten an sich geleit
 eine wât rîche,
 und doch unvrœlîche,
 nâch vil kostlîchem site. (v. 8229-32)

[They had put on splendid dresses that were, however, mournful, and very costly.]
 And also by mourning collectively when they are reminded of their sorrow through Enite's potential loss of Erec:

als diz die vrouwen heten vernomen,
 hie mite wâren si zehant
 ir herzeleides ermant,
 des in allen was geschehen.
 daz man si ê hete gesehen
 wünneclîche vreudenvar,
 des verlougenten si gar.
 daz bluot ir hiufeln entweich:
 dô wurden nase und wengel bleich.
 daz machete in der ougen regen. (v. 8311-20)

[When the ladies had heard this, they were immediately reminded of their heartfelt sorrow they had all experienced. They not absolutely put to the lie that one had earlier seen them with a joyful appearance. The blood drained from their cheeks. Their nose and cheeks grew pale. Their tears caused this.]

²³ Hartmann von Aue's *Erec* is generally considered to be the first German Arthurian romance. It is based on Chrétien de Troyes' *Erec et Enide*. Hartmann's version has 10,192 lines whereas Chrétien's 6,958 lines. Kim Vivan, introduction to *Erec*, in *Arthurian Romances, Tales, and Lyric Poetry: The Complete Works of Hartmann Von Aue*, trans. Frank Tobin, Kim Vivan, and Richard H. Lawson (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1987), 52. See the following works for discussions regarding the differences between Hartmann and Chrétien's texts: H. Kleiber, *Hartmann von Aue Erec und seine altfranzösische Quelle* (Königsberg: Hartung, 1893); Peter Wapnewski, *Hartmann von Aue*; Peter Wiehl, *Die Redeszene als episches Strukturelement in den Erec- und Iwein-Dichtungen Hartmanns von Aue und Chrestiens de Troues* (München: Fink, 1974); and Wilhelm Kellermann, "Die Bearbeitung des Erec und Enide-Romans Chrestiens von Troyes durch Hartmann von Aue," in *Hartmann von Aue*, ed. Hugo Kuhn and Christoph Cormeau (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973), 511-531.

In this scene, Hartmann illustrates that grief is a unifying experience, and that expressions of grief are a collective ritual. Not only is the mourning widows' clothing identical, but also their behavior and body language.²⁴ They, like Cadoc's wife, remain nameless throughout the narrative, which again illustrates that they lack identity independent of their dead husbands. The eighty widows' grief is not a context within which they gain agency. Furthermore, these widows represent how women, left without a protector, form a sub-community of suffering or "a social body in pain."²⁵ "Sie verkörpern" according to Elke Koch, "kollektiv die Bindung an den Mann über den Tod hinaus, und beweisen, dass weibliche Identität, die sich auf diese Weise konstituiert, nicht die Einzelne individualisiert, sondern darin ein 'Identisch-Sein' aller zum Ausdruck kommt."²⁶

This gendered response to loss is not only anticipated, but also commended in the text. At the end of the poem, King Arthur praises the eighty mourning widows for the manner in which they convey their grief:

und als si der künec ersach
liden umbe ir ungemach
gelîche klage, gelîche riuwe,
gelîcher stæte, gelîcher triuwe,
gelîcher schœne, gelîcher jugent,
gelîcher zuht, gelîcher tugent,
gelîcher wæte, gelîcher gûete,
gelîcher ahte, gelîcher gemûete,
diz dûhte in wîplîch und guot
und bewegete im den muot
und muoste im wol gevallen. (v. 9932-42)

[And when the king saw them suffering in their distress, with the same lamentation, the same sadness, the same constancy, the same loyalty, the same beauty, the same

²⁴ Koch, *Trauer und Identität*, 196.

²⁵ Pincikowski, *Bodies of Pain*, 113.

²⁶ Koch, *Trauer und Identität*, 198.

youth, the same courtliness, the same virtue, the same dress, the same goodness, the same station, the same bearing, this seemed to him to be womanly and good; and it moved his heart and pleased him well.]

The narrator codes the widows' communal expression of grief as specifically feminine, through their clothing, facial expressions, and demeanor. According to Pincikowski, "Arthur's observation is important because it demonstrates that a courtly lady's identity is in part defined by how she dutifully endures the pain of her lover's death."²⁷ Furthermore, as Koch postulates "Erst durch männliche Figuren wird eine agonal verfasste Ordnung auf die Frauen übertragen."²⁸ Unlike Enite, however, the widows lack individuality and instead embody both literally and figuratively a corpus of grief.²⁹

The men in *Erec* also lament loss, but in contrast to women, they grieve by either restoring or avenging their loss. The narrator describes both men and women in Brandigan grieving in anticipation of Erec's death:

sâ zuo den stunden
si alle begunden,
wîp und man beide,
von nâhe gândem leide
ir vreuden entwîchen
und vil jâmerlîchen
klagen daz wûnneclîche wîp,
und daz verliesen sînen lîp
solde ein alsô vrumer man,
wan dâ enzwîvelten si niht an. (v. 8076-85)

[At that very moment they all began, man and woman alike, instantly lost their joy because of the intense sorrow that troubled their hearts, and they began to lament

²⁷Pincikowski, *Bodies of Pain*, 96.

²⁸Koch, *Trauer und Identität*, 198.

²⁹Ibid., 198-199. Koch points out that they lack individuality compared to their husbands', whose heads are displayed on poles.

miserably for the lovely woman, and that such a brave man should lose his life, for they did not doubt that at all.]

In this passage, the men like the women lament miserably (“jæmerlîchen”), but there is no indication in the text that men engage in the physically detrimental forms of the lament that women do.³⁰

In general, men set out to restore their loss—typically a loss of honor—by taking action against others rather than themselves. At the beginning of the narrative, a dwarf dishonors Erec in front of Queen Guinevere by whipping him (v. 105-08). When faced with the loss of his honor and status, Erec: “tete als dem dâ leit geschiht: / der vlîzet dicke sich dar zuo / wie erz mit vuoge widertuo” (v. 167-69). (He acted as one does who has suffered grief: he makes every effort to set things right again.) To set things right, he immediately sets off in pursuit of the dwarf.³¹

Male characters do share similar inner feelings of sorrow to female characters when faced with loss, but they do not convey their sorrow in the same way. For instance, when Erec meets Koralus, Enite’s father, he explains his situation in hopes that Koralus can somehow assist him. Erec states: “daz sol mîn herze immer klagen, / mir engevüege got noch den tac / daz ich ez gerechen mac” (v. 489-91). (My heart will always lament this until God

³⁰ Pincikowski argues that men must bear pain stoically otherwise they are considered weak. *Bodies of Pain*, 106. For instance, when Erec encounters Guivreiz, Erec proclaims his lack of interest in fighting because of the suffering he has thus endured (v. 4360-65); Guivreiz suspects Erec is a coward (v. 4366-67).

³¹ Elke Koch argues that the word “leit” has a different connotation for men and women in the text. For Enite “leit” refers specifically to worry, loss and damage to her honor, whereas “leit” for Erec represents shame which stems from an injury to his honor. *Trauer und Identität*, 168-175. Friedrich Maurer makes a similar claim about the male characters in *Erec. Leid: Studien zur Bedeutungs- und Problemgeschichte, besonders in den großen Epen der staufischen Zeit* (Munich: A. Francke, 1969), 3. See Katharina Freche, “Geschlechtskonstruktion: Zum Konzept der Ehre in der Erec sage,” in *Helle döne schöne: Versammelte Arbeiten zur älteren und neueren deutschen Literatur: FS für Wolfgang Walliczek*, ed. Horst Brünner (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1999), 201-215 for a brief discussion on the gender specific nature of grief, which she claims constitutes men as rational and women as emotional. In contrast to Freche, I argue here that Hartmann also suggests that female grief may be rational. I interpret this scene not in terms of insult, but in terms of loss and the resulting expression of grief for that loss. Enite ‘loses’ her husband and therefore her honor whereas Erec loses his honor by being beaten.

grants me the day that I might avenge it). Like a woman, his pain lies in his heart and leads to his lamentation. Unlike a woman, however, he is not immobilized, nor does he beg for death or assistance. Instead, he sets out to undo the past, creating a promising future for himself. Grief motivates action and is therefore part of his linear narrative.³² Enite, as a woman, cannot retreat to the solace of action, but expresses her grief in the narrative space provided by the lament.

Enite's Lament: A Space for Self-Expression

In his depiction of Enite's lamentation, Hartmann constructs a new, unconventional model of femininity, in which Enite interrupts the linear narrative to speak, reflect and establish her identity as a daughter, wife and widow.³³ This space that Hartmann creates for Enite to act is only possible once Erec is 'dead'. In her husband's absence, Enite becomes the subject of poem (the agent) as she develops her voice, which she also uses to lament Erec's death. Enite's lamentation is then carried over to the location of the court, where she is able to use her lament as a form of power to maintain her agency in the presence of men.

As discussed above, the female lament is often portrayed as a ritualized expression of grief in which groups of women participate. This is certainly the case in the *Nibelungenklage*, as we will see in chapter three, and even in *Erec* grief is often a group experience, as we have

³² Pincikowski argues that physical pain increases men's honor and social status. *Bodies of Pain*, 106.

³³ Volker Mertens points out that noble women historically were categorized according to these three roles in addition to motherhood. "Enide—Enite: Projektionen Weiblicher Identität Bei Chretien und Hartmann," in *Erec, ou l'ouverture du monde arthurien: Actes du Colloque du Centre d'Etudes Médiévales de l'Université de Picardie—Jules Verne, Amiens 16-17 Janvier 1993*, ed. Danielle Buschinger (Greifswald: Göppinger, 1993), 61-74.

seen in the example of the eighty mourning widows. Enite, however, like Cadoc's wife, is alone in the woods, lacking assistance and community support:

nû enhalf ir dâ niemen mêre
klagen ir herzesêre
niuwan dre widergelt,
den ir der walt ûz an daz velt
mit gelîchem galme bôt.
der half ir klagen ir nôt,
wan ir enwas niemen mêre bî. (v. 5748-54)

[There was no one to help her lament her heartfelt misery save for the echo that the forest sent with equal loudness out to the field and back. There was no one else there to help her lament her heart's distress.]

Unlike the lament of many female figures in other courtly romances, therefore, Enite's lament is not part of a collective ritual lament in the court.³⁴ In this passage Hartmann acknowledges the convention, but the only assistance that Enite has in her lamentation is provided by her echo. Dietmar Peil has suggested that her echo fulfills the role of a community and provides Enite with a form of compassion.³⁵ However, while the echo does intensify her grief and suffering, it cannot offer any form of social control, and it therefore cannot fulfill the same role as an actual community that participates and becomes unified in the grieving process. Grieving alone, with only her echo as companion – Enite's lament is indeed atypical for grieving widows. Enite's isolation is significant because it allows Hartmann to develop her character without challenging traditional notions of courtly femininity. When Enite is later taken to Oringles' court, she struggles against the expectations of female heroines, but is ultimately exonerated not by her own actions but by

³⁴ Hartmann's Laudine in *Iwein* serves as an example of a grieving widow, whose lamentation is part of a collective ritual (v. 1321-30).

³⁵ Peil, *Die Gebärde bei Chrétien, Hartmann und Wolfram: Erec-Iwein-Parzival* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1975), 127. Küsters makes a similar observation. "Klagefiguren," 54. Elke Koch takes her investigation of Enite's echo a step further to say the forest, which provides the echo, assists Enite in her grief. *Trauer und Identität*, 182.

Erec's reappearance and rescue. With Erec's resurrection and vengeance, Enite is immediately recast within the expectations of courtly society as a loyal wife who lends support to her husband as he progresses through his remaining adventures.

Hartmann's story progresses through a series of adventures that allow Erec to showcase his skills as a knight, but in Enite's lamentation, Erec is effectively put out of action, when he becomes unconscious and is assumed dead. In Erec's absence, Enite is able to use the convention of the lament as a vehicle to gain agency. She, like Erec, displays her skills: intellect, logic, and rationale because she is no longer subject to her husband's control.

In a monologue over 350 verses long, Enite calls out to God to complain and even attempts to negotiate a different fate for her dead husband and herself.³⁶ As she articulates her thoughts and feelings, Enite touches on various themes from her own perspective (Christianity, status, loyalty, love, and classical tradition), all of which are pertinent topics for medieval society and courtly literature. Although her emotions motivate her monologue, she is not irrational.³⁷ She deals with these lofty issues in intellectual terms as she debates with God. In this she stands in contrast to other lamenting female figures in *Erec*. Cadoc's wife, for example, can hardly speak when Erec answers her cry for help.³⁸ The medieval theologians viewed women as purely irrational and physical, but Hartmann also depicts Enite

³⁶ Koch accurately points out that "Enites Selbstreflexion markiert ihre Position geschlechtsspezifische, indem sie die Definition der sozialen Identität durch die Ehe ins Licht rückt." *Trauer und Identität*, 166.

³⁷ Peter Czerwinski argues that Enite's lament is about the loss of her status as a queen not about her feelings. It is indeed true that Enite's status as queen is central to her lament, however, her emotions also play a central role. *Der Glanz der Abstraktion: frühe Formen von Reflexivität im Mittelalter: Exempel einer Geschichte der Wahrnehmung* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1989), 418.

³⁸ The narrator describes Cadoc's wife in the following way when Erec asks her what happened: *nû hate ir benomen / diu bitter leides grimme / vil nâch gar di stimme: / ie herzen sûft daz wort zebrach / daz si vil kûme gesprach*" (v. 5345-49). (The fury of bitter grief had almost robbed her of her voice. The sobbing of her heart broke off her words so that she could hardly speak.)

to be rational and intellectual.³⁹ In essence, Enite is a typical loyal and virtuous woman (wife, daughter and widow) with atypical knowledge and intellect.

In the two sections below I first show that Enite's lament has some highly conventional elements that place her in the context of other lamenting ladies in medieval German literature. Next, I foreground the unconventional aspects of her lament to make the case that Hartmann is interested in exploring a new model of gender within the lament. While I would concede that Hartmann does not challenge traditional notions of femininity, he revises Chrétien's version of Enite's lament to create an untraditional space in the narrative for female action and voice, thereby participating in a medieval discourse on gender and women's agency.⁴⁰

The Conventional Elements of Enite's Monologue

Although Hartmann expands the traditional motif of the female lament, he still incorporates into his representation of Enite some highly conventional aspects of the motif. Enite's situation is indeed both gendered and conventional: She is a woman who loses her husband; she laments his death; she desires death; and she engages in typical expressions of grief. Framing Enite as a loyal and virtuous widow, Hartmann emphasizes her femininity in her desire for death and her self-destructive gestures. Furthermore, he depicts her in a manner

³⁹ Caroline Walker Bynum describes the medieval view of women, "[...] allegorically speaking, woman was to man what matter is to spirit - that is, that they symbolize the physical, lustful, natural, appetitive part of human nature, whereas man symbolized the spiritual and mental." *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Literature* (New York: Urzone, Inc., 1991), 147.

⁴⁰ See Carol K. Bang, Richard Leicher, and Dietmar Peil for more specific information on the differences between Chrétien and Hartmann's depiction of Enite's lamentation. Bang, "Emotions and Attitudes in Chrétien"; Leicher, *Die Totenklage in der deutschen Epik: Von der ältesten Zeit bis zur Nibelungen-Klage* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1977), 96-106; and Peil, *Die Gebärde bei Chrétien*.

that mirrors other classical female lamenting figures. Both by placing Enite in isolation, and by framing her within the familiar conventions of lamenting women, Hartmann mitigates his heroine's agency. Enite's femininity is never in question and despite her forceful speech and attempted suicide, she is not presented as transgressive or threatening.

Hartmann illustrates Enite's conventional femininity by drawing attention to her actions against her own body and her relentless desire to join Erec in death. As I have already shown, Enite's self-abuse is decidedly typical (v. 5757-69). The narrator further stresses Enite's conventional yearning for death after the demise of her husband. First, Enite begs God to have mercy on her by taking her life (v. 5792-96). Next, she pleads with God to help her find death: "sî dîn erbermde manecvalt, / sô hilf ouch mir des tôdes hier" (v. 5831-32). ("If Your mercy is boundless, then help me too find death here.") Then she calls out to the animals in the forest to devour her body: "wâ nû hungerigiu tier, / beide wolf und ber, / lewe, iuwer einez kom her / und ezze unz beide, [...]" (v. 5833-36). ("Where are you now, hungry animals, both wolf and bear and lion? May one of you come here and devour us both [...]") Enite consistently displays loyalty and virtue, two of the most important qualities in a noble woman. In her desire to join her husband in death, Enite is indeed an exemplary wife.

In parts of her monologue the narrator and Enite explicitly state that certain actions and words are feminine, which highlights a conventional aspect of her lament. Enite, for instance, reproaches death in a "womanly" fashion for not taking her life:

dô si der rede vil getete
und si den Tôt mir ir bete
niht enmohte überwinden
noch ir willen vinden
daz er si næme in sînen gewalt,
vil wîplîchem si in dô schalt,
als ir der wille gebôt.
si sprach: "wê dir, vil überler Tôt!

daz dû vervluochet sîst!
 wie manec bilde dû gîst
 dûner unbescheidenheit!
 diu werlt doch wâr von dir seit,
 dû sîst mit valsche beladen.
 dû vlîzest dich ûf maneges schaden,
 dem nimmer solde leit geschehen.” (v. 5908-22)

[When she had spoken at length and was unable to convince Death with her pleading, and could not get her way and have him take her in his power, she scolded him in a typical womanly fashion, as her will ordered. She said, “Alas to you, most evil Death! May you be cursed! What a clear picture you give of your stupidity! The world speaks truthfully of you when it says that you are full of treachery. You make every effort to harm many who should never suffer grief.”]

Enite’s feminine will is the driving force behind her words to Death. Clearly, Hartmann does not want his audience to lose sight of Enite’s feminine nature. Even Enite herself highlights her femininity in a passage in which she holds herself responsible for Erec’s death:

“daz vervluochet sî der tac,
 ob ich die rede ruorte!
 wan ich mîn heil zevuorte,
 vil grôze êre und gemach.
 ouwê wie übele mir geschach!
 nû waz wolde ich tumbe
 ze redenne dar umbe?
 swie mîn herze wolde leben,
 jâ hâte mir got gegeben,
 daz mîn dinc ze wunsche stuont.
 ich tete als die tôren tuont,
 unwîses muotes,
 die êren und guotes
 in selben erbunnen
 und niht vertragen erkunnen
 sô ir dinc vil schône stât,
 und leistent durch des tiuvels rât
 dâ von ir heil zerstœret wirt,
 wan er ir êren gerne enbirt.” (v. 5955-73)

[“Cursed be the day when I mentioned the matter, for I destroyed my good fortune, great honor, and comfort. Alas, how badly I have acted! Why did I, foolish woman, want to speak of that? Indeed, God had given me the life my heart desired, where things for me were as I wished. Unwisely I acted as fools do, who begrudge themselves honor and wealth and cannot bear it when things go well for them, and on

the advice of the devil do things that destroy their good fortune, for he is glad when they do without their honor.”]

Surrendering completely to her emotional distress, she blames herself for Erec’s demise. This passage, similar to the one above, draws attention to a highly conventional aspect of the female lament: Enite, similar to Heinrich’s Dido and Wolfram’s Sigune, blames herself for her husband, Erec’s demise.

Both Enite and the narrator further mark the conventional aspects of Enite’s lamentation by highlighting her grief for and loyalty to Erec. As we saw with Heinrich’s Dido and Cadoc’s wife, narrators demonstrate women’s sorrow through an array of words. At the very beginning of her lamentation, Enite laments her heart’s pain (“klagen ir herzesêre”) (v. 5749) and the sadness of her heart “herzeriuweclîche” (v. 5745). These words illustrate her sadness and helplessness as a grieving widow as well as her loyalty to her dead husband. Whenever Enite does something out of the ordinary for a grieving widow (speak to death, curse God, court death), the narrator reminds his audience that Enite bears sorrow “trûrîge gebâre” (v. 5862) and laments more than any other “man sach nie jâmer merre” (v. 5874). Enite near death due to her immense grief is reminiscent of lamenting ladies:

daz ir herze niht zebrach
von leide, daz was wunder.
sich teilte dô besunder
von des jâmers grimme
rehte enzwei ir stimme,
hôhe und nidere. (v. 6075-80)

[It was a miracle that her heart did not break from grief. From the fury of her misery her voice broke right in two, into tones high and low.]

Like her literary counterparts (Dido, Sigune, Laudine), Enite is portrayed here as helpless and barely able to sustain her loss.

Hartmann draws on well-known conventional models of lamentation from antiquity. Similar to Ovid's Thisbe, Enite represents herself as a helpless, grieving daughter,⁴¹ when she cries out to her parents:

“ouwê liebiu muoter
unde vater guoter!
nû ist iu ze dirre stunt
mîn grôzer kumber vil unknunt.
ez was iuwer beider wân
mîn dinc vil wol gebezzert hân:
ouch was es vil wænlich,
dô ir mich einem küenege rich
gâbet ze wîbe.” (v. 5974-82)

[“Alas, dear mother and good father! My great affliction is still completely unknown to you at this time. You both supposed that my lot had greatly improved, and that was certainly to be expected, since you gave me as wife to a mighty king.”]

When Enite realizes that God does not plan to improve her circumstances either by taking her life or giving back her husband, she shifts her focus and calls upon the beasts in the forest to devour her body, which reminds the reader of Thisbe's encounter with the lioness.⁴²

Furthermore, Enite, like Virgil and Veldeke's Dido and Ovid's Thisbe, nearly kills herself when she realizes she will not die by other means (v. 5870-73; v. 6110-14). We can draw such parallels especially when we take into consideration that the stories of both Dido and Aeneas (v. 7545-62) and Thisbe and Pyramus (v. 7705-13) are engraved on the saddle of Enite's horse.

In many cases death is a traditional and final solution for grieving widows, a solution that is not always a commendable female action. Indeed the narrator criticizes Enite attempt at suicide:

⁴¹Thisbe cries out to her parents before she commits suicide (v. 155-161). *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, 107-110.

⁴²Knapp, “Enite's Totenklage,” 84-90.

diu hant ir gegen der erde sleif,
ir mannes swert si begreif
und zôch es ûz der scheide,
als si sich vor leide
mit im wolde erstechen
und kintlîche errechen
über sich ir mannes tôt,
wan daz irz got verbôt (v. 6062-69)

[She slid her hand to the ground where she grasped her husband's sword and drew it from its sheath as though she wanted to stab herself out of grief and childishly take revenge on herself for her husband's death, but God forbade her to do this [...]]

A woman's decision to take her own life, as we saw with Veldeke's Dido, is inappropriate, however it is conventional in stories from antiquity to the Middle Ages.

Enite's lamentation represents a variety of conventional motifs of the female lament seen throughout literature. Hartmann highlights her femininity, the self-destructive nature of the female lament and draws on images that are typical for the female lament. Hartmann is clearly familiar with the literary tradition of the lament and actively engages in it. While he frames Enite within the convention of the female lament, however, he expands Enite's role, paying unprecedented attention to her voice.

Unconventional Elements of Enite's Lamentation: Enite's Agency

As Enite laments Erec's death, she, unlike her female counterparts in *Erec*, and in most other medieval German romances, speaks, tells her life story, finds her voice to engage in intellectual debates about numerous topics, and even plays with the idea of transgressing her role as a woman. Even while the narrator indicates that Enite is overly emotional or feminine, he portrays her as clever and outspoken. By depicting a female figure who thinks independently and engages intellectually and vocally in issues that are central to medieval

society, Hartmann explores the potential of the lament as a space for female agency. Through her role as a grieving widow, Enite becomes the subject of the poem. The lament may be viewed as an adventure—a counterpart to Erec’s adventures—in which she is challenged to use her voice effectively.

Enite’s unique form of lamentation is apparent from the very start of her monologue. Where other widows in *Erec* merely wail, tear their hair, and exude sorrow Enite speaks out:

frouwe Ênîte zurnte vaste an got.
si sprach: “herre, ist diz dîn gebot
daz ein ritter alsô guot
durch sînen reinen muot
sînen lîp hât verlorn,
sô hât ein wunderlîcher zorn
dîner genâden barmunge genomen.
daz ich hân von dir vernomen
daz dû barmherzic sist
wie schwachez bilde dû des gîst
an mir vil armen!
mahtû dich nû erbarmen
über mich, sich, des ist zît.
nû warte wâ mî man lît
gar oder halp tût.
nû erbarme dich, des ist nôt,
wan ich ein tôtez herze hân.
nû sich wie trûric ich stân.” (v. 5774-91)

[Lady Enite vented anger on God. “Lord, if this is Your will that such a brave knight lose his life because of his pure heart, then a strange kind of anger has robbed Your mercy from its compassion. I have heard about You that You are merciful. What a pitiful example of it You show to poor me! If You want to have mercy on me, look, now is the time. Look how my husband lies dead or half-dead. Have mercy on me. This is what I need, for my heart has died. See how sadly I stand here.]

As we have seen, the narrator describes Cadoc’s wife and the eighty mourning widows as being sad and worried. In contrast, Enite speaks out of anger rather than sorrow.⁴³

⁴³ *Trauer und Identität*, 185. Enite’s reference to her heart, according to Koch, is not just an emotional expression. “Das tote Herz macht für Gott, der allein in ihr Inneres schauen kann, ihre *nôt* manifest, und diese

Enite's intellect and use of reason exemplify her agency and further set her apart from her female grieving counterparts. Not only does Enite speak, but she speaks intelligently. As Enite scolds God for taking Erec's life, she pleads her case by citing the Bible. By illustrating her knowledge of the Bible, Enite also draws attention to her role as a good Christian woman, which further supports her argument against God. Furthermore, she blames God for Erec's death, and his inconsistency in requiring her and her husband to live as one, and then taking Erec from her without allowing her to follow him in death:

“wan daz âne missewende
allez dîn werc stât,
herre, ich zige dich missetât
daz dû mich langer leben lâst,
sît dû mir den benomen hâst”
dem ich eine solde leben. (v. 5797-802)

[“Even if all Your works are without a flaw, Lord, I accuse You of a wrongdoing by letting me live any longer, since You have taken from me the one for whom alone I should live.”]

Using what Küsters refers to as legal language,⁴⁴ Enite engages in a lively rational debate with God, trying to force him into a judicial bind. She constructs an argument against Erec's death based on the Bible's representation of marriage:

“enwil aber dû mirs niht wider geben,
sô wis, herre got, gemant
daz aller werlde ist erkant
ein wort daz dû gesprochen hâst,
und bite dich daz dûz stæte lâst,
daz ein man und sîn wîp
suln wesen ein lîp,
und ensunder uns niht,

Sichtbarkeit ist Voraussetzung für *erbarmen* und *Hilfe...*” (185). For a more in depth discussion of the role of the heart in Enite's lament see Koch, *Trauer und Identität*, 185-189.

⁴⁴“Klagefiguren,” 53-59.

wan mir anders geschiht
von dir ein unreht gewalt.” (v. 5821-30)

[“But if You do not want to give him back to me, then be reminded, Lord God, of a word You have spoken that is known to the entire world, and I beseech You that You let it be, that a man and his wife shall be one body. Do not separate us, for otherwise I shall suffer unjust violence at Your hands.”]

Enite insists that, if a man and his wife are one body, then she must also die. Alternatively, if God does not resurrect Erec, he will break his own word, which in a Christian-based society is law.⁴⁵ Here, Enite uses her knowledge of the Bible to cleverly attempt to argue her way out of the situation. As several scholars have pointed out, Enite cites Genesis, and her argument about the Erec’s unjust death mirrors Job’s lamentation in the Old Testament.⁴⁶

Urban Küsters concludes:

Enite ist also als Rebellin und als Disputandin in die Schule Hobs gegangen, der ihr das Muster vorgibt für die signifikante Verbingung von Trauer und Intellektualität, der ihr den Blick freigibt auf das menschliche Glück im Zerrspiegel von Gottesferne und misslingendem Leben.⁴⁷

Furthermore, Enite proclaims that God will have two unjust deaths on his hands if she remains apart from Erec. By drawing attention to her role as a wife and her unification with her husband through marriage, Enite speaks to the traditional notion of wives in medieval Christian society. But the fact that she speaks and develops an argument within a context in which the other widows in *Erec* are shown to be passive, mute and self-destructive, illustrates Enite’s agency.

⁴⁵ See H.B. Willson “*Triuwe and Untriuwe*” for a discussion of God’s law and *triuwe* (13).

⁴⁶ Küsters, “Klagefiguren,” 55-56; Knapp, “Enites Totenklage,” 85-87; H. B. Willson, “*Triuwe and Untriuwe*,” 14.

⁴⁷ “Klagefiguren,” 55.

Enite highlights her agency further when she acknowledges and tests gender boundaries within the context of her lament as she courts Death:

“von dîner liebe kumt daz ich
alsô verkêre den site
daz ich wîp mannes bite.
nâch dîner minne ist mir sô nôt.
nû geruoche mîn, vil reiner Tôt.
ouwê wie wol ich arme
gezim an dînem arme!“ (v. 5887-93)

[“Out of my love for you it happens that I, a woman, reverse the custom and court you, a man. I need your love so much. Accept me, most perfect Death. Alas, how well it suits me, poor woman, to be in your arms!”]

Though yearning for death after the demise of one’s husband is a conventionally female trait, Enite goes a step further in speaking to, and expressly courting Death, exclaiming that she longs to be in Death’s embrace. Indeed, she asks Death to take her as his wife now, rather than wait until she is old and has lost her beauty:

“ich gezim dir wol ze wîbe:
ich hânz noch an dem lîbe,
beide schoene unde jugent,
ich bin an der besten tugent.
dir enmac mit mir niht wesen ze gâch.
nû waz touc ich die nâch,
sô beide alter unde leit
mir schoene unde jugent verseit?” (v. 5898-905)

[“I suit you well as a wife. I still have both beauty and youth, and have noble qualities. You cannot come quickly enough for me. What good am I to you later when both age and grief have robbed me of my beauty and youth?”]

H. B. Willson sees this scene as “a further sign of the high order of her love for Erec, since by becoming the wife of Death she will be united with her husband.”⁴⁸ But this scene goes beyond a simple expression of loyalty. Enite’s voice differentiates her from her literary

⁴⁸ Willson, “*Triuwe und Untriuwe*,” 13.

counterparts, and from Hartmann's source. In Chrétien's *Erec et Enide* Enide does not court death. Instead, she asks death to take her life.⁴⁹ Hartmann's Enite, stands in contrast to Chrétien's Enide, because Enite is persuasive, manipulative, and clever. Her use of speech underlines her agency.

Hartmann uses the context of the lament as a space in which his female protagonist Enite can express her voice and rhetorical ability. As a noble woman in the fictional medieval society of *Erec*, Enite is unable to seek revenge, but simply by speaking, she takes a kind of action traditionally denied to grieving women. In a cunning and resourceful manner, she attempts to lure death by promising him her primary feminine asset: her beauty. Throughout the poem Enite's beauty is emphasized, and it on occasion puts her and Erec's lives at risk.⁵⁰ Here she actually offers her beauty openly in exchange for death. Nowhere else in the text does Enite (or any other woman, for that matter) explicitly identify herself as beautiful. Men are the ones, who usually comment on beauty. She takes an active role by highlighting her own beauty.

Enite underlines her agency in the poem when she uses the metaphor of the linden tree to explain her emotional and physical development through her marriage to Erec:

“swer die linden von dem wege
næme ûz unwerder phlege
und si in sînen garten sazte
und si mit bûwe ergazte
daz si in dürrer erde
stüende unz dar unwerde,
und daz dar ûf tæte
daz er gedâht hæte

⁴⁹ *Arthurian Romances*, 94.

⁵⁰ For more information about the role of Enite's beauty see Freche, "Geschlechterkonstruktion," 201-215 and Bettina Spoerri, "Die Schönheit der Frau in Hartmanns Erec," *ZDP* 101, no.1 (1982): 1-28.

daz er ir wolde warten
 in sînem boumgarten
 ze guotem obezboume,
 der enmöhte von einem troume
 niht sêrer sîn betrogen,
 wan dâ enwürde niht an erzogen,
 swie vlîzic man ir wære,
 daz si bezzer obez bære
 dan ouch ê nâch ir art,
 ê daz si ûz gegraben wart
 ûz bæser erde von dem wege,
 dâ si schein in swacher phlege.
 swie schœne und edel ein boum si ist,
 michel graben unde mist
 mac man dar an verliesen.” (v. 6008-30)

[“Whoever might take a linden tree from being miserably cared for at the side of the road and plant it in his garden, compensating it with a gardener’s care for its earlier miserable existence in arid soil, and whoever might do that with the thought of caring for it in his orchard so that it might become a good fruit tree, could not be more greatly deceived by a dream, for no matter how diligent one might be, it could not grown to produce better fruit than earlier, as was its nature before it was dug up from poor soil at the side of the road where it seems to be badly cared for. However beautiful and noble a tree it is, a lot of digging and manure can be wasted on it.”]

Despite her parents’ attempt to improve their daughter’s life by giving her to Erec, a king, Enite is back to being poor, helpless and now a widow. It is highly unusual for a female figure to be so self-reflexive as to relate her life story, especially metaphorically, while grieving her husband’s death. What is so intriguing about this particular scene is how Enite, for the first time in the narrative, talks directly to the audience about her own life, before, during and after Erec. This introspection in the context of grief presents a further deviation from the traditional female lamentation.

In Enite’s monologue Hartmann presents a new paradigm of the female lament, in which a grieving widow is able to take center stage. Enite illustrates that a female figure may claim agency even within the conventional motif of the lament. Enite may be emotional and feminine, but she is also introspective, intellectual, and calculating. Despite her newly

acquired agency, Enite remains an ideal grieving widow because she is loyal to Erec. In fact, as I will show, Enite continues to embody agency through her grief for Erec even within the court and in the presence of men.

Enite's Agency in the Court

Enite is able to continue enacting her new found agency through her lamentation even after Count Oringles forces her to leave the forest and accompany him back to his court. No longer in isolation where she sought death, Enite takes her agency into the court, where she showcases the potential for feminine power in the verbal and physical manifestations of the female lament. Enite subjects Count Oringles to her control and power that arises from her grief. It is through her identity as a grieving widow that Enite maintains agency. Once Erec regains consciousness, however, and becomes reunited with Enite, the poem's focus on the linear progression of Erec's adventures resumes, and Enite becomes a secondary character in Erec's story.

When Count Oringles hears Enite in the forest, he prevents her from committing suicide and brings her to his court with the intention of marrying her.⁵¹ No longer able to seek death, Enite must put her newfound agency to work to maintain her widowhood. She defends herself persuasively. When Oringles tells Enite that he wants to marry her, Enite protests:

⁵¹ There is a paradox inherent in Enite's suicide attempt. Her actions would, according to Willson, display the utmost form of *triuwe* to Erec, but she would not be obedient to God's word. "*Triuwe und Untriuwe*," 13. Enite's failed attempt at suicide is an attempt, according to Pincikowski, to "incorporate a masculine form of pain infliction by taking Erec's sword a phallic symbol of social control and pain." *Bodies of Pain*, 114.

“lât, herre, die rede lanc:
 herre, lâi iuwer spot
 mit mir armen durch got.
 und sît ir rîche, deist iu guot.
 erkennet, herre, mînen muot.
 des wil ich iu kurze bejehen:
 ez enmac nimmer geschehen
 deich iuwer wîp werde
 oder iemens ûf der erde
 über kurz oder über lanc:
 ez geschæhe sunder mînen danc,
 mir engebe got wider mînen man.” (v. 6287-98)⁵²

[“Enough my lord, of your long speech. My lord enough of your derision of me, for God’s sake. If you are wealthy, that is fortunate for you. Know, my lord, what I am thinking. I shall tell you in a few words: it can never happen that I become your wife, or anyone’s in the world, now or later, unless it were against my will, or unless God gave me back my husband.”]

Contrary to most of her encounters with men prior to her lamentation, Enite uses her voice without hesitation. She illustrates her intellectual capacity by cleverly calling on the count’s noble nature in an effort to dissuade him from forcing her to marry him against her will. Enite has an opportunity to reestablish her station as countess and wife by marrying Oringles, but decides to maintain her identity as a grieving widow, an identity that allows her to sustain her agency.

Hartmann uses the lament as a context within which Enite remains in the subject position even in the court. When Oringles starts to arrange a ceremonial marriage feast, to which Enite objects by emphasizing her obligation as a woman to continue lamenting her husband’s death:

“ob ich nû æze
 und sô schiere vergæze
 des aller liebisten man

⁵² The count dismisses Enite’s disinterest. He states: “diu wîp suln reden alsô. / dâ von man irz wizen ensol: / si bekêret sich wol / von ir unmuote. / ich bringe wol ze guote”(v. 6302-07). (“Women will talk like that. Of should not chide her for that. She will surely get over her distress. I shall bring things to a happy conclusion.”)

den ie wîp mê gewan,
daz wære ein unwîplich maz:
ouwê wie zæme mir daz?” (v. 6382-87)

[“If I were to eat now and so quickly forget the very dearest man a woman ever had, that would be a meal against womanly decorum. Alas, how would that befit me?”]

In an attempt to defuse the situation, Enite informs the count that her reputation would be at stake, if she were to eat so hastily following her husband’s death. It is typical for lamenting ladies to refuse food. Enite is therefore using the convention of the lament to control the situation and dissuade the count. If Oringles wants to uphold Enite’s honor which is a reflection in turn of his own honor, then, as Enite implies, he will allow her to continue her lamentation. When Oringles does not relent, Enite refuses yet again to eat and marry him this time by inciting Christianity: “daz ensol got wellen, / daz ich mînen gesellen / alsô muoz hân verlorn” (v. 6412-14). “God would not want me to abandon my companion.” Her words are indeed clever. She cites God in an attempt to stop the count. If the count forces her to marry him, he will act against God. Enite’s clever attempts, however, fail and as a result she turns to the most conventional aspects of the lament, she wails, wrings her hands (v. 6437-42) and flat out refuses the count. We can assume that Enite resorts to emotionally charged speech and the more conventional modes of grieving because her other attempts fail. However, Enite actually uses these methods to get what she wants: death. In other words, she provokes the count purposefully. She therefore instrumentalizes her lament to achieve a specific purpose.

Even the more conventional forms of lamentation (wailing, wringing the hands, screaming) as well as uncalculated speech become a powerful tool for Enite’s agency. She provokes and angers the Count and succeeds in gaining the upper hand. When Enite first weeps and wrings her hands (v. 6437-42), the count requests that she stop her lamentation

and eat.⁵³ Enite, however, publicly states in front of all, that she will not eat until her dead husband does so first (v. 6513-14). By publicly challenging the count's authority, Enite provokes him into action—he slaps her on the mouth (v. 6515-20). Enite's recognizes Oringles's uncourtly blows as an opportunity to join Erec in death and escalates her lament (v. 6567-69), vehemently refusing Oringles proposal:

“geloubet, herre,
ich enahte ûf iuwer slege niht
und swaz mir von iu geschiht
unde nemet ir mir den lîp,
ich enwirde doch immer iuwer wîp.
des nemet iu ein zil.”

(v. 6571-76)

[“Believe me, my lord, I shall pay no attention to your blows, and whatever else you do to me. Even if you take my life, I shall never become your wife.”]

According to Scott Pincikowski, Enite “takes Oringles’s abuse of power to inflict pain and makes the pain her own, a tool with which she can demonstrate her devotion to Erec.”⁵⁴

Embodying the utmost form of “triuwe”, Enite is willing to sacrifice her life. Her actions, I contend, also help her to maintain her agency and identity as a widow. Enite performs so intelligently that the count falls into her trap. Interestingly, Hartmann sets Enite’s behavior and speech in contrast to the count’s. Enite stays in control while the count loses control and appalls his courtiers by refusing to wait until Erec is buried before marrying Enite (v. 6324-30). Though Christian values argue a wife should be obedient to her husband, the chivalrous

⁵³Oringles says: “vrouwe ir machet iu und mir / den jâmer al ze vesten / und mînen lieben gesten / die her durch vreuwen komen sint. / und enwæret ir niht ein kint, / ir möhtet iuwer klage lân, / und kundet ir iuch rehte entstân, / wie rehte schône in kurzer vrist / iuwer dinc gehœhet ist, / doch iuch lützel noch bedrôz (v. 6447-56). (“Lady, in your stubbornness you are making things miserable for you and me and my dear guests, who have come here to enjoy themselves. And if you would not act like a child, you would cease your lamenting, and if you could only rightly understand how things have improved for you so magnificently in such a short time, then there would be little that troubled you.”)

⁵⁴*Bodies of Pain*, 102.

code commands that a knight should honor and revere the lady.⁵⁵ Enite's excessive lament is necessary if she is to sustain her agency and to combat Oringles's inappropriate behavior.⁵⁶ Continuing to lament and speak against the count's wishes, Enite warmly welcomes each of his blows (v. 6583). Finally, Enite's voice is heard when she awakens Erec from the dead (v. 6587-97). Her agency therefore accomplishes its goal, but more significantly it is Enite's lament that allows the narrative to continue and that motivates the action. It is at this point in the text that Enite's lamentation ends, and her agency is not addressed again.

The lament functions as a space within which Enite becomes the speaking subject, she develops her voice and is able to speak intellectually and logically. It is a source of empowerment for her inside and outside the court. This, as I have shown, stands in stark contrast to the eighty mourning widows and Cadoc's wife. The lament, however, cannot be understood independent of the entire narrative, as it plays a significant role for both Erec and Enite throughout the entire text.

The Significance of the Lament for Erec and Enite's Story

The lament plays a crucial role in the development of Erec and Enite into king and queen.⁵⁷ Hartmann, contrary to Chrétien, uses the lament as a vehicle for Enite to develop

⁵⁵ Willson, *Triuwe and Untriuwe*, 17.

⁵⁶ According to Pincikowski, Enite demonstrates "ascetic exercise control devotion to Erec like devotion to God." *Bodies of Pain*, 115.

⁵⁷ As part of the ruling couple Enite, according to Francis G. Gentry, must embody steadfastness and loyalty whereas Erec compassion and justice. "The Two-Fold Path: Erec and Enite on the Road to Wisdom," in *A Companion to the Works of Hartmann von Aue*, ed. Francis G. Gentry (Rochester: Camden House, 2005), 101.

and realize the importance of her speech as part of a ruling couple, and to support and protect her husband as king.⁵⁸ As Francis G. Gentry points out, Enite “must learn the responsibility of her status in courtly society,”⁵⁹ but, as I will show, her lament assists her in this learning process. Furthermore, Enite’s lament helps Erec recognize the value of her voice⁶⁰ and assists him in regaining and sustaining his identity as king.⁶¹ Indeed, “Enite’s speech extends beyond the emotion of love for Erec to become the voice of reason.”⁶² For Erec, the female lament provides him with a task (or, in the case of the eighty grieving widows, it drives him into action), which elevates his honor and social standing. As McConeghy has remarked, men in Arthurian works “are allowed to seek social status actively by performing deeds of physical might.”⁶³ The lament serves to enhance both Erec and Enite’s personal and marital development, but as I will show, it is quite different for each character.⁶⁴

⁵⁸Whereas I argue that Enite must speak in order to maintain both her and Erec’s status, McConeghy argues that the Enite should speak in order for her husband to maintain his status (“Women’s Speech and Silence,” 772). Haiko Wandhoff points out that Enite is in search of a voice. I take his assertion further to say it is her lament that allows her to come into a voice. “Gefährliche Blick und rettende Stimmen eine audiovisuelle Choreographie von Minne und Ehe in Hartmanns Erec,” *Aufführung und Schrift in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. Jan-Dirk Müller (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1996), 170-189.

⁵⁹“Two-Fold Path,” 101.

⁶⁰ I differ here from Irmgard Gephart, who asserts that lament is a rhetorical representation of Enite’s selflessness and willingness to suffer. “Welt der Frauen, Welt der Männer: Geschlechterbeziehung und Identitätssuche in Hartmann von Aue Erec,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 85 (2003): 171-199.

⁶¹I disagree with Koch and Mertens readings of Enite and her lament. Mertens argues that Enite plays a marginal role in Erec’s identity (“Enide—Enite,” 71-72). Koch on the other hand contends that Enite’s lament does not play an important role in Erec’s identity. I am, however, in agreement with Koch’s claim that the lament is a stage for the performance of a feminine identity. *Trauer und Identität*, 159-204.

⁶²Jean E. Godsall, “Enite’s Loss of Voice When She Speaks From the Heart,” *Speculum Medii Aevi: Zeitschrift fuer Geschichte und Literature des Mittelalters* 2, no. 3 (1996): 63.

⁶³“Women’s Speech and Silence,” 772. We see a similar constellation in *Parzival*, when Parzival rides to Sigune’s lamenting voice (138, 15; 249, 21). Ironically, the lament does exactly the opposite for Count Oringles

The lament defines Enite's character. Leading up to the central scene in the forest, her speech and her thoughts are consistently referred to in the text by the term "klage." While this term is also used in reference to a few other characters in the text, it is used most frequently to describe Enite's sentiments. When Erec is presumed dead, for instance, the narrator describes Enite's misery as a "klage" when he portrays her as a pitiful woman who is helpless and alone.⁶⁵ In the courtly feast scene, Count Oringles, on the other hand, claims that Enite's "klage" is evidence of her childishness and foolishness.⁶⁶ Erec uses the word "klage" to refer to Enite's speech not only when she is wailing or crying out, but also when she expresses regret or some form of sorrow.⁶⁷ Enite herself uses the word "klage" on at least two occasions. On the first occasion, she asserts that her own death would not be worthy of lament, when she contemplates warning Erec about a band of robbers (v. 3168-71), and on the second, she refers to her words in the bedchamber which set off the whole sequence of

in *Erec*. He acts in an inappropriately by slapping and reprimanding Enite when she laments. McConeghy further states that "Women rise in status by passive means, being saved or espoused by exemplary men: they remain silent" (772). This, however, is not the case for Enite. As I show, Enite rises in status by using her voice persuasively and effectively.

⁶⁴In contrast to my argument, Kathryn Smits postulates that Erec must learn to be a husband and Enite in contrast must learn to behave humbly. "Enite als christliche Ehefrau," in *Interpretation und Edition deutscher Texte des Mittelalters: Festschrift für John Asher zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Kathryn Smits, Werner Besch and Victor Lange (Berlin: E. Schmidt, 1981), 13.

⁶⁵"von jâmer huop diu guote / ein klage vil barmeclîche, / herzeriuweclîche" (v. 5743-45). ("In her misery the good woman raised a pitiful, heart-wrenching lament.") "nû enhalf ir niemen mêre / klagen ir herzesêre" (v. 5748-49). ("There was no one else there to help her lament her heart's distress.")

⁶⁶"und enwæret ir niht ein kint / ir möhtet iuwer klage lân" (v. 6451-52). ("And if you would not act like a child, you would cease your lamenting,...") "[...] und lât iuwer tumbez klagen" (v. 6491). ("[...] and quit your silly lamenting.") Count Oringles uses the word *klagen* in reference to Enite behavior more frequently than other figures in the text.

⁶⁷Shortly after their marriage, Enite complains about Erec's honor being lost. Erec overhears her talking and says, "vrouwe Ênite, saget, / waz sint iuwer sorgen / die ir dâ klaget verborgen" (v. 3035-37)? ("Lady Enite, tell me, what are your worries that you lament in secret?")

events as a “klage” (v. 5949-54). Here I use a broader definition of the lament. The lament may imply that Enite fears the loss of her husband or in the bedchamber scene it suggests that she worries about her noble status. Through the repetitive use of “klage” in reference to Enite it becomes apparent that “klage” is intrinsic to Enite’s character.

Not realizing the importance of her voice for Erec’s position as king and hers as queen, Enite fails to speak as a queen should. Instead, she laments. Soon after marrying Enite, Erec begins to neglect his knightly duties for which the court blames Enite.⁶⁸ Unable to remain silent, Enite speaks aloud, believing Erec is asleep: “wê dir, dû vil *armer* man, / und mir *ellendem* wîbe, / daz ich mînem lîbe / sô manegen vluoch vernemen sol” (v. 3029-32). (“Alas for you, you poor man, and for me, miserable woman, that I must hear so many curses.”) Enite laments the loss of her honor, which is dependent on Erec’s reputation.⁶⁹ Instead of directly telling Erec the issue, she laments secretly. Upon hearing her words, Erec first requests that Enite explain her “klage” (v. 3035-37) and then demands that she speak:

“lât die rede stân.
des nemet iu ein zil,
daz ich die rede wizen wil.
ir müezet mir benamen sagen,
waz ich iuch dâ hôret klagen,
daz ir mich sus habet verswigen.” (v. 3039-44)

⁶⁸Alexandra Sterling-Hellenbrand argues that Hartmann constructs Enite in such a way that she is depicted as a cause of Erec’s downfall or rather the loss of his honor. *Medieval History and Culture: Topographies of Gender in Middle High German Arthurian Romance* (New York: Garland, 2001), 52. Enite, according to Sterling-Hellenbrand, also resembles Eve, who causes the seduction of man. “Gender and Love,” 76. While there are parallels between Enite and Eve, Hartmann does not set up Enite as being the cause for Erec’s downfall. She, however, plays a role because she does not tell him that he is behaving improperly.

⁶⁹Prior to this scene the audience hears Enite’s voice only once. In response to her father’s request for her to take care of Erec’s horse, she states “herre, daz tuon ich” (v. 320). (“Lord, I shall do this.”) Later in the text the narrator explains the following about Enite: “si enredte im niht vil mite: / wan daz ist ir aller site, / daz sie sem êrsten schamic sint / unde blûc sam diu kint” (v. 1322-25). (“She hardly said a word to him because that is the etiquette among maidens.”) Enite’s speech is indeed closely related to her status. The narrator does not refer to Enite as a queen until verse 6732.

[“Stand by your words. It should be clear to you that I want to know what you were talking about. You must by all means tell me what it was I heard you lamenting, what you have not told me.”]

When Enite finally explains, he takes away her right to speak, suggesting she spoke improperly. McConeghy argues that Erec takes away Enite’s speech because she is impolite and dishonorable in this scene.⁷⁰ As a queen Enite should have been more direct when she spoke to Erec. Moreover, I contend that as a queen Enite should have told Erec sooner that his honor is in jeopardy.⁷¹ Enite fails to practice her agency by speaking, but even though this is one of her duties as a queen. She takes no personal risk on behalf of his honor and his kingdom. When she finally speaks, she laments for the wrong reasons: She laments her reputation rather than his or theirs.

That Enite does not realize the importance of her speech for Erec’s position as king is further illustrated during her and Erec’s adventures. Enite faces a series of obstacles in which grief and worry for her husband cause her to speak out against Erec’s wishes.⁷² Deciding,

⁷⁰ “Women’s Speech and Silence,” 775.

⁷¹ Enite decides not to speak sooner, according to Hartmann, on account of her femininity and fear of losing him: “si begunden dise swære / vil wîplichem tragen. / getorste si’z niht klagen: / si vorhte in dâ verliesen mite” (v. 3009-12). (“She bore this pain in a womanly fashion. She did not dare complain about it to Erec. She feared she might lose him.”)

⁷² Godsall-Myers claims there are several “justifications” for Erec’s demand that Enite be silent. “One is that Erec didn’t want Enite to say anything because with his helmet on, he couldn’t guarantee hearing everything she said; rather than risk missing an important comment, he just eliminated all comments from her. A second, [...] is that knightly combat [...], required intense mental preparation and Erec’s command was intended simply as a means to enable him to prepare for a match. A third possibility is that just as Adam was given ultimate power over creatures in the garden when he used language and named the animals, so Erec exercised ultimate power through language.” “Enite’s Loss of Voice,” 60.

after a sequence of internal monologues, that Erec's life outweighs her own (v. 3167-80),⁷³ she warns Erec about a band of robbers. The narrator tells us that Enite's feelings of sorrow and unhappiness motivate her to use her voice (v. 3135). Failing to recognize that Erec's position as king is far more important than his role as her husband, Enite again speaks for the wrong reasons. In other words, she warns him out of fear for him as her husband and not as king. In yet another example, Enite's worries again cause her grief ("ê daz ir aber leide / von sorgen geschach" v. 3295-96) when she sees another band of robbers. Again, the narrator uses adjectives and nouns that convey Enite's worry and grief: ("vil sorclîchen ungemach / vrouwe Ênite gewan" v. 3351-52) which then motivates her to use her voice. In contrast, to the earlier internal processes, here Enite's inner monologue mirrors her later lengthy lamentation in form and content. Afraid of disobeying him, Enite thinks:

"ouwê ich sældenlôsez wîp!
 wære ich nû niuwan tôt,
 daz næme ich vür dise nôt:
 sô wære mir verre baz geschehen.
 sol ich den slahen sehen
 der mich von grôzer armuot
 ze vrouwen schuof über michel guot
 dâ von ich schône gêret bin
 (ich heize ein rîchiu künegin),
 daz sol mich geriuwen:
 wan sô muoz von untriuwen
 mîn sêle verderben
 und von rehte ersterben
 gelîche mit dem lîbe."

(v. 3357-70)

[“Alas, what an unfortunate woman am I! If only I were dead now, I would prefer that to this plight. Things would then go much better for me. If I were to watch the man be killed who lifted me out of great poverty to a lady of great wealth, by which I am highly honored--people say I am a powerful queen--I would regret that, because out of disloyalty my soul would go to ruin and rightly die, along with my body.”]

⁷³“bezzer ist verlorn mîn lîp, / ein als unklagebære wîp, / dan ein alsô vorder man, / wan dâ verlür maneger an. / erst edel und rîche: / wir werden ungelîche“ (v. 3168-73). (“Better for me to lose my life—as a woman whom no one would lament—than for such an excellent man to lose his, for many would lose thereby. He is noble and rich. Our value is not the same.”)

Lamenting her present situation (potentially losing Erec), Enite intriguingly examines the station she's acquired through her marriage to Erec. She suggests that she owes Erec for improving her circumstance, but she does not want to disobey his command to remain silent. While McConeghy argues that Enite in these inner monologues "is torn between traditional values, which demand her unquestioning obedience, and new, higher values of love and companionship, which demand self-confidence and self-sacrifice,"⁷⁴ I see it as an opportunity for her to explore and develop her voice. She does not yet fully occupy her role as a queen and cannot until she uses her voice properly. Her thoughts in this passage and in the metaphor of the linden tree cited above indicate that part of Enite's thought process is occupied with her station and her new role as a queen. By not warning Erec immediately, she illustrates that she has not completely developed her voice, a very important aspect of her role and agency as a queen.

Though Enite is reluctant to use her voice in Erec's presence, Hartmann illustrates that Enite is capable of using her voice persuasively and effectively in the presence of others. In the midst of their travels Enite and Erec meet a count, who secretly intends to take Enite as his wife. Trying to persuade him otherwise, Enite lies to the count: "mit liste er mich vürz tor gewan: / dâ zuhte er mich und vuorte mich dan / und hât mich alsô iemer sît" (v. 3878-80). (With trickery he lured me outside the gate. He [Erec] snatched me up and abducted me and has had me ever since.) By doing this she is able to win the count's loyalty and deceives him so that she and Erec are able to escape. At first Enite appears to behave inappropriately because she is dishonest, but "Hartmann," according to Godsall-Myers, "steps over his

⁷⁴ "Women's Speech and Silence," 775.

bounds of silence by speaking as author to insure readers note Enite's competence as a verbal dueler against the count."⁷⁵ Indeed he commends her:

mit schœnen wîbes listen
begunde si dô vristen
ir êre und ir mannes lîp,
vrouwe Ênite was ein getriuwez wîp
sus überredete si den man
daz er schiet mit urloube dan
ûf solhe ungewisheit,
al ich iu dâ hân geseit. (v. 3940-47)

[With fine female cunning she had saved her honor and her husband's life. Lady Enite was a loyal wife. Thus she persuaded the man to take his leave through her deception, as I have told you.]

Hartmann highlights that Enite is able to speak as a loyal wife in this scene. He does not, however, mention her other, arguably more important, role: queen. Despite her ability to speak so cunningly to the count, Enite reverts to lamentations the moment she is in Erec's presence. Just as with the robbers, Enite wavers as to whether she should inform Erec of the situation with the count (v. 3972-97). In contrast, Enite, however, speaks with other figures in the text such as Queen Guinevere. However, when these two women speak in the queen's chambers, the narrator states:

dâ wart vil wîplîche
von in beiden geklaget,
vil gevrâget und gesaget
von ungewonter arbeit
die vrouwe Ênite erleit. (v. 5107-11)

[There they both lamented matters, as women are wont to do, and there was much asking and telling about the unaccustomed hardships, which lady Enite suffered.]

In the text Hartmann emphasizes that women lament, while men take action. However, it is through her lamentations that Enite is able to use her voice and develop into a queen.

⁷⁵ "Enite's Loss of Voice," 61.

Through lamentation, she tests the boundaries of her agency and explores the importance of her voice.

Hartmann constructs the lament as being the most vital factor in Enite's transformation into a speaking queen. This becomes explicit when the narrator, after Enite awakens Erec with a cry (v. 6587-97), refers to her as a (künegîn) queen⁷⁶ for the first time:

vür sich sazte er die künegîn,
(ez enmohte dô niht bezzer sîn),
vrouwen Ênîten,
und gedâhte rîten
allez vür sich durch daz lant. (v. 6732-36)

[In front of him he seated the queen, Lady Enite—it was the best he could do— and thought he would ride straight through the land.]

It is most telling that Hartmann refrains from calling Enite a queen until this point in the text because from here onward he no longer restricts her speech to the lamentation. Indeed Enite uses her voice without hesitation or fear of consequence, when she helps Erec find his way to the road to escape Count Oringles (v. 6745-48) and then when they are out of harm's way she recounts the events that took place while he was presumed dead (v. 6768-70). Furthermore, she uses both her voice and her body to save Erec from another one of Guivreiz's blows:

si spranc ûz dem zîle
und begunde sich vellen
über ir gesellen.
“nein, ritter guot,
gewünne dû ie ritters muot,
niht erslach mir mînen man!
und gedenke dar an:
er is wunt sêre,
dû bist sus gar âne êre,
swaz dû im nû me getuost,
wan dû es sünde haben muost.” (v. 6943-53)

⁷⁶ Gentry also makes note of her status, but he does not highlight the importance of her lament in acquiring this role. “Two-fold path,” 99.

[She sprang out of the hedge and threw herself over her companion, saying, “No, brave knight, if you have ever had knightly spirit do not slay my husband! Consider that he is severely wounded. Therefore you will have no honor if you do anything further to him, for you would be committing a sin.”]

In this particular scene, as well as the others mentioned above, Enite does not lament, grieve or convey great anxiety in an inner monologue. Instead, she reacts instinctively, using her voice to protect and support her husband, the king. Guivreiz would indeed lose his honor, if he were to kill Erec, a king. Her initial reaction—shielding Erec’s body with hers—prohibits Guivreiz from serving Erec a final blow, but her voice is what truly saves Erec’s life: “nû begunden si imz aber sage / unde wortzeichen geben / des beleip im daz leben” (v. 6985-87). (“Enite told him everything again and gave him proof. Because of this Erec kept his life.”)

The female lament provides Erec with the means to both realize his social responsibilities and elevate his honor.⁷⁷ First it is Enite’s lament that sends Erec out on adventures to restore his honor. Her laments continue to help him to sustain his life, when she hesitantly warns him about the robbers. Later Erec illustrates his willingness to assist others when he encounters Cadoc’s lamenting wife. When Enite and Erec are riding through the woods, Erec hears Cadoc’s wife lamenting:

nû reit er dâ ze stunde
ein wênige wîle,
kûme eine mîle:
dô hôrte er eine stimme
jæmerlîchen grimme
von dem wege wüefen,
nâch helfe rüefen
erbarmeclîchen ein wîp,
der was bekumbert ir lîp. (v. 5293-301)

⁷⁷ Wendy Sterba contends that Erec sets off to learn his social responsibilities, but she does not account for role Enite’s lament plays. “The Questions of Enite’s Transgression: Female Voice and Male Gaze as Determining Factors in Hartmann’s Erec,” in *Women As Protagonists and Poets in the German Middle Ages: An Anthology of Feminist Approaches to Middle High German Literature*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1991), 57-68.

[He had ridden a short time, hardly a mile, when he heard a voice from off the road crying out in misery and fury, a woman pitiably calling out for help. She was in distress.]

Her cry “gives voice to Cadoc, who is too weak to scream” and sets Erec into action.⁷⁸ Erec rides towards her, where he discovers two giants have captured her husband, and heads out to rescue Cadoc. Here his chivalrous actions elevate his honor. If it were not for the lament of Cadoc’s wife, he would not have had the opportunity to engage in this adventure. Earlier in the narrative Erec defended himself against robbers, allowing him to sustain his life. Now the lament provides him with the opportunity to help someone else. Furthermore, the lament helps Erec develop his compassion for others – for when he sees Cadoc and his wife he nearly cries (v. 5335-38; v. 5429-34).⁷⁹ Even the eighty mourning widows enforce Erec’s need to fight Mabonagrín, which elevates his honor further. When Erec sees them, their grief touches his heart and invokes him to take action against the man who murdered their husbands (v. 8334-42). The court in which these women live embodies grief. Reestablishing joy depends on Erec’s chivalric acts.⁸⁰ Enite’s lament is also significant for Erec. It awakens him both figuratively and literally. Though her speech saves his life by allowing him to defeat robbers, it also indicates that Erec must learn to hear Enite when she speaks.⁸¹ They must work together as a couple in order to live an honorable life as king and queen.

⁷⁸Pincikowski, *Bodies of Pain*, 103.

⁷⁹ According to Hugo Kuhn, compassion is a motivation for chivalric action. “Erec,” in *Hartmann von Aue*, ed. Hugo Kuhn and Christoph Cormeau (Darmstadt: WBG, 1973), 38.

⁸⁰ Gentry, “Two-fold Path,” 100.

⁸¹ Ian R. Campbell accurately points out that for the first time in the narrative Erec hears a lady’s cry and assists a complete stranger without Enite bringing the situation to his attention. He suggests that Erec’s action in this adventure may reflect an alteration in “his mental state.” “An Act of Mercy: The Cadoc Episode in Hartmann von Aue’s Erec,” *Monatsheft* 88, no. 1 (1996): 4-5.

Once Enite embodies the role of queen, Hartmann returns to the story of Erec, who has yet another task to finish before completely reinstating his honor. Indeed, Enite no longer stands in the spotlight when she and Erec enter Brandigan (Joie de la Court episode). This does not, however, mean that Enite plays a less significant role, even though she speaks less in this episode. On the contrary, I contend that Hartmann focuses less on Enite because she has fulfilled her role, while Erec must do more to fully become king. Indeed, Hartmann reminds us that *Erec* is really a story about both a king and a queen in the last twenty-nine verses, in which he mentions the difficult times Enite previously encountered (v. 10107-14) and how the king (Erec) fulfilled and paid attention to Enite's wishes (v. 10119-121). Indeed the final verses focus more on Enite than on Erec, suggesting that this poem is at least as much about her adventures as his.

Conclusion

Hartmann von Aue presents his audience with a new model of the female lament, in which a female figure uses her voice actively and effectively in order to highlight her agency. Her lament enables her to become the subject of the poem. The lament, for Enite, is closely connected with her voice, which stands in contrast to the other lamenting female figures in *Erec*. It is, intriguingly, only outside the confines of the court that Enite is able to develop her voice and gain the status of a queen.⁸² As a queen, she is expected to be a partner to Erec and provide assistance where it is needed. However, she needs time away from the court before she is able to act as a queen, which stands in contrast to Queen Guinover, whose status

⁸² Sterling-Hellenbrand, *Topographies*, 42.

according to Godsall-Myers “acts as an entrée for interaction.”⁸³ Queen Guinover provides evidence of a female voice beyond the lament when she commands men, such as Erec, into action. However, the lamentation is also part of Ginover’s character. She laments to her husband about the dishonor bestowed upon Erec and her maiden through the dwarf’s actions (v. 1124-29).

Hartmann implies to the audience that there are three stages in Enite’s use of speech. In the first part, Enite, as a maiden, does not speak. In the second stage, Enite fails to recognize the importance of her speech for both her and Erec’s honor and status. Once she appropriately utilizes her voice in the third part, she comes into her own right as a queen, an agent. Hartmann suggests that Erec and Enite are able to have an equal relationship, if Enite uses her voice appropriately without hesitation and Erec listens to her. Wendy Sterba, writes with respect to *Erec*: “The medieval woman should be circumspect in her speech, but she should feel free to express herself when she knows it to be important.”⁸⁴

Enite acts within the conventions of the female lament and draws, for the most part, on socially accepted notions of female behavior to express her desires, protect her husband, support her king and transform herself into a queen. The poet of the *Nibelungenlied*, similarly explores the convention of the lament, and also identifies the potential for female action as a response to grief, but he interprets that potential as destructive and dangerous. Enite does not transgress gender boundaries, but remains within courtly conventions of female behavior. Kriemhild, by contrast, uses the lament as an opportunity to gain agency, seek revenge, and

⁸³ “Enite’s Loss of Voice,” 58.

⁸⁴ “Enite’s Transgression,” 66.

her ultimate transgression of gender boundaries is reflected in the downfall of the Burgundians and Etzel's court.

Chapter 3

The Threat of the Female Lament in the *Nibelungenlied*

Introduction

At the beginning of *Aventiure* 17 of the *Nibelungenlied* Kriemhild discovers Siegfried's dead body outside her chamber. Recalling Hagen's inquiry about how he might best protect Siegfried, Kriemhild mourns the dead knight in utter despair. The physical and verbal manifestations of her lament are intense:

Do seich si zv der erden, daz si niht entsprach.
die schonen frevdelosen ligen man do sach.
der edeln frowen iamer wart unmazen groz.
do erschre si nach unchrefte, daz al div kemenate erdoz.
(C: 1021 [A: 950; B: 1006])¹

[Thus she sank to the ground and did not speak. They saw the beautiful unhappy lady lay there. The noble lady's sorrow was immoderately great. After fainting she screamed so loud that the entire room echoed.]²

Kriemhild's lament at the death of her husband draws on the same classic conventions as Enite's. It is physically detrimental, she is unable to speak, loses consciousness and her screams are deafening. Although Kriemhild does not explicitly inflict harm upon her own body like Enite and other grieving widows (e.g. Dido, Cadoc's wife), her *initial* response to

¹ All quotations of the *Nibelungenlied* Manuscripts A, B, and C are from Michael S. Batts, ed., *Das Nibelungenlied: Paralleldruck: der Handschriften: A, B und C nebst Lesarten der übrigen Handschriften* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1971). The C redaction appears first in the parentheses followed by the corresponding strophes in the A and B manuscripts.

² All English translations of the *Nibelungenlied* manuscripts are my own.

her loss is a highly conventional form of feminine lamentation. Immediately following Siegfried's death she weeps, swoons, bleeds from the mouth.

While Kriemhild initially expresses her grief in a normative feminine manner she later deviates from the conventional female lament by instrumentalizing and exploiting her grief. Kriemhild's grief becomes the motivating force behind her vengeance that results in the downfall of the Burgundians. As Ann Marie Rasmussen has pointed out, Kriemhild "appears at times to be exploiting the social conventions of widowhood in order to pursue the course of action she has determined for herself: avenging Siegfried's slaying."³ In this chapter I argue that Kriemhild not only steps outside the conventions of the female lament, but also transgresses gender boundaries in her effort to avenge her grief. The poet of the *Nibelungenlied* therefore draws on the notion of female agency in the female lament as it is portrayed by Hartmann, but explores this agency much further to show its destructive potential.

That Kriemhild's grief was a source of concern for the thirteenth-century redactors of the *Nibelungenlied* is apparent from the way in which they reinterpreted the motivations for her actions and her culpability in the final destruction of the Burgundians. In order to make the argument that the female lament was the subject of a medieval discourse on female agency, therefore, it is essential to examine the different thirteenth-century manuscript redactions and consider the significance of the variation with respect to Kriemhild's lament and the representation of gender.

³ Ann Marie Rasmussen, *Mothers & Daughters in Medieval German Literature* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 82. For Stephanie B. Pafenberg Siegfried's death "evokes in Kriemhild the desire not just for private revenge or personal pain, but also for revenge for the widow's loss of political power and financial independence." "Spindle and the Sword: Gender, Sex, and Heroism in 'Nibelungenlied' and 'Kudrun'," *Germanic Review* 70, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 110.

The *Nibelungenlied* Manuscripts

The *Nibelungenlied*, composed around 1200, has been handed down to us in 11 complete manuscripts and 23 fragments that range in date from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century.⁴ The most important thirteenth-century manuscripts are the Hohenems-Münchener Manuscript (A), the St. Galler Manuscript (B), and the Hohenems-Donaueschinger Manuscript (C). As Joachim Bumke and others have argued, the variation in vernacular texts in thirteenth-century manuscripts bears testimony to texts' fluidity. Although it is now generally assumed that manuscript C is a reworked version of the text, and manuscripts A and B contain older versions, all three versions probably co-existed.⁵ As we will see, manuscript C differs significantly from the other two particularly in its representation of Kriemhild.⁶

⁴ Jan-Dirk Müller, *Das Nibelungenlied* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2005), 43. Also see Winder McConnell, introduction to *A Companion to the Nibelungenlied* (Columbia: Camden House, 1998), 1-17. The *Nibelungenlied* is based on stories from as far back as the fifth century. In the thirteenth century the historical and mythical texts were brought together. As a heroic epic, the *Nibelungenlied*, composed for courtly society, contains some courtly elements such as honor and loyalty. However, it does not embody the important courtly notion of moderation.

⁵ Joachim Bumke, "Der unfeste Text," in *Aufführung und Schrift in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. Jan-Dirk Müller (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1996), 118-129. Müller writes: "die Frage auf, inwieweit man das *Nibelungenlied* als ein geschlossenes, gebildehaftes 'Werk' betrachten darf und ob man nicht mit einem offeneren Textbegriff operieren muß." *Das Nibelungenlied*, 47.

⁶ According to Ursula Schulze, C has 112 stanzas, which are not found in manuscripts A and B. Similarly 45 stanzas found in A and B are not in C. Nachwort in *Das Nibelungenlied: Nach der Handschrift C der Badischen Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe* (Düsseldorf: Artemis & Winkler, 2005), 781-791. For a general discussion of differences between A, B, and C see Albrecht Droege, "Die Fassung C des Nibelungenlied" *ZfdA* 75 (1938): 89-104; Joachim Heinzle, "Mißerfolg oder Vulgata: Zur Bedeutung der C-Version in der Überlieferung des *Nibelungenliedes* und die Klage," in *Blütezeit: Festschrift für Peter Johnson zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Mark Chinca, Joachim Heinzle, and Christopher Young (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000), 207-220; Joachim Heinzle, "Die *Nibelungenliedes* und die Entwicklung des Textes," in *Die Nibelungen: Sage-Epos-Mythos*, ed. Joachim Heinzle, Klaus Klein, and Ute Obhof (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2003), 191-212; and Jan-Dirk Müller, "Die Vulgatafassung des *Nibelungenliedes*, die Bearbeitung C und das Problem der Kontamination," in *Das Nibelungenlied: Actas do Simpósio Internacional 27 de Outubro de 2000*, ed. John Greenfield (Porto: Universidade do Porto, 2001), 51-77. Since as early as the 18th century scholars have disagreed on which manuscript represents the original version. While Ms. B has taken precedence over the other two in the past, the

In all three thirteenth-century manuscripts, Kriemhild's insistence on Hagen's death stems from the grief that she has suffered from Siegfried's murder. However while Kriemhild's sorrow is consistently emphasized as a motivating factor, it is more deeply explored in C where it becomes strongly associated with the concept of "triuwe" (loyalty). In this chapter I first show that Kriemhild's lament is initially portrayed as highly conventional. I then contrast the male lament to show that lamentation in the *Nibelungenlied* is explicitly gendered: Women become lifeless and passive while men arm themselves and go to battle. In the third section I argue that Kriemhild transgresses gender boundaries by avenging her grief. This transgression is foregrounded at the end of the text when Hildebrand kills her to avenge the death of Hagen. Next, I look at the ways in which the different redactors place Kriemhild's actions in the context of her "triuwe," her loyalty to her dead husband. While the redactors of A and B present us with the irreconcilability of Kriemhild's revenge and her representation as a loyal wife, the redactor of manuscript C makes a more concerted effort to mitigate her actions and exonerate her on account of her loyalty.⁷ Finally, I turn to the question of blame and examine the ways in which the different redactors assign blame for the downfall of the Burgundians. The variation in the three redactions offers us insight into the medieval reception of Kriemhild's transgression, and reveal to us conflicting notions

popularity of Ms. C is on the rise, especially since it is the "most developed in terms of a literary book form." Joachim Heinzle, "The Manuscripts of the *Nibelungenlied*," in *A Companion to the Nibelungenlied*, ed. Winder McConnell (Columbia: Camden House, 1998), 116. Originally Karl Lachmann thought Ms. A was the original version, but Karl Bartsch refuted his claim in favor of Ms. B. Heinzle, "The Manuscripts of the *Nibelungenlied*," 107.

⁷Kathryn Starkey and Elaine Tennant have shown the redactor of Manuscript C in particular problematizes gender and makes it a central issue in several of the characters' interactions. Kathryn Starkey, "Brunhild's Smile: Emotion and the Politics of Gender in the *Nibelungenlied*," in *Codierungen von Emotionen im Mittelalter*, ed., C. Stephen Jaeger and Ingrid Kasten (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 159-171; and Elaine C. Tennant, "Prescriptives and Performatives in Imagined Cultures: Gender Dynamics in *Nibelungenlied*'s Adventure 11," in *Mittelalter: Neue Wege durch einen alten Kontinent*, ed., Jan-Dirk Müller and Horst Wenzel (Stuttgart: S. Hirzel, 1999), 273-316.

regarding the lamenting woman. We will see that the *Nibelungenlied* poet reinterprets the female lament to explore its destructive and transgressive potential, but that the different redactors deal with this portrayal in diverse ways.

Kriemhild's Sorrow: The Conventional Female Lament Revisited

As shown above, Kriemhild's immediate response to Siegfried's death conforms to the prescribed courtly behavior for women—she weeps uncontrollably, cries out, and falls to the ground in despair.⁸ Indeed, anticipating the worst, Kriemhild starts to grieve as soon as she hears that a knight's corpse is outside her door: “da begunde Chriemh' harte / vnmæzliche klagn” (C: 1019, 4 [A: 948, 4; B: 1004, 4]). (Then Kriemhild began to lament fiercely and without moderation.) Similar to Enite, Kriemhild expresses her infinite sorrow in later stanzas through ritualized gestures of bleeding from the mouth (C: 1022, 2 [A: 951, 2; B: 1007; 2]), losing consciousness (C: 1082, 1-2), and crying out.⁹

It becomes even more evident that Kriemhild's initial reaction to Siegfried's death follows the conventional motif of the lament when the narrator describes blood coming out of

⁸ See Urban Küsters's discussion of Kriemhild's gestures in *Aventure 17* in “Klagefiguren: Vom höfischen Umgang mit der Trauer,” in *An den Grenzen höfischer Kultur: Anfechtungen der Lebensordnung in der deutschen Erzähldichtung des hohen Mittelalters*, ed. Gert Kaiser (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1991), 59-63.

⁹ See chapter 7 of *Der Zorn der Nibelungen: Rivalität und Rache im Nibelungenlied* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2005), 94-102, where Irmgard Gephart briefly discusses Kriemhild's ritualized gestures (fainting, screaming, crying, collapsing, etc.) that are drawn from the canon. As Gephart notes the typical self-destructive gestures of the female lament such as beating the breasts and tearing out the hair are missing from the *Nibelungenlied*. In spite of such absence, Kriemhild displays archaic forms of the lament that are indeed excessive. Kriemhild's lamentation, according to John Greenfield, is not typical for a heroic epic or courtly romance. He argues that it is a mix of forms from different genres. “Frau, Tod und Trauer im *Nibelungenlied*: Überlegungen zu Kriemhild,” in *Das Nibelungenlied: Actas do Simpósio Internacional 27 de Outubro de 2000*, ed. John Greenfield (Porto: Universidade do Porto, 2001), 95-114. Otfrid Ehrismann postulates that Kriemhild's numerous screams and fainting spells illustrate her immense love for Siegfried. “ze stücken was gehouwen dô daz edele wîp: The Reception of Kriemhild,” in *A Companion to the Nibelungenlied*, ed. Winder McConnell (Columbia: Camden House, 1998), 18-41.

her mouth from her broken heart (“daz blv(o)t¹⁰ ir vzem munde / von hercen iamer brast”) (C: 1022, 2 [A: 951, 2; B: 1007, 2]).¹¹ Here the narrator describes Kriemhild’s grief in terms similar to Hartmann von Aue who portrays the lament as both an internal and external process. Kriemhild’s sorrow and her broken heart are manifested physically in her bleeding mouth. Moreover, Kriemhild mimics Enite’s lament by taking Siegfried’s bloody head in her hands:

Div frowe bat sich wisen, da si den rechen vant.
 si hv(o)p sin schone hovbet mit ir wizen hant.
 swie rot er was von blv(o)te, si het in schier bechant.
 (C: 1023, 1-3 [A: 952, 1-3; B: 1008, 1-3])

[The lady demanded to be accompany to where she found the knight. She lifted his beautiful head with her white hands. Although he was red from blood, she immediately recognized him.]

The image of the broken-hearted Kriemhild holding her dead and bloody husband is a powerful one and recalls the familiar image of the Pieta.¹² In this scene, Kriemhild and Siegfried’s blood combines, binding them together in marriage, suffering, and death.¹³

Kriemhild’s sorrow becomes even more intense when she requests time with Siegfried’s body before his burial:

¹⁰ In this chapter, I have inserted parentheses around the vowels o and e which appear above the letter v in manuscript C.

¹¹ *Jamer*, similar to *leit*, as Jan-Dirk Müller has briefly shown, conveys a wide range of meaning in the *Nibelungenlied*: “So kann die kollektive Trauer um Sivrit (B: 1025, 2) oder um Rüedeger (B: 2241, 4) *jâmer* heißen, *jâmerliche* der Zustand eines Landes nachdem Tod der Königin genannt werden (1195, 2). Auf inneren Schmerz bezogen wird *jâmer* erst in Kombination mit *herze*.” *Spielregeln für den Untergang: Die Welt des Nibelungenliedes* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1998), 217.

¹² See, for example, Küsters and Gephart, who also cite the following similar scene as a quotation of the Pieta: “si huop sin schoene houbte / mit ir wizen hant, / do chustes also tôten / den edeln ritter guot” (C: 1078, 2-4 [A: 1009, 2-4; B: 1066, 2-4]). (She [Kriemhild] held his beautiful head with her white hands then kissed the noble good knight.) Küsters “Klagefiguren,” 60-61; and Gephart *Der Zorn der Nibelungen*, 96-97. Similar images are also found in Wolfram’s *Parzival* with Sigune and Schionatulander (138, 20-24 249, 1-40). Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, ed. Wolfgang Spiewok (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1992).

¹³ Gephart, *Der Zorn der Nibelungen*, 96.

do sprach div kuniginne:	“irn svlt niht eine lan
mich hinte bewachen	den v(o)z erwelten degn.
ez ist an sime libe	al min frevde gelegn.

(C: 1065, 2-4 [A: 996, 2-4; B: 1052, 2-4])

Dri tage un dri nahte	wil ich in lazen stan,
vnz ich mich wol geniete	mins vil lieben man.
waz ob daz got gebivtet,	daz mich ovch nimt <i>der</i> tot?
so wære wol verendet	min armer Chriemhilde not.”

(C: 1066 [A: 997; B: 1053])

[Thus spoke the queen: “You should not allow me this evening to watch over the excellent warrior alone. All my joy was connected to his life. Three days and nights I will let him lie in state until I am able to separate myself from my dear husband. What if perhaps God decided that death should also take me? Then the misery of me, poor Kriemhild, would end.”]

Kriemhild, like Enite, articulates the absence of her joy, her need to mourn in the presence of her husband’s dead body, and her hope for death. Indeed, her conjugal love, like Enite’s, is so powerful that she nearly dies of grief when she is finally parted from Siegfried’s corpse:

Ein iæmerlichez scheiden	wart do da getan.
man trv(o)ch die frowen dannen;	sine mohte niht getan.
do lac in unsinne	daz herliche wip.
vor leide moht ersterben	<i>der</i> ir vil wnnekliche lip.

(C: 1079 [A: 1010; B: 1067])

[There was thus a miserable part. They had to carry the lady from there; she was not able to walk. Then the noble woman lay unconscious. On account of grief her splendid body could have died.]

Kriemhild’s loss of consciousness in the face of her husband’s death bears testimony to the intense bond between husband and wife. Throughout *Aventiure* 17, therefore, Kriemhild’s lament is comparable to Enite’s, and consistent with other conventional literary female lamentations.

Kriemhild does not follow Dido and Enite in attempting to take her own life, but her sorrow is no less intense, and she continues to grieve long after Siegfried’s death. In *Aventiure* 18, several years after Siegfried’s burial we are told:

man horte zallen citen hie Chriemh' klagn,
daz ir niemen troste daz herce vn ovch den mv(o)t,
ez entæt ir brvder Giselher; der was getriwe un gv(o)t.
(C: 1110, 2-4 [A: 1039, 2-4; B: 1096, 2-4])

[Kriemhild was heard lamenting here all the time and no one could console her heart and also mind except her brother Giselher, who was loyal and good.]

Her grief intensifies over the years affecting not only her heart but also her mind.¹⁴ Here the narrator's emphasis has shifted slightly from describing Kriemhild's physical expressions of her grief to the internal, psychological manifestations of her sorrow, which consume her mentally and physically.¹⁵ This extreme and lasting sorrow, according to the narrator is commendable, as it demonstrates Kriemhild's loyalty to her husband:

si hete nach ir frivnde die allergrozysten not,

die nach liebem manne ie mere wip gewan.
man moht ir starche tvgende chiesen wol dar an:
sie chlaget unz an ir ende, die wile wert ir lip.
(C: 1115, 4-1116, 1-3 [A: 1044, 4-1045, 1-3; B: 1101, 1-1102, 1-3])

[She had the greatest longing for her husband, which no other women possessed for a dear man. Her strong virtue was completely shown to all: She lamented until her end, so long she had her life.]

Kriemhild's lamentation in the first half of the text is thus represented as both extraordinary and exemplary.

Like its contemporaries, therefore, the *Nibelungenlied* characterizes the female lament as a consistent and constant trauma. Woman's grief, in the fictional world of the *Nibelungenlied*, is not a call to action, but a trial to be endured. Although the

¹⁴ Jan-Dirk Müller explores the multiple meanings of the word *herce* in the *Nibelungenlied* Manuscripts B and C. *Herce*, he argues, is used as a simple intensifier to mark a particular feeling or emotion. In this particular, scene *herce* refers to both Kriemhild's feelings and emotions. *Spielregeln für den Untergang*, 218-19.

¹⁵ Müller argues that emotions in medieval literature arise out of an external state of events and are not part of a psychological process. Emotions, he postulates, have to do with disruption in a state of affairs that must be fixed. Authors characterize fictitious figures in a certain way and as a result that is who they become. *Ibid.*, 201-248.

disempowerment integral to the female lament is ultimately transcended by Kriemhild, as will be further detailed below, it is important to note that her initial response to Siegfried's murder is normative and definitively feminine. Regardless of her intentions or her sincerity, she clearly takes up the mantle of proper courtly grief and expresses it through the accepted conventions of the female lament.

The Male Lament

As in *Erec*, in the *Nibelungenlied* the lamentation is clearly and explicitly gendered. In contrast to other heroic epics, such as the *Rolandslied* (1170) and *Willehalm* (1215), most male characters in the *Nibelungenlied* do not engage in lengthy and emotional expressions of grief.¹⁶ Instead, they seek revenge. Those male characters who do lament too much are marked as effeminate and cowardly.

There are several examples in which male characters' grief motivates action, and this action is characterized in the text as reflective of masculinity. When Etzel's warriors discover that Hagen's brother killed Lord Bloedelin and his men, for example, the narrator describes them as being deeply grieved. But in immediate response to this news, the two thousand Huns prepare themselves for battle:

Ê manz ze hove erfvnde,	die Hven dvrch ir haz
der garte sich zwei tvsent	oder dannoch baz.
si giengen zv den knehten	– mv(o)s et also wesen –
vn liezen des gesindes	ninder einen genesen.

(C: 1986 [A: 1871; B: 1931])

¹⁶ Men in heroic epics, according to John Greenfield, tend to engage in the more physical and verbal aspects of the lament. "Frau, Tod und Trauer," 102-106.

[Before many at court found out two thousand Huns or more armed themselves on account of their hate. They went to the knights and—what was to happen had to happen—left not one of them alive.]

Etzel's men react on impulse instead of waiting for the king's orders. The men's hatred "haz" demands that they act and seek revenge for the loss of Bloedelin. Their sorrow therefore motivates a physical response that is directed at others.

The conventions of the male lament in the *Nibelungenlied* society are further delineated in the narrator's description of Dietrich in the final battle when he faces the loss of many kinsmen and friends:

Do svchte *der* herre Dietrich selbe sin gewant.
do half, daz er sich wafent, maister Hildebrant.
do chlagte also sere der chreftige man,
daz im daz hvs erdiezen gein siner stimme began.
(C: 2382 [A: 2261; B: 2321])

Der helt gewan do widere rehten mannes mv(o)t.
in grimme wart gewafent do *der* degen gv(o)t.
(C: 2383, 1-2 [A: 2262, 1-2; B: 2322, 1-2])

[Thus Lord Dietrich sought his armor himself. Master Hildebrand helped him to arm himself. The mighty man [Dietrich] lamented so loudly that the palace began to echo with his cries. The hero soon recovered his manly courage. Then the good warrior was armed with fierceness.]

Here, although the hero laments loudly, he immediately arms himself for battle. Real men in the *Nibelungenlied* are allowed to lament, but not to excess and only if followed or accompanied by action.

Just as Dietrich's response of readying himself for battle underlines his masculinity, his "rehten mannes mv(o)t" (true manly spirit), other male responses to grief are marked as feminizing and therefore inappropriate. Toward the end of the story when Rüdiger is faced

with the decision of having to betray the Burgundians or his liege Lord, he cries, and a Hun warrior notices and criticizes his weeping:¹⁷

do sprach zer kvniginne: “nv seht ir wie er stat,
der doch gewalt den meisten bi iv vn Ezeln hat,
(C: 2195, 3-4 [A: 2075; B: 2135, 3-4])

vn dem ez allez dienet,	livt vn o(v)ch div lant.
wie ist so vil der bvrge	vn der erbe an in gewant,
der er von dem kvnige	so vil gehaben mac!
er geslvc in disen stvrmen	noch nie lobelichen slac.
(C: 2196 [A: 2076; B: 2136])	

Mich dvnchet ern rvche	wie ez hie vmbe gat,
daz et er den vollen	nach sime willen hat.
man giht im, er si chv(e)ner	danne iemen mvge sin,
daz ist in disen sorgen	worden bo(e)seliche schin.”
(C: 2197 [A: 2077; B: 2137])	

[Thus he spoke to the queen: “Now look at how he [Rüdiger] stands there, the man who has the most power next to you and Etzel, and to whom people and land serve. How so many castles and riches have been granted to him and he has received so much from the king! He has not yet struck an honorable blow in this battle. I think he does not care what happens here, since he has all that he can want. They say he is braver than anyone could be, but in this difficult situation it is not confirmed.”]

In the heroic society of the text in which men are bound by their feudal alliances and expected to go to battle for their friends, this accusation which touches on Rüdiger’s political power, his feudal allegiance, and his lack of action in battle is tantamount to placing Rüdiger’s masculinity in question. As Ruth Mazo Karras writes:

Honor for men was much more multivalent, and deeply tied to gender identity: To be dishonorable or dishonored was to be unmanly. It could mean “reputation”: a man had more honor if people thought more highly of him. It included both prowess and trustworthiness, but also gentle behavior. It was not constituted only through violence, but the successful use of violence was a *sine qua non*, and violence was the

¹⁷ When Rüdiger comes to the court, he sees how both sides suffer tremendously. On account of this Rüdiger cries (C: 2192 [A: 2072; B: 2132]) and complains about being born (C: 2193 [A: 2073; B: 2133]).

ultimate means of maintaining it. Prowess included courage and actual military success; trustworthiness included keeping one's word, and loyalty to one's lord.¹⁸

The Hun's disdain has a gendered understanding of the lament at its origin. Men do not sit idly by and weep, they fight and take revenge—they use violence. Rüdiger, of course, does not stand for such insult. “Mit trûrîgem muote” (With a saddened spirit) Rüdiger tells the warrior he shall pay for questioning his bravery and immediately turns to revenge:

Die fv(o)st begvnder twingen;	do lief er in an.
er slv(o)c so chreftechliche	den hvnischen man,
daz er im vor den fvzen	lac vil schiere tot.
(C: 2199, 1-3 [A: 2079; B: 2139, 1-3])	

[The vassal began to clench his fist; then he ran at him. He struck the hunnish man such a strong blow that he lay immediately dead at his feet.]

Rüdiger thus emphatically reestablishes his masculinity by physically attacking the warrior who insulted him. Rüdiger later fights on behalf of Etzel and Kriemhild, despite his legally binding ties to the Burgundians (his daughter is engaged to Giselher).¹⁹ At the end of the episode, both the Huns and the Burgundians honor and praise Rüdiger because of his valor in battle. In the end, Rüdiger's actions—his violence and death in the face of his grief—are glorified and deemed loyal and appropriate. By acting out his grief in battle, Rüdiger dies a man of honor and loyalty.

Sigmund's response to his son Siegfried's death is a further example of a conventional male response to grief. When he first hears rumor of his son's death, he expresses his immeasurable sorrow:

Do sprach der herre Sigemvnt: “lat daz schimpfen sin

¹⁸ Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 60.

¹⁹ When Gunther and his men arrive in Burgundy in *Aventiure* 25, Rüdiger escorts them to the court. By serving as a guide, Rüdiger is bound to them.

vn also bosiv mære daz ir daz saget iemen, wande ich en chunde in nimmer (C: 1031 [A: 960; B: 1016])	von dem svne min, daz er si erslagn, vnz an min ende verklagn.”
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[Thus spoke the Lord Sigmund: “Let your mocking and despicable news about my son of mine be. That you tell people that he has been slain, for I could never stop lamenting him before my death.”]

When he realizes that the rumors are true, Sigmund and his warriors immediately respond with action:²⁰

Mit hundert sinen mannen si zvchten zv den handen sie liefen zv(o) dem w(o)fe do chomen tusint rechen, (C: 1033 [A: 962; B: 1018])	er von dem bette spranch. div scharpfen wafen lanch. vil seneliche dan. des chunen Sivrides man.
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[He jumps out of bed with a hundred of his men. They take long sharp swords in their hands. Then they run to the cries very quickly. Thus a thousand of the King Siegfried’s warriors come.]

Although the men are so tormented by sorrow that they do not properly dress themselves, they nonetheless take their swords in hand and rush to action (C: 1034 [A: 963; B: 1022]).

Sigmund and his men are ready and willing to avenge Siegfried’s death immediately. Only in manuscript C does the narrator tell us that Kriemhild convinces Sigmund to abandon his plan to avenge his son’s death,²¹ whereupon he succumbs to complete despair:

Chriemh’ unversunnen den tac un den abent swaz iemen sprechen chvnde,	in vnhreften lac vnz an den andern tac. daz was ir gar vnhunt.
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²⁰ “vnd welt ir niht gelouben daz ir mich hoeret sagn, / ir mv(o)get wol selbe hoeren Chriemhilde klagn / vnd allez ir gesinde den Sifrides tot. / vil sere erschrach do Sigemunt, des gie im groezliche not. (C: 1032 [A: 961; B: 1020]. (“If you do not want to believe me, what you say to me, so can you yourself hear Kriemhild and her companions lament Siegfried’s death.”))

²¹ Kriemhild, according to Walter Haug, stops Sigmund and his men from avenging Siegfried’s death because she is not ready to yield to the rules of the heroic topos. “Höfische Idealität und heroischen Tradition im Nibelungenlied,” in *I Nibelunghi: Colloquio italo-germanico* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1974), 45.

in den selben no(e)ten lage ovch der kunich Siegmunt. (C: 1082)

[Kriemhild in weakness laid unconscious the day and night until the next day. Whatever someone could speak that was completely unknown to her. The King Sigmund laid also in the same state.]

King Sigmund is compared here to Kriemhild. He loses his senses: he cannot speak, hear or react; he is helpless. His men eventually persuade him to go back to Xanten:

Vil chume wart <i>der herre</i>	<i>wider</i> zu sinnen braht.
von dem starchen leide	chranch was gar sin maht;
daz enwas niht <i>wnder</i> .	do <i>sprachen</i> sine man:
“herre, ir sult ze lande;	wir mugen niht langer hie bestan.”
(C: 1083)	

[With difficulty the Lord was brought back to his right mind. The heavy sorrow had weakened him and that was no wonder. Thus spoke his men: “Lord, you should go home. We are no longer able to remain here.”]

Although manuscript C describes Sigmund lamenting in a manner reminiscent of female characters, there is no indication that Sigmund is acting in an inappropriate manner. Indeed, Sigmund is consistently represented as honorable, noble, and brave. I argue that these additional stanzas are in line with other revisions undergone in redaction C to give the story more emotional weight and to recontextualize Kriemhild’s revenge as an act of loyalty and love. Sigmund did initially respond to his grief by taking up arms, and therefore has already established his masculinity. Allowing him to grieve for his son after first demonstrating his masculinity mitigates Kriemhild’s lament. She is no longer the only character who grieves openly and excessively, but is joined by her father-in-law who is otherwise portrayed as honorable and noble. I return to the variation in C below. Regardless how one might read these two additional strophes, however, Sigmund’s initial response to rush into battle places him in context with the other men in the *Nibelungenlied* who express their grief through action.

King Etzel is the exception that proves the rule. In contrast to other male characters in the text, he laments bitterly the warriors' deaths instead of fighting. For instance, at the end of *Aventuure* 35, Etzel laments Iring's death:

Der chvnic klagte sere,	sam tet ovch sin wip;
mægde vn frowen	die qvelten o(v)ch den lip.
ich wæne des, daz hete	der tot vf si gesworn.
des wart noch vil der degene	von den gesten verlorn.
(C: 2135 [A: 2017; B: 2077])	

[The king lamented severely as did also his wife; maidens and ladies also tormented their bodies. I suspect that death had sworn to take them. For many warriors were yet to be lost to the guests.]

It is significant here that Etzel's lamentation is placed in the context of the female lament: He mourns just like the ladies. In the next chapter I discuss in detail the way in which the lamentation motif is used to feminize Etzel. Suffice it here to briefly sum up by recalling the examples of Rüdiger, Sigmund, and Dietrich that show that men in the *Nibelungenlied* mourn by resorting to action. They avenge their loss in battle.

Grief, Revenge, and Transgression: Kriemhild's Trajectory

Unlike other literary widows who become passive in the face of their husbands' deaths, such as the eighty mourning widows in *Erec* discussed in Chapter two, Kriemhild eventually takes revenge into her own hands and carefully manipulates the men around her to initiate a battle. Ultimately she herself bears a sword to avenge her grief and thus oversteps the gender boundaries firmly established in the *Nibelungenlied* and implicit in other contemporary literary texts. But even before this final transgressive act, Kriemhild refuses to remain passive in the face of her grief.

Kriemhild's initial act is to decline to return to Xanten and instead stay in Worms where, with the help of Siegfried's treasure, she is able to remain politically and socially active. The narrator emphasizes throughout that her actions are motivated by her grief. Although Kriemhild's actions exemplify her loyalty to her husband, they also create a paradox that, as Ann Marie Rasmussen has pointed out, puts Kriemhild's loyalty in conflict with the idealized submissive role.²² Unable to attain her goal of revenge immediately because as a woman she does not have the power to bare arms, Kriemhild waits patiently and devises plans.²³ In the end, however, she even takes up the sword.²⁴

That Kriemhild's grief becomes integral to her character is evident when, after Siegfried's death, she weighs the options of returning to Xanten and at first seems to find a persuasive argument to accompany Sigmund home—if she stays she will constantly be confronted by Hagen who has caused her “leide”, great pain and sorrow. But when Kriemhild decides to stay in Worms in spite of Hagen, it is precisely because she will be better able to mourn the loss of her husband:

Si sprach: “herre Sigemunt, ine mac geriten niht.
 ich mv(o)z hie beliben, swaz halt mir geschiht,
 bi den minen magen, daz si mir helfen klagn.”
 (C: 1099, 1-3 [A: 1028, 1-3; B: 1085, 1-3])

[She spoke: “Lord Sigmund I cannot ride with you. Whatever happens to me, I must stay here with my relatives, that they will help me lament.”]

²² Rasmussen, “Emotions,” 189.

²³ Jerold C. Frakes, *Brides and Doom: Gender, Property, and Power in Medieval German Women's Epic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1994), 18.

²⁴ For a discussion regarding Kriemhild's metamorphoses from lover to avenger see Werner Schröder, “Die Tragödie Kriemhilds im *Nibelungenlied*,” *ZfdA* 90 (1960/1961): 41-80.

On the one hand, Kriemhild's reason for staying in Burgundy suggests that she will become a conventional grieving widow who does not wish to forget her sorrow but instead sees her own identity as so closely intertwined with her husband's that she wants to keep her sorrow alive and will rely on her family to help her to do so.²⁵ On the other, we can read her decision as an action that goes beyond the conventional role of a lamenting widow. Kriemhild's family does indeed help her to mourn after Siegfried's burial, but not in any traditional sense.

Her brothers "help her to mourn" by becoming pawns in her act of revenge against Hagen. In addition to offering their wealth and comfort (C: 1090 [A: 1019; B: 1076]), Gernot and Giselher, under Kriemhild's orders, fetch her treasure (C: 1130 [A: 1057; B: 1114]), which she uses to lure foreign warriors to Burgundy (C: 1141 [A: 1067; B: 1124]). When Hagen sinks her treasure thus disabling her from becoming politically powerful in her own right, she calls upon her brothers to defend her and her property (C: 1149 [A: 1075; B: 1132]).²⁶ Kriemhild's early efforts to establish an army place Rüdiger's seemingly conventional gesture of support in an entirely new light:

Er sprach: "frowe here,	lat iwer weinen.
ob ir zen Hvnin hetent	niemens danne min,
getriwer miner frivnde	vn ovch der minen man,
er mv(e)ses sere engelten,	vn het iv iemen iht getan."
(C: 1278 [A: 1196; B: 1253])	

[He spoke: "Glorious lady, let your weeping be. If you with the Huns had no one other than me my loyal relatives and also my men, then he would pay dearly who had done something to you."]

²⁵ Sorrow, Gephardt points out, is an integral part of Kriemhild's identity. *Zorn*, 109.

²⁶ Kriemhild's brothers Gernot and Giselher serve her until the great slaughter. In *Aventure* 21 as Kriemhild parts to marry Etzel, Giselher asks her to call upon him should she need anything at all (C: 1318 [A: 1232; B: 1292]).

Kriemhild's grief and her reluctance to enter into a new marriage leads to Rüdiger's offer of service, service that can potentially avenge Siegfried's death. Here grief functions as a means of capital for Kriemhild.²⁷ When Kriemhild weeps, services are rendered to her, and she uses this capital strategically. Kriemhild asks Rüdiger to swear that he will avenge her:

Da von ein teil geringet wart do *der* frowen mv(o)t.
 sie sprach: "so swert mir, Rvdeger, swaz mir iemen tv(o)t,
 daz ir mir sit *der* nähste, *der* reche miniv leit."
 (C: 1279, 1-3[A: 1197, 1-3; B: 1254, 1-3])

[Thus the thoughts of the lady were alleviated. She spoke: "Thus swear to me, Rüdiger, whatever anyone does to me that you will revenge me and my sorrow."]

Kriemhild thus seizes an opportunity, and when Rüdiger pledges his support and that of all his men, she acts by deciding to marry Etzel (C: 1279, 4 [A: 1198, 4; B: 1255, 4]).²⁸

The enduring need to avenge her undying grief is evident in all of the decisions Kriemhild makes. The omniscient narrator explains Kriemhild's train of thought in deciding to remarry:²⁹

Do gedahte div getriwe: "sit daz frivnde han
 also vil gewnnen, nv sol ich reden lan
 die lvtē, swaz si wellen, ich iamerhaftez wip.
 waz ob noch wirt errochen mins vil lieben mannes lip?"
 (C: 1281 [A: 1199; B: 1259])

Si gedahte: "sit daz Ezele der rechen hat so vil,
 sol ich den gebieten, so tvn ich swaz ich wil.
 er ist ovch wol so riche, daz ich ze gebene han.
 mich hat *der* mordær Hagene des minen ane gar getan."
 (C: 1282 [A: 1200; B: 1260])

²⁷ Gephardt argues that Kriemhild's grief in this scene represents a disruption in social order. *Zorn*, 104.

²⁸ Francis G. Gentry has remarked *leit* can also convey a sense of insult or dishonor. "Key Concepts in the *Nibelungenlied*" in *A Companion to the Nibelungenlied*, ed. Winder McConnell (Columbia: Camden House, 1998), 68.

²⁹ It is at this point moment in the text that Kriemhild, according to Gephardt, becomes the culprit in the B manuscript. *Zorn*, 105.

[Thus the loyal woman thought: “Since I have won so many friends, I, pitiful woman, shall now let the people speak whatever they want. Perhaps my dear husband’s life will be avenged?” She thought: “Since Etzel has so many warriors and I can have command of them, I will do whatever I wish. He is so very rich that I can give again. The murderer Hagen has taken away all of mine.”]

Kriemhild’s grief is no longer a passive impulse but has become a truly transgressive desire for action that must be fulfilled. It does not fade with time, nor does the acquisition of a new husband deaden it. Instead the possibilities offered by her marriage to Etzel spur on her plans for revenge.

Kriemhild’s grief must remain dormant for years after she marries Etzel, but this lack of action should not be conflated with passivity, because as soon as the opportunity arises, Kriemhild acts on her plan for revenge.³⁰ In *Aventure* 23, 12 years have passed since the marriage of Kriemhild and Etzel and they now have an infant son Ortlieb. After she has produced an heir, and thereby solidified her status at Etzel’s court, Kriemhild starts to act on her grief, and carefully sets into motion her plan for revenge:

Si gedahte zallen citen,	si wolden kunic biten,
daz er ir des gunde	mit gv(e)tlichen siten,
daz man ir frivnde bræhte	in der Hunin lant.
den argen willen niemen	an frown Chriemh’ ervant.
(C: 1426 [A: 1339; B: 1396])	

[She thought all the time about how she wanted to request the king that he would allow her with noble custom to invite her relatives to the land of the Huns. No one knew the evil intentions of Lady Kriemhild.]

Etzel, like Rüdiger and Kriemhild’s brothers, becomes Kriemhild’s pawn when she manipulates him into hosting a feast for her kinsmen:

Do sprach div kuniginne:	“iv ist daz wol geseit,
ich han vil hoher mage.	darvmbe ist mir so leit,

³⁰ Frakes discusses the constraints of gender roles and how it leads women, such as Kriemhild, to “skillfully elicit not always the actions they immediately desire, but at those leading indirectly to their goals.” *Brides and Doom*, 24.

daz mich die so selten rvchent his gesehen,
 ich hore min die lvte niwan fvr ellende iehn.”
 (C: 1430; [A: 1343; B: 1400])

[Thus spoke the queen: “It is well known to you that I have many distinguished kinsman. It saddens me that they have never thought to come and see me here. I hear that the people perceive me always as a stanger.”]

Here Kriemhild emphasizes her sorrow that she has seen her kinsmen so seldom. Here, as in the scene with Rüdiger, she uses her grief as capital to actively gain a man’s support. Etzel responds by inviting the Burgundians to his court and thereby making it possible for Kriemhild to exact revenge. Although “leid” in this context refers to a different kind of sorrow from the lament, the use of grief as a motivating factor underlines the notion that Kriemhild’s grief has become the instigator not of a conventional female lament but of calculated action.³¹

The calculated way in which Kriemhild turns her grief to action is apparent not only in her manipulation of Etzel, but also in her effort to hide her grief from the Burgundians. Before he leaves for Worms, Kriemhild takes Etzel’s messenger aside and tells him:

“Swaz ir *der* minen frivnde immer mvget gesehen
 ze Wormez bi dem Rine, den svlt ir niht *veriehn*,
 daz ir noch ie gesæhet betrv(e)bet minen mv(o)t;”
 (C: 1443,1-3[A: 1355, 1-3; B: 1412, 1-3])

[“Whomever of my kinsmen you should see in Worms beside the Rhine, you must never let them know that you saw me weep my heart.”]

If her kinsmen were to find out that she still grieves for Siegfried, then they would interpret the invitation to Etzel’s court correctly, as a threat.

³¹ According to Gentry, Kriemhild’s revenge is better understood if “leit” is defined as an insult. Kriemhild was after all humiliated and dishonored through Siegfried’s death and her treasure being stolen. “Key Concepts,” 69.

Kriemhild's deft manipulation of her lament is most apparent in *Aventiure* 29, after Gunther and Hagen arrive, when she weeps in front of Etzel's men, which prompts them to ask her why she is grieving:

Ez mante si ir leide;	weinen si began.
des hete michel wnder	die Ezeln man,
waz ir so snelle ertrvbet	het ir hohen mv(o)t.
si sprach: "daz hat Hagene,	ir helde chv(e)ne vn gv(o)t."
(C: 1804 [A: 1701; B: 1760])	

[It [the sight of Hagen] reminded her of her sorrow; she began to cry. Etzel's men wondered what had suddenly embittered her good mood. She said: "You courageous and noble heroes that Hagen has done."]

The men, in accordance with their feudal obligations, react to her weeping by arming themselves to avenge the wrong that has been done to her. What is crucial in this exchange is Kriemhild's familiar use of tears as capital. Here she uses them to coerce the men into soliciting her exposure of Hagan's insult. She does not openly request vengeance, but her revelation of Hagan's complicity in her sorrow makes it necessary for them to avenge their liege lady. Like the scene with Rüdiger in Worms, she uses her grief as an instrument to elicit the promise of support from these men (C: 1806 [A: 1703; B: 1762]).³²

Although the first part of the text establishes Kriemhild's role as a grieving, lamenting wife, the second part quite clearly lays out her plan to act on her grief and avenge her loss. Kriemhild's fulfillment of an essentially masculine obligation is achieved through subtle means that transcend her femininity.³³ Paffenberg asserts that Kriemhild not only

³² Gephardt claims that when Kriemhild uses her tears to coerce men, her desire for revenge is personal rather than objective for the clan. *Zorn*, 141.

³³ In contrast to my claim that the redactor of the *Nibelungenlied* insists on a gender boundary that cannot be crossed, Carol J. Clover argues that within Medieval German and Scandinavian texts there is mobility between male and female and that mobility does not rely on sex or gender. "Regardless of Sex: Men, Women, and Power in Early Northern Europe," *Speculum*, 68, no.1 (1993): 363-87.

transgresses gender boundaries, but also all “moral, social and human codes.”³⁴ Kriemhild enacts and initiates her own revenge through grief, and her actions drive the story to its bloody end.

The other characters’ responses to Kriemhild show us how inappropriate her actions are in the fictional world of the *Nibelungenlied*. Particularly the male characters demonize her; Dietrich and Hagen explicitly label her a she-devil (C: 1789, 1; 2431, 4 [A: 1686, 4, 2309, 4; B: 1745, 4, 2369, 4]) in response to her actions.³⁵ Once Kriemhild exceeds the normative prescribed role of a grieving wife, she, according to Rasmussen:

[...] knows no political, social, or moral boundaries. As a subject she embodies excess. Such a portrayal of Kriemhild suggests a fear that when a woman is not confined by the limits of her object status, she will recognize no boundaries at all.³⁶

Kriemhild’s actions, her call to battle and her ultimate beheading of Hagen,³⁷ cause her own death.³⁸ Completely appalled and distraught that a woman took Hagen’s life, Hildebrand takes a sword and kills her, for that appears to be the only solution.³⁹ Tennant notes

³⁴ “Spindle and the Sword,” 110. See Pafenberg for a discussion of how the heroic culture loses its ability to control the definition of gender.

³⁵ Ehrismann argues that Hagen and Dietrich are responsible for the extent of Kriemhild’s revenge. Dietrich did not agree to assist her and Hagen continuously attempts to provoke her. “The Reception of Kriemhild,” 32.

³⁶ Rasmussen, *Mothers and Daughters*, 84.

³⁷ Britta Simon points out “An dieser Stelle wird nicht nur Hagen fragmentiert und vernichtet, sondern hier werden auch die Geschlechtrollen negiert, welche ein grundlegendes Element der patriarchalen, feudalen Gesellschaft darstellen.” “Höfisch-Heroisch-Fragmentiert: Körpergebundene Kommunikation im *Nibelungenlied*.” PhD diss., University of Washington, 1998, 178.

³⁸ Hans Kuhn, “Brunhilds und Kriemhilds Tod,” *ZfdA* 82 (1950): 191-199.

³⁹ According to Simon, Kriemhild and Hildebrand’s actions are both unacceptable by courtly standards. “Höfisch-Heroisch-Fragmentiert,” 179).

“Kriemhilt’s campaign to avenge Sifrit is presented not as immoderate but as transgressive, and the men of her imagined world punish her transgression immoderately, not with a dispassionate execution but with the retribution of violent dismemberment.”⁴⁰ As Paffenberg has argued, Kriemhild is killed in order to reestablish the gender roles that were broken by her actions.⁴¹ Furthermore, Gephart contends:

Kriemhild steht als eine der herausragenden Gestalten mittelalterslicher Literatur für die von einer Männerwelt betrogene und verletzte Frau schlechthin und zwar in einer Verletztheit, die nicht mehr korrigierbar ist durch herkömmliche Riten oder eine stellvertretende männliche Schutzhandlung, sondern die sich als solche in der maßlosen Zerstörung und einem orgiastischen Hinschlachten von Helden ein Denkmal setzt.⁴²

By avenging her grief, Kriemhild rejects the prescribed femininity in the *Nibelungenlied*.

With her execution, Hildebrand emphatically reasserts prescribed gender roles and effectively puts an end to female agency.

***triuwe*: Kriemhild’s Justification in Manuscript C**

The redactors of the *Nibelungenlied* all emphasize Kriemhild’s “triuwe” in her initial response to Siegfried’s death. “Triuwe” is a central courtly virtue in medieval German literature.⁴³ It “is the essential quality of character that nourishes all other virtues, such as

⁴⁰ “Prescriptions,” 313.

⁴¹ “Spindle and the Sword,” 110.

⁴² Zorn, 102.

⁴³ According to Gentry, “triuwe” is the most important concept in the *Nibelungenlied*. “Key Concepts in the *Nibelungenlied*,” 74. Joachim Bumke states “triuwe” is specifically a female virtue meaning “Uprightness.” *Courtly Culture: Literature and Society in the Middle Ages*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (New York: The Overlook Press, 2000), 345.

steadfastness, honor, good breeding, and noble attitude, without which they would wither.”⁴⁴ Although “*triuwe*” is applicable to both men and women it is usually gendered differently. The male figures in the *Nibelungenlied* often exhibit “*triuwe*” through serving their lord or lady, defending the loss of a relative or friend in combat, or compensating and protecting their vassals.⁴⁵ Kriemhild, on the other hand, demonstrates “*triuwe*” by mourning infinitely and ultimately seeking justice for Siegfried’s death. Her “*triuwe*” often seems excessive, but the narrator cites it to justify her later actions, even their horrible repercussions.⁴⁶ While the redactors of manuscripts A and B are ultimately unable to reconcile the loyal Kriemhild in the first half of the poem with the she-devil of the second half, the redactor of C attempts to place even Kriemhild’s transgressive revenge in the context of her “*triuwe*.”⁴⁷ I argue that the redactor of C seeks to exonerate Kriemhild’s transgressive behavior by emphasizing her feminine loyalty. This is particularly apparent if we compare the representations of Kriemhild in the *Nibelungenlied* and *Nibelungenklage*, which I discuss in detail in the next chapter.

In all three thirteenth-century redactions of the *Nibelungenlied*, Kriemhild initially exhibits “*triuwe*” through the verbal and physical manifestations of her grief. For many years after Siegfried’s death, Kriemhild still visits his grave every day where “*vil dicke wart beweinet / mit grozen triwen der degn*” (C: 1114, 4 [A: 1043, 4; B: 1100, 4]). (The warrior

⁴⁴ Gentry, “Key Concepts,” 74.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 74-76.

⁴⁶ Heinzle, *The Manuscripts of the Nibelungenlied*, 114.

⁴⁷ “Within the framework of an ethic that lauds loyalty and which accords the highest praise to *absolute* loyalty,” according to Winder McConnell, “Kriemhild garnered more than just sympathy from some quarters, particularly the author of the *Klage* and the scribe of ms. C.” An introduction to *A Companion to the Nibelungenlied*, 4.

was always lamented with great loyalty). Even twelve years after Siegfried's demise, Kriemhild's sorrow and loyalty to him prevail:

Nach Sivrides tode	— daz ist al war —
was si in manigen leiden	vnz in daz zwelfte iar,
daz si des rechen todes	mit chlage nie <i>vergaz</i> .
si was triwen stæte	vn tet vil willechliche daz.
(C: 1157 [A: 1082; B: 1139])	

[After Siegfried's death—it is true—she was in such deep sorrow for twelve years that she never forgot the death of the hero with lament. She was steadfast in loyalty and was so very willingly.

Kriemhild's grief—never ceasing—is the result of her steadfast loyalty “triwen stæte.”

Kriemhild's grief is described here as the utmost form of “triuwe.”

Kriemhild's loyalty to Siegfried strengthens over time and inhibits her from establishing a new life and a new identity. In *Aventure* 20 Kriemhild's devotion reaches new heights when Etzel sends Rüdiger to Kriemhild to ask for her hand in marriage. She initially rejects the offer, suggesting that Etzel's own loyalty to his beloved deceased wife are grounds for preventing a new marriage:

Do sprach div iamers riche:	“iv sol <i>verbieten</i> got
vn andern minen frivnden,	daz si deheinen spot
an mir armen vben.	waz sold ich einem man,
der ie hercen liebe	von gytem wibe gewan?”
(C: 1242 [A: 1158; B: 1215])	

[Thus spoke the miserable noble woman: “God prohibits that you and my other relatives, should make a mockery of me poor woman. What could I mean to a man, who has possessed true love of a noble wife?”]

Finally, at her family's urging, Kriemhild agrees to meet with Etzel's vassal Rüdiger the following day to give an answer to Etzel's proposal.⁴⁸ Kriemhild receives Rüdiger in clothes that signify her steadfast loyalty to the memory of her dead husband:⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Gephardt, *Zorn*, 104.

Chriemhil' div vil arme,	div trvrich gemv(o)t,
si warte Rvdegere,	dem edeln boten gv(o)t.
der vant si in der wæte,	die si alle cite trvch,
da bi het ir gesinde	richer chleider genv(o)ch.

(C: 1249 [A: 1165; B: 1222])

[The very poor Kriemhild, very sad in thoughts, waited for Rüdiger the noble, good messenger. He found her in a mourning robe, which she had on all the time, on account of which her royal suit wore practical clothes.]

Indeed Kriemhild's self-representation (both in public and private) consistently serves as a reminder of her loyalty to her dead husband. When she first meets Rüdiger, her public crying reinforces the significance of her attire:

Do si da wol gesazen	vn sahn manich wip,
do pflach niwan weinens	der Chiemh' lip.
ir wat was vor den brusten	der heizen træhene naz.
daz sach der marcgrave;	der helt niht langer do da saz.

(C: 1252 [A: 1168; B: 1225])

[As she had sat, the many women saw that Kriemhild cried continuously, her dress was on the breasts with hot tears completely wet. The margrave saw this and thus hero no longer sat.]

Here, approximately 12 years after Siegfried's death, Kriemhild's public lament still emphatically expresses her "triuwe" and her grief. In her response to Rüdiger's request for her hand in marriage to his liege Lord Etzel, she explicitly states the magnitude of her devotion to Siegfried as a justification for refusal:

Do sprach div kuniginne:	"vil edel Rvdeger,
wær ieman der bechande	div minen scharpfen ser,
der riete mir niht trvten	noch deheinen man,
wan ich vlos ein den besten,	den ie frowe mer gewan."

(C: 1257 [A: 1173; B: 1230])

[Then the queen spoke: "Very noble Rüdiger, anyone who knows my deep-seated pain, would not try to talk me into loving another man because I have lost the best man a woman has ever had."]

⁴⁹ For a scholarly overview of clothing on the *Nibelungenlied* see Marjatta Wis, "Zu den Schneiderstrophen des Nibelungenliedes: Ein Deutungsversuch," *Neuophilologische Mitteilungen* 84 (1983): 251-260. Also see Simon, "Höfisch-Heroisch-Fragmentiert," 66-79.

At this point in the story, Kriemhild's unyielding devotion supersedes both her urge to avenge Siegfried's death and her family's desire for her to remarry. Although her brother Giselher tries to persuade her to marry by citing Etzel's power and wealth, she flatly refuses, exclaiming that she is suited now only for lamenting, and that her once legendary beauty has now gone:

Si sprach zv(o) zir brvder:	“zwiv raetestv mir daz?
chlagen un weinen	mir immer zaeme baz.
wie solde ich vor rechen	da ze hove gan?
Wart min lip ie schone,	des bin ich ane getan.”
(C: 1269 [A: 1185; B: 1245])	

[She says to her brother: “Why do you suggest this to me? Lamenting and crying seem better suited for me. How could I appear at a court in front of a warrior? Whatever beauty my body had before, of this I am done.”]

Taking the role of the grieving devout wife to the extreme, Kriemhild dismisses Giselher and advocates a life of lamentation. Although Kriemhild has considered revenge (C: 1036, 1044 [A: 965, 974; B: 1033, 1024]), revenge does not initially enter into her consideration of Etzel's marriage offer. The offer initiates an internal struggle for Kriemhild who spends the night crying and worrying over her options:

Da mite siz lie beliben.	die naht unz an den tac
div frowe in vil gedanchen	an ir bette lac.
div ir vil liechten ovgen	wrden trvchen nie,
vnze si aber den morgen	hin zer mettine gie.
(C: 1273 [A: 1189; B: 1246])	

[She left it at that. The night until the day the lady lay in many thoughts in bed. Her bright eyes were never dry until she went to mass the next morning.]

There are in fact several issues at stake in Kriemhild's consideration of the marriage. On the one hand, she wishes to sustain her loyalty to Siegfried by not marrying Etzel. On the other she has been humiliated by her brothers and could gain power through the marriage.

However, Etzel is pagan and her marriage to him could therefore jeopardize both her Christian beliefs and reputation. Ultimately Kriemhild's decision to marry Etzel in the hope of avenging Siegfried's death is portrayed as an act of loyalty:

Do gedahte div getriwe:	“sit daz frivnde han
also vil gewnnen,	nv sol ich reden lan
die lvte, swaz si wellen,	ich iamerhaftez wip.
waz ob noch wirt errochen	mins vil lieben mannes lip?”
(C: 1281 [A: 1199; B: 1259])	

[Thus the loyal woman thought: “Since I have won so many friends, I, pitiful woman, shall now let the people speak whatever they want. Perhaps my dear husband's life will yet be avenged?”]

Even during Kriemhild's wedding— typically a joyous occasion—she is grief-stricken with loyalty. The narrator remarks:

Wie si ze Rine sæze,	si gedaht an daz,
bi ir vil edelem manne;	ir ovgen wrden naz.
si hetes vaste hæle,	deiz iemen chunde sehn.
ir was nach manigem leide	so vil <i>der</i> eren hie geschehen.
(C: 1398 [A: 1311; B: 1368])	

[She thought back to when she and her noble man lived on the Rhine; her eyes grew wet. She hid it so discretely that no one could see. She suffered on account of great sorrow and here honor was bestowed upon her.]

In spite of her newly acclaimed honor, Kriemhild remains loyal to Siegfried.⁵⁰ Again and again the C redactor reminds the audience of Kriemhild's persistent sorrow and devotion to Siegfried. In *Aventure 23*, for example, we are told:

Sine chvnde ovch nie vergezzen,	swie wol ir <i>anders</i> was,
ir starchen hercen leide.	in ir hercen si ez las
mit iamer zallen stvnden,	daz man sit wol bevant.
do begvnde ir <i>aber</i> salwen	von heizen trahen ir gewant.
(C: 1421 [A: 1334; B: 1391])	

⁵⁰ According to Gentry, honor in the *Nibelungenlied* can be a visible attribute as well as an inner quality. “Key Concepts,” 66-67. Here Kriemhild acquires honor through her marriage.

[She could never forget her grave sorrow even though she did not show it. In her heart she felt it painfully the entire time, as people later experience. Hot tears dampened her garment again and again.]

Kriemhild experiences constant pain on account of her loyalty to Siegfried. She refuses or is unable to forget him, and her loyalty is consistently represented as admirable.

Kriemhild's "triuwe" is evident throughout the *Nibelungenlied*, but the excessiveness and transgressive potential of her loyalty is first evident in *Aventiure* 19, where the narrator conflates her "triuwe" and her vengeance: "sit rach sich harte swinde / in grozen triwen daz wip" (C: 1116, 4 [A: 1045, 4; B: 1102]). (Out of tremendous loyalty the woman later revenges fiercely).⁵¹

While most of these references to Kriemhild's loyalty are present in all three thirteenth-century redactions, manuscript C includes several additional strophes that emphasize her "triuwe" as the motivating force in all of her actions. At the end of *Aventiure* 19, for example, six additional strophes characterize Kriemhild as a pious widow unwilling to be parted from her husband's body. Approximately twelve years after Siegfried's death, Kriemhild's mother Ute establishes an abbey to which Kriemhild contributes financially:

Dar zv(o) gab ouch Chriemh'	sit ein michel teil
durch Sivrides sele	vn vmb aller sele heil,
golt un edel steine,	mit williger hant.
getriwer wip decheine	ist uns selten ê bechant. (C: 1159)

[Hereunto Kriemhild also contributed later willingly for Siegfried's salvation and for all other souls with a large donation of gold and gem stones. A more loyal woman is unknown to us from any other time.]

Here, the narrator emphasizes the extraordinary nature of Kriemhild's loyalty; she donates her wealth to the church for his salvation. Through her gifts she reinforces her devotion not

⁵¹ For a discussion regarding a direct link between Kriemhild's love and revenge see Ehrismann, "The Reception of Kriemhild," 25-26.

only to her husband, but also to the glory of God. The redactor, therefore, marks her “triuwe” as not only a social, but a religious virtue.

Kriemhild gives a further example of her loyalty to Siegfried when she refuses to move to Lorsch to be closer to her mother:

Do sprach div kuniginne:	“vil liebiv tohter min,
sit dv hie niht maht beliben,	so soltv bi mir sin
ze Lorse in mime hv(o)se	vn solt din weinen lan.
des antwrt ir Chriemh’:	wem liez ich danne minen man?” (C: 1162)

[Then spoke the queen: “My dear daughter, since you do not want to stay here [in Worms], you ought to live with me in Lorsch in my house and there you should stop crying.” Thereupon Kriemhild answered her: “With whom would I then leave my husband?”]

Kriemhild will not leave her husband even in death.⁵² Once again her devotion to Siegfried, much like Enite’s to Erec, outweighs her own life; she is bound to his dead body. Ute attempts to change Kriemhild’s mind, but Kriemhild refuses to leave the body (C: 1163). These additional strophes identify Kriemhild as pious and god-fearing, and thus give her loyalty and grief additional weight.

Finally, Kriemhild agrees to have Siegfried’s body taken to Lorsch where she then intends to live:⁵³

Do schv(o)f div iamers riche,	daz er wart v(o)f erhabn.
sin edelez gebeine	wart ander stvnt begrabn
ze Lorse bi dem munster	vil werdechlichen sit,
da der helt vil chu(e)ne	in eime langen sarche lit. (C: 1164)

⁵² This scene is in juxtaposition to the scene between Enite and Count Oringles. When Enite mourns Erec’s presumed death, she is reprimanded by Count Oringles through physical abuse. Count Oringles ulterior motive is to take Enite as his wife, whereas Ute’s is to put an end to her daughter Kriemhild’s sorrow.

⁵³ “In den selben ziten, /do Chriemhilt solde/ varn mit ir muoter,/dar si doch wolde, / do muoste si beliben, / als ez solde sin. / daz understuonden maere, / vil verre chomen uber Rin” (C: 1165). (Precisely as Kriemhild ought to have moved with her mother, as it was in accordance with her wish, she had to yet stay in the end. The effected news, it came from afar on the Rhein).

[Thus the grief-stricken lady allowed him to be exhumed out of the grave. His noble bones were buried in Lorsch next to the monastery-church in a dignified place, where the bold hero still rests in a casket.]

By emphasizing Kriemhild's loyalty to both Siegfried and God, these additional strophes in the C redaction set the stage for understanding Kriemhild's later actions as expressions of her loyalty and piety.

Variation in the Manuscripts

As the additional strophes in the C redaction suggest, the three thirteenth-century redactors did not agree on the way in which Kriemhild's lament should be depicted, nor on the responsibility for the final battle. Through often very subtle variation in wording, the A and B redactors downplay Kriemhild's loyalty and focus more heavily on her need to avenge Siegfried's death at any expense, including the death of her son, Ortlieb. In these redactions, Kriemhild's agency is the problem, and the only solution is her death. Manuscript C, by contrast, emphasizes not only Kriemhild's "triuwe," but also her desire to harm only Hagen who is cast in a more negative light in this redaction. Kriemhild is not completely exonerated, but the C redactor justifies her actions more fully and does not vilify her to the same extent as the other two redactors. This variation supports the argument that the female lament was not a static motif, but instead integral to a medieval discourse on femininity and power.

Three examples serve to illustrate the subtle variation in the representation of Kriemhild's character and her grief. In *Aventure* 20 the narrator describes Kriemhild as she awaits her first meeting with Rüdiger, Etzel's vassal. The adjectives used to describe her in each redaction suggest differing assessments of Kriemhild's character. In manuscript C, the

narrator refers to: “Chriemhil’ div vil arme, div trvrich gemv(o)t” (The pitiful Kriemhild whose spirit was saddened, 1249, 1). This version thus portrays a pitiful Kriemhild and invokes sympathy for her. In manuscript A, the narrator characterizes her as: “Criemhilt div scho(e)ne, vn vil reine gemv(o)t” (Kriemhild the beautiful and pure spirited, 1165, 1). This version therefore highlights Kriemhild’s beauty and noble character.⁵⁴ And finally in the B redaction, we find the following line: “Criemhilt div here, vnd vil trvrech gemvt” (Kriemhild the proud and sad-spirited, 1222, 1). This version recognizes Kriemhild’s sorrow, but describes her as proud, a dubious quality, particularly in a woman.⁵⁵ The entirely positive characterization of Kriemhild in manuscripts A and C is thus reinterpreted in B as more ambivalent and perhaps even foreshadows her transgressive behavior later in the poem.

Although in the example above redactor A places Kriemhild in a positive light, he does not do so consistently. For example, both manuscripts A and B characterize Kriemhild ambiguously in *Aventuure* 23 when she coerces Etzel into inviting the Burgundians to his court. The first three and a half lines of the strophe are similar in all redactions:

“Nach den getriwen iamert	dichez herce min.
die mir da leide taten,	mo(e)ht ich bi den gesin,
so wrde noch errochen	mines mannes lip—
des ich chume erbite	(...)”
(C: 1424, 1-4 [B: 1394, 1-4; A: 1337: 1-4])	

[“My heart often longs for those, who have stayed loyal to me. I could reach but them, who have deeply injured me there then the life of my husband would still yet be revenged. I can hardly wait (...)”]

⁵⁴ According to Joachim Bumke, “physical beauty manifested the inner virtue of a woman.” *Courtly Culture*, 325.

⁵⁵ “here” means happy and glorious, but also arrogant and proud. See Matthias Lexer, *Mittelhochdeutsches Taschenwörterbuch*, 38th ed. (Stuttgart: S. Hirzel, 1992), 87.

In the final half line in manuscripts A and B, Kriemhild is characterized simply as Etzel's wife: sprach daz Ecelen wip ([Thus] spoke Etzel's wife, B: 1394, 4 [A: 1337, 4]). Manuscript C, by contrast, reads: "sprach daz iamerhafte wip." ([Thus] spoke the sorrowful woman, C: 1424, 4). In Manuscripts A and B the emphasis thus lies on Kriemhild's status as Etzel's wife, and implicitly therefore, her duties as his consort. When she manipulates him and seeks vengeance for herself, she steps outside her prescribed social role and transgresses the boundaries of femininity established in the text. In manuscript C, however, the redactor reminds us that Kriemhild is still a grief-stricken woman. Implicit in this version is her loyalty to Siegfried.

A third example demonstrates the C redactor's emphasis on Kriemhild's sorrow as the primary motivating factor in her actions. In *Aventuure* 27, at Etzel's court, Hagen and Volker are seated on a bench. They see Kriemhild approach, but fail to rise to greet her. Kriemhild is justifiably insulted and provokes Hagen. Redactions A and B present the following strophe:

Si sprach: "nv saget, her Hagne, daz ir getorstet riten vn ir daz wol erchandet hete ir gv(o)te sinne, (A: 1725 [B: 1784])	wer hat nah iv gesant, her in ditz lant, waz ir mir habet getan? ir soldet ez billichen haben lan."
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[She said: "Now tell me, Lord Hagen, who sent for you that you dare ride here into this land and are well aware of what you have done to me? If you were in the right frame of mind, you should have stayed."]

Kriemhild publicly accuses Hagen of having wronged her and thus makes clear that she is in pursuit of revenge. In manuscript C, however, we are explicitly reminded that Hagen has caused Kriemhild great sorrow:

Si sprach: "nv sagt mir, Hagene, daz ir getorstet riten	wer hat nach iv gesant, her in dizze lant
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zv(o) also starchen leiden
het ir rehte sinne,

vn ich von iv han?
so het irz pilliche lan.” (C: 1828)

[She said: “Now tell me, Lord Hagen, who sent for you that you dare ride here into this land after you have bought me so much great sorrow? If you were in the right frame of mind then you should have stayed.”]

Here as throughout the C redaction, Kriemhild’s need for revenge is justified by her immense sorrow.

Furthermore, as Joachim Heinzle has remarked, manuscripts A and B suggest that Kriemhild is motivated by selfishness whereas manuscript C frames her vengeance as noble and virtuous.⁵⁶ In *Aventuure* 19 after Siegfried’s death and shortly before Kriemhild rekindles her relationship with her brother Gunther, the narrator foreshadows Kriemhild’s inevitable revenge. In A and B, we are told: “sid rach sich wol ellen des ku(e)nen Sifrides wip.” (Later Siegfried’s brave wife avenged herself powerfully, A: 1045, 4 [B: 1102, 4]). In manuscript C, by contrast, the narrator tells us: “sit rach sich harte swinde in grozen triwen daz wip.” (Later the woman avenged herself very severely out of great loyalty, C: 1116, 4). Here, as throughout the poem, the C redactor has added the emphasis on her loyalty and thus given her actions a different motivation.

Even when the A and B redactors mention Kriemhild’s loyalty to Siegfried, they do so in a way that raises questions about that loyalty. For instance, in *Aventuure* 19 numerous years after Siegfried’s death, the narrator in redactions A and B describes Kriemhild’s loyalty to Siegfried: “si was im getriwe, des ir div meiste menige giht.” (She was faithful to him, most people would concede this about her, A: 1082, 4 [B: 1139, 4]). Although “most people would concede” Kriemhild’s loyalty, implicit in this statement is that some people would not.

⁵⁶ Heinzle, “The Manuscripts of the *Nibelungenlied*,” 114.

Redaction C leaves no question as to Kriemhild's loyalty: "si was triwen stæte vn tet vil willechliche daz" (She was steadfast in loyalty and very willingly so, C: 1157, 1).

Manuscripts A and B emphasize Kriemhild's revengeful nature in two examples in particular. Thirteen years after Siegfried's death Kriemhild acquires the high esteem of Etzel's first wife, Helche, in *Aventure* 23. Now that Kriemhild is sure that no one will go against her will, she considers how she might avenge herself on Hagen and concludes: "Daz geschehe ob ich in bringe mohte in dize lant!" (That may come to pass, if I am able to bring him into this country, A: 1333, 1 [B: 1390, 1]). The A and B redactors thus portray a vengeful Kriemhild who consistently seeks ways in which she can harm Hagen while also avenging Siegfried's death. In redaction C the following line appears in its place: "Si wnschte daz ir mv(o)ter wære in Hunin lant." (She wished that her mother were in the land of the Huns, C: 1420, 1). In contrast to redactions A and B, therefore, the C redactor's Kriemhild does not plot against Hagen, but instead thinks of her mother, and wishes she were there. Furthermore, in a continuation of the passage discussed above in manuscript C, Kriemhild emphasizes her sorrow by describing her inability to forget it:

Sine chvnde ovch nie vergezzen, ir starchen hercen leide. mit iamer zallen stvnden,	swie wol ir anders was, in ir hercen si ez las daz man sit wol bevant.	(C: 1421, 1-3)
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[She could never forget her heavy sorrow even though she did not show it. In her heart she felt it painfully the entire time, as people later experience.]

These lines do not appear in manuscripts A and B. In this and several other passages redactor C constructs a Kriemhild who is less spiteful and more humane than the one depicted in A and B.

As a further means of reconstructing Kriemhild as a victim of her grief, rather than a perpetrator of destruction, redaction C does not hold her responsible for the death of her son.

Manuscripts A and B, however, suggest that Kriemhild uses her son as bait to start the fighting:

Do der strit niht anders	kvnde sin erhaben
Kriemhilt leit daz alte	in ir herzen was begraben —
do heiz si tragen ze tische	den Eceln svn.
wie kvnde ein wip dvrch rache	immer vreislicher tv(o)n?
(A: 1849; [B: 1909])	

[Because the fight could not begin any other way—Kriemhild’s old grief was buried in her heart—she ordered that Etzel’s son be carried to the table. How could a woman even commit such horror on account of revenge?]

Redactors A and B do refer to Kriemhild’s “old” complaint, but this is not used to justify her actions. Instead, these versions of the poem demonize Kriemhild and question her femininity. As McConnell points out, “Ortlieb proves to be little more than a pawn in the machinations of his mother, who had no tears for the hapless youngster when he is decapitated by a provoked Hagen.”⁵⁷ The narrator’s shock, however, lies in the juxtaposition of Kriemhild’s womanhood with this act of revenge.

The A and B redactors not only deemphasize Kriemhild’s sorrow by highlighting her revenge, they also portray Hagen neutrally which by default insinuates Kriemhild as the culprit. Unlike the C redactor who, according to Francis G. Gentry “versucht [...] Hagen jeden heldenhaften Zug abzuspielen,”⁵⁸ Manuscripts A and B set out to deemphasize Hagen’s role in the downfall of society, and emphasize his heroism. In *Aventuure* 19 as Kriemhild considers a possible marriage to Etzel she recalls what Hagen did to her:

⁵⁷ “The Problem of Continuity,” 252. For a discussion in variations of Ortlieb’s death in the manuscripts see Hans-Friedrich Rosenfeld, “Ortliebs Tod: Mit einer Erzählung zur Überlieferung des Nibelungenliedes,” in *Uf der mæze pfat: Festschrift für Werner Hoffmann zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Waltraud Fritsch-Rößler (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1991), 71-96.

⁵⁸ “Mort oder Untriuwe?: Nibelungenliet und Nibelungennôt,” in *Ergebnisse und Aufgaben der Germanistik am Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts: Festschrift für Ludwig Erich Schmitt zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. Elisabeth Feldbusch (Hildesheim: Olms-Weidmann, 1989), 307.

Si gedaht: “sit daz Ecele der reken hat so vil,
sol ich den gebieten, so tu(o)n ich swaz ich wil.
er ist o(v)ch wol so riche, daz ich ze gebene han.
mich hat der leidege Hagene mines gu(o)tes ane getan.”
(A: 1200 [B: 1257])

[She thought: “Since Etzel has so many knights, whenever they are mine to command I can do whatever I want. And he is so immensely rich that I can give it [gifts]. The trouble-bringing Hagen has taken my wealth from me.”]

In these stanzas Kriemhild describes Hagen as “leidege” which I have translated here as “trouble-bringing”, but the term is ambiguous and could mean “troubled.” In Manuscript C, Hagen is described in much less ambiguous terms:

Si gedahte: “sit daz Ezele der rechen hat so vil,
sol ich den gebieten, so tvn ich swaz ich wil.
er ist ovch wol so riche, daz ich ze gebene han.
mich hat der mordær Hagene des minen ane gar getan.” (C: 1282)

[She thought “Since Etzel has so many knights, whenever they are mine to command I can do whatever I want. And he is so immensely rich that I can give it [gifts]. The murderer Hagen has taken my wealth from me.”]

As is the case throughout Manuscript C Kriemhild identifies Hagen as a murderer—not simply as troubled, or rabble rousing. As Gentry points out: “Hagen ist nicht nur ein niederträchtiger Mensch, vielleicht auch ein Feigling in den Augen des C-Bearbeiters, nein, er ist noch verächtlicher, denn er ist nichts anders als ein Mörder.”⁵⁹

Similarly, the A and B redactors describe Hagen as “grimme”, “terrible” in *Aventure* 20, where Rüdiger tells Kriemhild not to lament the gold Hagen took from her: “Gewalt des grimmen Hagne / duhte sie ce starch” (A: 1221, 1 [B: 1278, 1]). (The power of the terrible Hagen seemed to her to be too strong). In Manuscript C, the redactor strengthens this negative image by using the word evil: “Gewalt des vbelen Hagenen / der duhte sie ze starch” (The power of the evil Hagen seemed to her to be too strong, C: 1304, 1).

⁵⁹ “Mort oder Untriuwe,” 308

Kriemhild's grief always plays a central role, but it is weighted differently in the three thirteenth-century redactions. In manuscript C the redactor portrays Kriemhild as a loyal wife. Manuscripts A and B emphasize the danger inherent in Kriemhild's agency. The A and B redactors imply that Kriemhild's grief, which leads to her actions, is inappropriate for a courtly woman. Her grief when taken to such extremes renders her evil and unwomanly. Indeed, Kriemhild, according to the A and B redactors, acts like a man. My investigation of manuscripts A, B, and C suggests that ideas about women, power, and emotion were in flux and heterogeneous in the thirteenth century.

Casting Blame: Die *untriuwe*

In manuscript C Kriemhild is ultimately exonerated.⁶⁰ Kriemhild's loyalty to Siegfried justifies her actions. The C redactor further absolves Kriemhild of blame by elaborating on her initial intentions (seeking only the death of Hagen) and by focusing on various male figures' actions and the negative aspects of their characters. In essence, the redactor blames numerous men, especially Hagen, whom he calls the "ungetriuwer", the (disloyal), for the slaughter that takes place.⁶¹ In spite of various characters' judgment of Kriemhild as a "valandinne", the narrator in manuscript C affirms her loyalty. As Joachim

⁶⁰ Numerous *Nibelungenlied* scholars argue about who is at fault for the great battle. See Wolfgang Hempel, "Superbia als Schuldmotiv," *Seminar* 2, 2 (1966): 1-12; and Jens Haustein, "Siegfried's Schuld," *ZfdA* 112, 4 (1993): 373-387 for a discussion about Siegfried's role; Winder McConnell, "Father as a Failure," *Neophilologus* 69 (1985): 236-245 for a discussion about Sigmund's role; Werner Schröder, *Nibelungen-Studien* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1968): 70 for a discussion of Kriemhild's role; and A.T. Hatto "An Introduction to a Second Reading," *The Nibelungenlied*, trans. and commentary A. T. Hatto (London, New York: Penguin, 1969), 293-347.

⁶¹ When Hagen kills Siegfried his action is considered "untriuwe." As Gentry articulates, Hagen's deed suggests "an absence of "triuwe" where one would expect to find it." "Key Concepts," 76.

Heinzle has briefly discussed, the C-scribe depicts Hagen as being disloyal “ungetriuwen” and Kriemhild as a loyal wife in spite of the many deaths.⁶² Though there are places where Kriemhild’s intentions are clearly of a destructive nature, redactor C absolves her of the blame.

Immediately following Siegfried’s death, the narrator in C validates Kriemhild’s later role in the revenge discretely in *Aventure* 17 where Siegfried’s men and father Sigmund abandon their masculine duty to avenge:

Mit vf erburten schilden	ze strite was in not.
Chriemh’ div frowe,	bat vn ovch gebot
daz siz miden solden,	die rechen vil gemeit.
ob siz niht wenden chunde,	daz waere ir bedenthalben leit.
(C: 1044 [A: 973; B: 1029])	

Si sprach: “herre Sigemunt,	ir svlt iz lazen stan,
vnz iz sich baz gefv(e)ge.	so wil ich minen man
immer mit iv rechen.	der mir in hat benomen,
wirde ich des bewiset,	ich sol im schædeliche komen.”
(C: 1045 [A: 974; B: 1030])	

[With their swords raised up to battle, which was necessary; Kriemhild, the lady, bid and ordered that the proud soldiers ought to give up. If they could not abandon it, then it would be additional sorrow for her. She spoke: “Lord Sigmund, you should leave it be until an opportunity is favorable, then I will revenge my husband with you. When I unearth evidence against him, who took him away from me, then I will bring him to shame.”]

Kriemhild wants Siegfried’s death to be avenged, but she does not want Sigmund and his men to risk their lives at the present moment as they are outnumbered. Given the present circumstances, she recommends that they seek revenge when a better opportunity arises.⁶³

⁶² “The Manuscripts of the Nibelungenlied,” 114.

⁶³ Urban Küsters points out that Kriemhild’s need for revenge does not jeopardize her ability to be strategize her revenge. She is rational. “Klagefiguren,” 60.

Sigmund and his men, in the end, abandon their revenge entirely, essentially leaving Kriemhild no other choice, but to seek revenge herself.⁶⁴ According to Frakes,

It only becomes a problem—for the Burgundians and their modern scholarly advocates—when Sigmund, as the responsible male relative, abandons this course of action, while the course of action itself is not abandoned but rather assumed by—a *woman*. According to this society’s codes, women may not act independently, but rather only through their male guardians: fathers, brothers, husband.⁶⁵

Had Sigmund assumed the appropriate “course of action” for his son’s death, Kriemhild may not have sought revenge herself.

Though loss, grief, and revenge constantly consume Kriemhild, for which Hagen is culpable, the scribe depicts her intentions as ambivalent, particularly in *Aventure* 23, where Kriemhild, after having been married to Etzel twelve years, thinks:

Si gedaht ovch maniger eren von Nibelunge lant,
der sie da was gewaltech vn die ir Hagenen hant
mit Sivrides tode hete gar benomen.
si gedaht, ob im daz immer noch ze leide mo(e)hte chomen.
(C: 1419 [A: 1332; B: 1389])

[She also thought about the great reputation that she had relished in the land of the Nibelungens and that Hagen had robbed her through the murder of Siegfried. She contemplated whether he could ever be paid back through harm.]

Here, the narrator emphasizes Hagen’s role in Kriemhild’s current situation. Not only did he murder her husband, but he also deprived her of her reputation. Certainly, Kriemhild is interested in causing Hagen harm, however, her objective is not explicit. She does not have a plan of action to revenge. Her vehement feelings towards Hagen are followed by her desire for Etzel to invite her relatives in order for her to see her brothers and mother:

⁶⁴ Later in manuscript C, Kriemhild articulates: “got laz iz noch errechen / siner friunde hant” (1058, 2). (God let his friends and family avenge his death.) In other words, she hopes someone will punish Hagen for his unfaithful deed.

⁶⁵ *Brides of Doom*, 18.

Si wnschte daz ir mv(o)ter	wære in Hunin lant.
ir trovmte daz ir Giselher	gienge an der hant
bi Ezele dem chunige.	si chvsten zaller stv(o)nt
vil diche in senftem slafe.	sit wart in arebeiten chvnt.

(C: 1420 [A: 1333; B: 1390])

[She wished that her mother would come to the land of the Huns and she daydreamed that she walked hand in hand with Giselher next to King Etzel. She remembered kissing him again and again as he deeply softly asleep. Since then childhood had turned to great affliction.]

The C redactor emphasizes the dual nature of Kriemhild's intentions: As seen in the above stanza, she wants Hagen to pay, but she also wants to be near her family. The scribe does not claim that Kriemhild's only reason for inviting the Burgundians is to injure Hagen.

Furthermore, Kriemhild ponders:

“Nach den getriwen iamert	dichez herce min.
die mir da leide taten,	mo(e)ht ich bi den gesin,
so wrde noch errochen	mines mannes lip —
des ich vil chvme erbite,”	sprach daz iamerhafte wip.

(C: 1424 [A: 1337; B: 1394])

[“My heart often longs for those, who have stayed loyal to me. I could reach but them, who have deeply injured me there, then the life of my husband would still yet be revenged. I can hardly await,” said the woman filled with pain.]

Like the six stanzas at the end of *Aventiure* 19, this stanza appears only in C suggesting the redactors attempt to liberate Kriemhild from blame. Kriemhild's dubious desire is to see the people from Worms (i.e. Giselher, Gernot, Ute, etc.) who are faithful to her on the one hand because she misses them, but on the other hand she needs their assistance in defeating Hagen. By depicting scenes with such ambiguous meaning, the redactor distances Kriemhild from fault.

In spite of her insistence on Hagen's death, it is important to note Kriemhild's intentions specifically in Ms. C. are aimed at Hagen only and not all the Burgundians. Once

Hagen arrives at the festival Kriemhild sets out to cause him harm through hidden means. In *Aventuure* 30, Kriemhild sends soldiers to attack Hagen while he sleeps. As she sends them away she specifically states in Ms. C:

Ê Chriemhilt dise rechen si sprach: “ob irs also vindet, daz ir da slahet niemen den vngetriwen Hagenen;	hete dan gesant, dvrch got so sit gemant, wan den einen man, die andern svlt ir lebn lan.” (C: 1882)
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[Before Kriemhild had sent the warriors away, she says: “If you meet them, think about God’s will, that you kill there only one man, the disloyal Hagen, you should leave the others living.”]

Kriemhild legitimizes her request to kill Hagen by appropriating God’s will. Furthermore, if the men were to kill someone other than “den vngetriwen Hagenen,” they, not Kriemhild, would be acting against God. Kriemhild, still seeking assistance in only Hagen’s demise, says to Hildebrand:

Si sprach: “ia hat mir Hagene er morte Sivriden, der in vz den andern schiede, engvltes ander iemen, (C: 1947)	also vil getan: den minen lieben man. dem wær min golt bereit. daz wær mir inneklichen leit.”
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[Kriemhild said: “But Hagen did so much to me, he murdered Siegfried, my dear husband. He, who separates Hagen from the others, will receive my gold. If someone else was affected it would make me feel heartfelt sorrow.”]

Appearing only in Ms. C, this stanza emphasizes Kriemhild’s will to injure Hagen exclusively and as a result it exonerates her from being the final battle’s culprit. Moreover, Kriemhild alludes to the sorrow “leit” she would be confronted with should someone other than Hagen be harmed. Appealing to potential “leit” suggests that Kriemhild still embodies the normative courtly female figure that grieves. She is not simply revengeful at all costs.

Redactor C further excuses Kriemhild from the many deaths in the great battle in *Aventuure* 35 when he articulates:

Sine het <i>der</i> grozen slahte	also niht gedaht.
si het es in ir ahte	vil gerne dar zv(o) brahte,
daz niwan Hagene aleine	den lip da hete lan.
Do geschv(o)f <i>der</i> vbel tivfel, deiz vber si alle mv(o)se ergan. (C: 2142)	

[She had not expected that it would come to such a great slaughter. She would like to have arranged it so that only Hagen lost his life. Yet the evil devil brought about the she [Kriemhild] affected everyone.]

This stanza, only found in Ms. C, clarifies that in spite of Kriemhild's wishes (i.e. that no one other than Hagen died) the devil caused the harm of many. By placing the blame on the devil, Kriemhild is "intentionally excused as the one who unleashes the slaughter at the Hunnish court [...]." ⁶⁶

Depicting Hagen negatively, the Ms. C scribe juxtaposes Kriemhild's loyalty, constructed as justification for her actions, with Hagen's disloyalty, grounds for his wrongdoing. When Hagen claims, after killing Siegfried in *Aventure* 16, that he does not care how Siegfried's murder affects Kriemhild, the narrator describes Hagen as "der ungetriwe" (C: 1012) (the disloyal one). The C redactor instantaneously sets up a framework that casts Hagen as being unfavorable after killing Siegfried. Kriemhild, on the other hand as we have seen, delineates "triwen stæte" (steadfast loyalty) throughout. Such illustrations of Hagen as "der ungetriwe" continue throughout the narrative. In *Aventure* 19, fearing Kriemhild's wealth, a source of power, Hagen sinks her treasure and as a result the narrator enumerates:

Erne mohte des hordes	sit gewinnen niht,
daz den ungetriwen	vil dicche noch geschiht.
er wande in niezen eine,	die wil er mo(e)hte lebn.
sit moht ers im selben	noch <i>ander</i> nieman gegeben. (C: 1153)

[Later he could not take possession of the treasure as it still happens that the disloyal fail. In vain he hoped to use it alone from which he would live. He wanted it for himself and to not give it to anyone else.]

⁶⁶ Heinzle, "The Manuscripts of the Nibelungenlied," 114.

The narrator constructs Hagen's action (sinking the treasure) and intention (using the treasure) as both disloyal and vain. He has robbed Kriemhild of her husband's protection yet again.⁶⁷ Hagen's treacherous nature and vanity intensifies in *Aventuure* 25 where he pushes the king's priest off a ship for no specific reason (C: 1612) and as a result the priest, after reaching land, yells out: "ir mörder vngetrewer, / waz hett ich euch getan, / daz ir mich on schuld / ertrenckt wollt han?" (C: 1621, 3-4) ("You faithless murderer! What did I do to you that would cause you to want to drown me without reason?"). This random act against a priest exposes Hagen as a faithless man, who has no regard for the clergy (i.e. God or the church). This is further illustrated when responding to the priest's outburst, Hagen says it is unfortunate that he is still alive because that was not at all his intentions (C: 1622). In general Hagen does not appear to take heed in anything he does, which suggests his activity is excessive. Even when it is clear that he has wronged someone, he does not submit to wrongdoing. Instead, he continues to denigrate anyone who empathizes with Kriemhild or the Huns.

Acting in a manner that provokes and eventually forces Kriemhild to her hand, Hagen is subsequently held responsible for the demise of numerous Burgundians and Huns in Ms. C. His role in the slaughter begins, when he murders Siegfried at the end of *Aventuure* 16. Even years later after Siegfried's death, Hagen, a vassal, not only abrades her, but also exercises, according to the narrator, power over Kriemhild: "Gewalt des vbelen Hagenen / der duhte sie ze starch" (C: 1304, 1[A: 1221, 1; B: 1278, 1]). (The power of the evil Hagen appeared to be too strong for her.) Here, Hagen, fearing her potential power with money, prohibits Kriemhild from taking her own financial wealth with her to Hungary. His action

⁶⁷ Ehrismann, "The Reception of Kriemhild," 29.

(i.e. throwing her treasure into the Rhine) is clearly calamitous (“vbelen”). Even when Hagen is in her presence for the first time in several years, he intentionally evokes sorrow and discontentment for Kriemhild:

Do si daz swert erchande, des gie si michel not.
sin gehilze daz was gvldin, div scheide porten rot.
ez mante si ir leide; weinen si began.
ich wæn iz hete Hagene ir ze reizen getan.
(C: 1825[A: 1722; B: 1781])

[As she caught sight of the sword, she became overwhelmed with great pain. The handle was gold, the sheath’s edge red. This reminded her of her sorrow and she began to cry. I suspect Hagen had only done that in order to provoke her.]

Once again Hagen exercises malevolent behavior when he wears the very sword that killed her first husband Siegfried. Such an action clearly demonstrates his lack of respect for Kriemhild and her feelings. It does nothing but heighten her anger and revengeful thoughts. When Hagen kills Kriemhild and Etzel’s son Ortlieb in *Aventure* 33 he instigates the battle.⁶⁸ What is particularly interesting about Ms. C is how the redactor excuses Kriemhild from any participation in the death of her son. Instead, he constantly reminds the reader of Hagen’s evil nature, depicts him misbehaving, and foreshadows his role in Ortlieb’s death.

As Hagen dines with Etzel and Kriemhild:

si trv(o)gen Ortlieben, den ivngen kunec, dan
zv der fvrsten tische, da ovch Hagene saz.
des mvsiz kint ersterben dvrch sinen mortlichen haz.
(C: 1964, 2-4 [A: 1850, 2-4; B: 1910, 2-4])

[They [servants] carried Ortlieb, the young king, to the princes’ tables, where Hagen also sat. On account of his deadly hate the child had to die later.]

⁶⁸ Redactor C does not suggest that Kriemhild sacrificed her own son as in A and B. Instead, he writes: Do die fvrsten gesezzen / warn vber al / vn nv begvnden ezzen, / do wart in den sal / getragen zv(o) den fv(e)rsten / daz Ezeln kint; / da von der kunec riche / gewan vil starchen iamer sint (C: 1963 [A: 1849; B: 1909]). (As the princes all had sat down and began to eat, Etzel’s son was carried to them in the hall. Out of it a great sorrow originated for the powerful King.)

Hagen's hate for Kriemhild is so strong that he is determined to harm her in anyway possible. Even when Etzel boasts about his son Ortlieb, Hagen dismisses his comments and claims that Ortlieb's life is marked by death (C: 1969 [A: 1855; B: 1915]). The narrator further notes Hagen's role in Ortlieb's death when he states: "sit tet im Hagene mere: er slv(o)gen vor sinen ovgen tot" (C: 1972, 4). (Later Hagen caused him still great sorrow he killed his child in front of his eyes.)

The *Nibelungenlied* C redactor manipulates the narrative in such a way that Kriemhild is absolved from her role in the great battle. In doing this, he emphasizes her loyal nature in juxtaposition to numerous male figures' malevolent actions.

Conclusion

Kriemhild, the "she-devil" of the *Nibelungenlied* manuscripts A, B and C explores the transgressive power of the female lament.⁶⁹ The *Nibelungenlied* A and B redactors depict Kriemhild's grief as unquestionably threatening, malevolent and detrimental to society; especially when it is "unmâze." Redactor C, however, illustrates a loyal and passionate Kriemhild, whose grief forces her to take action. As a courtly woman who instrumentalizes and exploits the effects of her own feminine obligations, i.e., her obligation to lament and grieve for her dead husband, Kriemhild shows that women in medieval texts can alter their own destinies and even manipulate men to their purposes. The power to pursue a self-determined course of action is liberating, but it comes at a price, and that price, for the *Nibelungenlied* poet, is nothing short of apocalyptic. The newly empowered grieving widow, represented by Kriemhild, does not merely violate her own gender boundaries, but threatens

⁶⁹ See Ann Marie Rasmussen, *Mothers and Daughters* for a general discussion of Kriemhild's role as a "self-determining subject" (66-84).

and transgresses the mores and foundations of the courtly, chivalrous society as a whole. Kriemhild's journey is enlightening in terms of the reactions and commentary it arouses in the three manuscripts of the *Nibelungenlied*, and also in the companion text *Nibelungenklage*. The *Nibelungenklage* offers an explanation for her behavior by presenting her grief and her response to this grief as a paradox in which Kriemhild's loyalty to her dead husband is in conflict with the idealized submissive roles of the courtly lady.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Rasmussen, "Emotions" 189.

Chapter 4

Reconfiguring the Lament in the *Nibelungenklage*

Introduction

The indisputable villianization of Kriemhild at the end of the *Nibelungenlied* manuscripts A, B, and—to a lesser extent—C serves as a warning against the threatening potential of a powerful grieving widow. The problems (i.e. the transgression of gender boundaries to gain vengeance) that Kriemhild creates go beyond the final tragedy in the poem and into the realm of courtly ideals themselves. In short, how can a courtly audience condemn Kriemhild's actions when they are, at least according to the *Nibelungenlied* C redaction, ultimately born out of a sense of "triuwe" that is a courtly ideal and is admirable in its intensity and depth? There is a paradox inherent in Kriemhild's vilification, a paradox that was not lost on the medieval recipients of the text. It is this paradox that the anonymous poet seeks to undo in the mid-thirteenth century narrative the *Nibelungenklage*, in which the characters remaining after the great slaughter in the *Nibelungenlied* grieve and deal with the aftermath.

Since the *Nibelungenklage* is always transmitted with the *Nibelungenlied*, it is regarded as a companion piece.¹ In fact, the B and C redactions respond specifically to their corresponding *Nibelungenlied* redactions suggesting that the scribes did more than copy the story of *Nibelungenklage* down from a common source. As Joachim Bumke has remarked,

¹ The *Nibelungenklage* is attached to all but redaction K of the *Nibelungenlied*. See Winder McConnell, an introduction to *A Companion to das Nibelungenlied*, ed. Winder McConnell (Columbia: Camden House, 1998), 3.

the *Nibelungenklage* is not only a contemporary reaction to the *Nibelungenlied*, but a challenge to, an appendix to, and commentary on the earlier poem.²

The aptly named *Nibelungenklage* focuses entirely on lamentation. Some characters in the *Nibelungenklage* practice stoic pragmatism, some wring their hands, others pull their hair, still others tear at their clothes, many cry and scream, some lose their ability to speak, and some speak eulogies about the dead. How are we to make sense of all this grieving? I argue that the *Nibelungenklage* poet constructs different models of grief in response to Kriemhild's immoderate sorrow in the *Nibelungenlied*. Indeed, the poem performs a didactic function by presenting its audience with examples of socially productive and unproductive modes of grief.

The poem may be roughly divided into three parts. The author begins with a retelling of the events in the *Nibelungenlied* and justifies Kriemhild's revenge as a form of *triuwe* (loyalty)³. The second section describes various male and female characters bewailing the dead and burying them, and in the final part the groundwork is laid for a new beginning.⁴ As Jan-Dirk Müller remarks:

²Joachim Bumke, *Die vier Fassungen der >Nibelungenklage<: Untersuchungen zur Überlieferungsgeschichte und Textkritik der höfischen Epik im 13. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 120. Jan-Dirk Müller argues that the *Nibelungenklage* is an "authentische Schlüssel für das Verständnis des Nibelungenlied." "Die Klage—Die Irritation durch das Epos," in *Der Mord und die Klage: Das Nibelungenlied und die Kulturen der Gewalt*, ed. Gerold Bönnen and Volker Gallé (Worms: Stadtarchiv Worms, 2003), 168. Written several years later, the epic *Kundrun* is also considered a response, by some scholars, to the *Nibelungenlied*. See Werner Hoffman, "Die 'Kundrun': Eine Antwort auf das Nibelungenlied," in *Nibelungenlied und Kudrun*, ed. Rupp Heinz, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1976), 599-620.

³ Winder McConnell, "The Problem of Continuity in *Die Klage*," in *Neophilologus*, 70 (1986): 248-255.

⁴ Michael Curschmann and Joachim Bumke suggest a similar structural synopsis. Curschmann, "Nibelungenlied und Nibelungenklage: Über Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit im Prozeß der Episierung," in *Nibelungenlied und Nibelungenklage: Neue Wege der Forschung*, ed. Christoph Fasbender (Stuttgart: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005), 166; Bumke, *Die vier Fassungen*, 102.

“Für den Epiker [*Nibelungenlied*] ist der Untergang der heroischen Welt definitiv (wieviele Handlungsfäden auch liegen geblieben sein mögen); für ihn gibt es keine Brücke zu einem Nachher. Die Klage dagegen zieht die Linen aus, die das monströse Geschehen mit feudaler >Normalität< verbinden.”⁵

In this chapter, I argue that the normalcy that Müller refers to is represented in large part by the gendered lament. The lament is redefined as a productive and gender-specific social act that serves as the starting point for the rebuilding of society.

That the immoderate nature of Kriemhild’s lament and her culpability were a source of concern for the thirteenth century poet of the *Nibelungenklage* is evident in the poem’s interest in redefining the lament and emphasizing “maze” (moderation). Given the variation we have seen in the *Nibelungenlied* manuscripts, it is worth investigating whether the different redactions of the *Nibelungenklage* also vary significantly in their representation of gender in the context of the lament. More specifically it is important to see how Kriemhild is portrayed in the different redactions of the poem and how blame is assigned to the characters.

Just as manuscript C of the *Nibelungenlied* tends to redeem Kriemhild and blame other characters for the downfall of the Burgundians so too does the *Nibelungenklage* attempt to exonerate Kriemhild in order to reestablish the gender boundaries of the lament.⁶ As I will

⁵ “Die Klage—Die Irritation” 167. Winder McConnell makes a similar observation, “The close-ended structure [of the *Nibelungenlied*], with no allusion to a possible future of any significance, may have been too radical for him [the author of the *Nibelungenklage*] to accept.” In other words, he claims the disastrous ending of the *Nibelungenlied* left no hope for a future, no “continuity.” “The Problem of Continuity,” 249. George T. Gillespie also sees the *Nibelungenklage* as a commentary on the *Nibelungenlied*. “Die Klage as a Commentary on Das Nibelungenlied,” in *Probleme Mittelhochdeutscher Erzählformen: Marburger Colloquium 1969*, ed. Peter F. Ganz and Werner Schröder (Berlin: Eric Schmidt, 1972), 153-177.

⁶ Günter Zimmermann postulates “Die Klage versucht, die Schuldfrage der Nibelungenkatastrophe grundsätzlich nach einer eindimensionalen Handlungskausalität aufzurollen.” “Der Krieg, die Schuld und die Klage,” in *Helden und Heldensage: Otto Gschwanter zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Hermann Reichert und Günter Zimmermann, *Philologica Germanica* 11 (Wien: Fassbänder, 1990), 530. I follow more contemporary readings of the *Nibelungenklage*. For instance, in her dissertation Britta Simon asserts the *Nibelungenklage* B redactor attempts to exonerate various figures’ corpses and reestablish them according to heroic and courtly values that they initially represented at the beginning of the *Nibelungenlied*. Höfisch-Heroisch-Fragmentiert: Körpergebundene Kommunikation im Nibelungenlied.” PhD diss., University of Washington, 1998, 180-196.

show, the B and C redactions of the *Nibelungenklage* redeem Kriemhild by depicting her as a woman overwhelmed by grief, which is born out of her prodigious and admirable “triuwe.”⁷ Like its *Nibelungenlied* counterpart, however, redaction C of the *Nibelungenklage* sheds a more empathetic and positive light on Kriemhild. Moreover, although it is more pronounced in manuscript C, both the B and C redactors shift some of the blame for Kriemhild’s actions to Hagen.

In this chapter I show that the *Nibelungenklage* poet sought to reestablish the gender boundaries lost at the end of the *Nibelungenlied* and to reconfigure the female lament as self-destructive rather than destructive for society. Even though men in the *Nibelungenklage* engage in physical aspects of the lament, they, like the men in *Erec* and the *Nibelungenlied*, also act. They praise and honor the dead, encourage others to grieve moderately, assist in rebuilding the kingdom, and bury the dead. Such actions are thus productive for society. Women, in contrast, are inactive, self-destructive, helpless, and unproductive when they lament. Like Cadoc’s Wife and the eighty mourning widows in *Erec*, the female figures Gotelind and Ute are not agents when they grieve the loss of loved ones. Next I examine King Etzel’s lament to further illustrate the gendered differences between the male and female lament. Etzel, for the *Nibelungenklage* poet, is an example of how men should not behave. He transgresses gender boundaries as he engages in feminine aspects of the lament. Etzel fails to assist in the rebuilding of his kingdom, he loses her honor and renders himself unproductive for society. Then I argue that the *Nibelungenklage* provides the audience with hope by recasting the female lament as potentially productive and admirable. Dietlinde and Brünhild’s more excessive forms of the lament lead them to set aside their grief and become

⁷ Scholars, such as McConnell, claim the author’s main point was to rehabilitate Kriemhild. “The Problem of Continuity,” 249.

productive. Next, I show that the *Nibelungenklage* author further reestablishes the gender boundaries by recontextualizing Kriemhild's grief as beyond her own control and based on "triuwe." While the redactors of B and C both place a more positive spin on Kriemhild's lament, the C redactor makes a more concerted effort to mitigate her actions in the *Nibelungenlied* on account of loyalty. Then I turn to the question of blame and examine the ways in which the different redactors cast blame for the events in the *Nibelungenlied*. In the final section of this chapter I briefly argue that manuscript B makes a more clear distinction between productive and unproductive grief. As we will see grief can be self-destructive, but it cannot be destructive for society. For the *Nibelungenklage* poet it is male figure's role to act productively and the female figure's role to grieve either unproductively or productively with a man's assistance.

The *Nibelungenklage* and its Manuscripts

Written initially around 1220,⁸ the *Nibelungenklage* has come down to us in nine complete manuscripts and five fragments from as late as the 16th century.⁹ The oldest and most important thirteenth-century redactions are the St. Galler Manuscript (B) and the

⁸ According to Michael Curschmann, the *Nibelungenklage* poet was familiar with the narrative *Herzog Ernst* and Hartmanns' works. "Nibelungenlied und Nibelungenklage," 172, 178. Albert Leitzmann and Werner Schröder argue that there are parallels in the language between the *Nibelungenklage* and *Parzival*. The *Nibelungenklage*, however, postdates *Parzival*. Albert Leitzmann, "Nibelungenklage und höfische Dichtung," *ZfdA* 60 (1924): 49-56; Werner Schröder, *Nibelungen-Studien* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1968), 185-225.

⁹ Joachim Bumke, ed. *Die >Nibelungenklage<: Synoptische Ausgabe aller vier Fassungen* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), 1.

Karlsruhe Manuscript (C).¹⁰ There is also a manuscript A, but, unlike manuscript A of *Nibelungenlied*, it is not considered a lead manuscript.¹¹

As with the *Nibelungenlied*, scholars have spilled much ink on the question of which redaction is the original.¹² Following the work of Joachim Bumke and others, however, I assume that multiple versions coexisted. Unlike its courtly and heroic contemporaries, the *Nibelungenklage* has no previous oral history, no other parallel texts, and does not belong to any particular genre.¹³

Most scholars have given little attention to the poem as a story in its own right, and instead have focused on the *Nibelungenklage*'s classification, literary value, and its

¹⁰ The *Nibelungenklage* redactions are organized similarly to the *Nibelungenlied* manuscripts. Manuscript C, originally named Donaueschingen, was written sometime between 1220 and 1230. Bumke, *Die >Nibelungenklage<*, 2. The *Nebenfassungen*, composed later, are Manuscripts D and J. For information regarding the four manuscripts B, C, D and J of the *Nibelungenklage* see Joachim Bumke, *Die vier Fassungen* and *Die >Nibelungenklage<*. There are 4360 verses in Ms. B and 4428 Ms. C. 521 verses in Ms. B are not found in Ms. C, whereas 594 in Ms. C are not in Ms. B. Ms. C, unlike Ms. B, is broken down into 5 adventures. Bumke, *Die >Nibelungenklage<*, 8-9. For a brief discussion of the differences in manuscripts B and C see Elisabeth Lienert, "Intertextualität in der Heldendichtung zu Nibelungenlied und Klage," in *Wolfram-Studien XV Neue Wege der Mittelalter Philologie Landhuter Kolloquium 1996*, ed. Joachim Heinzel, L. Peter Johnson and Gisela Vollmann-Profe (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1998), 276-298.

¹¹ Bumke, *Die vier Fassungen*, 257-258.

¹² Michael Curschmann argues that Ms. C represents a reworking of manuscripts A and B. "Nibelungenlied und Nibelungenklage," 164. Joachim Bumke, on the other hand, suggests that manuscript B could be a reworking of the C manuscript or perhaps the other way around. *Die vier Fassungen*, 389.

¹³ There is an on-going debate among scholars about the classification of the *Nibelungenklage*. Bumke, *Die vier Fassungen*, 89. Hans Szklénar and Max Wehrli contend that the *Nibelungenklage* is a "Mischgattung." Szklénar, "Die literarische Gattung der Nibelungenklage und das Ende alter maere," in *Poetica* 9 (1977): 49; Wehrli, "Die Klage und der Untergang der Nibelungen," in *Zeiten und Formen in Sprache und Dichtung: Festschrift für Fritz Tschirch zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Karl-heinz Schirmer and Bernhard Sowinski (Köln: Böhlau, 1972), 96-112. According to Jan-Dirk Müller, "Die Klage ist daher deutlicher als das *Nibelungenlied* selbst als Werk der Schriftkultur inszeniert. Sie gibt sich eindeutig als Buchepos zu erkennen." "Die Klage—Die Irritation," 166.

relationship to the *Nibelungenlied*.¹⁴ For instance, Winder McConnell claims that despite the *Nibelungenklage* being “aesthetically inferior to the *Nibelungenlied*” it warrants attention because of its ‘spiritual counterpole’ to the *Nibelungenlied*.¹⁵ Similarly, G.T. Gillespie argues that the *Nibelungenklage* poet constructed his Christian tale to make up for the *Nibelungenlied*’s lack of Christian elements such as “mâze.”¹⁶ Max Wehrli contends that the *Nibelungenklage* author attempts to understand the events in the *Nibelungenlied* as right and reasonable.¹⁷ Albrecht Classen similarly claims that the *Nibelungenklage* “is not a glorification of death, but instead serves as a literary vehicle to understand the essential elements of bereavement and also to warn against political and military actions that lead to war, murder and slaughter.”¹⁸ Fritz P. Knapp argues that the *Nibelungenklage* author’s primary interest is to illustrate motifs of the lament that stem from the Latin tradition.¹⁹ The

¹⁴ Most scholars agree that the *Nibelungenklage* is indeed a response to *Nibelungenlied*, but many disagree on its literary importance and significance. Michael Curschmann, for example, argues the *Nibelungenklage* is a reflective poetic work that, written from the perspective of a learned cleric, warrants literary merit. “Nibelungenlied und Nibelungenklage,” 382. Others scholars, such as Wehrli and Leitzmann, contend that the *Nibelungenklage* is a mediocre work. Leitzmann, “Nibelungenklage und höfische Dichtung,” 49; Wehrli, “Die Klage und der Untergang,” 104.

¹⁵ McConnell, “The Problem of Continuity,” 253.

¹⁶ “Die Klage as a Commentary,” 155.

¹⁷ “Die Klage und der Untergang,” 101.

¹⁸ Albrecht Classen, “Death Rituals and Manhood in the Middle High German Poems *The Lament*, Joahannes von Tepl’s *The Plowman*, and Heinrich Wittenwiler’s *Ring*,” in: *Grief and Gender: 700-1700*, ed. Jennifer Vaught and Lynne Dickson (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2003), 41.

¹⁹ “Tragodeia und Planctus: Der Eintritt des Nibelungenliedes in die Welt der literati,” in *Nibelungenlied und Klage: Sage und Geschichte, Struktur und Gattung: Passauer Nibelungengespräche 1985*, ed. Fritz Peter Knapp (Heidelberg: Winter, 1987), 294.

poet does this in order to differentiate the depictions of grief in the *Nibelungenklage* from those seen in the *Nibelungenlied*.

While the *Nibelungenklage* is closely tied to the *Nibelungenlied*, it is an independent text that is different not only in metric form, but also in its detail and character descriptions. My work on the *Nibelungenklage* examines the poem from a new perspective. I will show that the *Nibelungenklage*, similar to *Erec* and the *Nibelungenlied*, participates in a discourse on gender and grief. The author's interest is in the effect of grief on *Nibelungenklage* society.

Joachim Bumke and Werner Schröder have compared the various manuscripts of the *Nibelungenklage* concluding that the redactions cast blame on different figures for the destruction in the *Nibelungenlied* and they rehabilitate Kriemhild differently.²⁰ I take these investigations of *Nibelungenklage* manuscripts further to argue that the variations in the descriptions of grief suggest diverse ideas about gender.

Productive and Unproductive Modes of Grief

The *Nibelungenklage* poet presents us with two dominant modes of grief. On the one hand, productive grief motivates action and leads to the rebuilding of society. On the other, unproductive grief is self-destructive and does not help society. I see this focus on the instrumentalization of grief for the productive rebuilding of society as a direct response to the destructive nature of Kriemhild's grief. The poet redefines and reestablishes the lament as a site within which agency is possible, but only a specific kind of agency. We will see that

²⁰ Bumke comments on the different redactions, "Die Unterschiede zwischen den verschiedenen Fassungen sind nicht in erster Linie Unterschiede in der Auffassung des Stoffes oder der künstlerischen Konzeptionen, sondern es sind in wesentlichen Varianten eines grundsätzlich gleichgerichteten Erzählinteresses; es sind Zeugnisse eines Zustands volkssprachlicher Schriftlichkeit, als die Texte noch prinzipiell variable waren." *Die Vier Fassungen*, 389. Schröder makes a similar observation. *Nibelungenlied-Studien*, 185-225.

while productive grief is gendered male and unproductive grief is gendered female, two characters in particular are able to overstep gender boundaries.

Medieval discussions of mourning do not distinguish explicitly between productive and unproductive grief. In drawing this distinction, I look to the work of Sigmund Freud to provide concepts that help us to explain the different models of grief in the *Nibelungenklage*. According to Freud, grief may result from the loss of a loved one, a country, or even an ideal and it may produce either melancholy or mourning. This distinction between melancholy and mourning is key to understanding the lament in the *Nibelungenklage*. The mental and somatic characteristics of melancholy include low self-regard, disinterest in the outside world, inhibition of all activity, emptiness, self-torture, and disdain for life.²¹ Mourning consists of similar features, but is not typically considered a pathological disposition, does not induce low self-regard, and is eventually overcome.²² The concept ‘Trauerarbeit’, pertinent to mourning, implies that mourning is a process, which requires the individual to work through his or her grief. Freud’s theory suggests that mourning is a more productive grieving process than melancholy. Looking at a medieval text through the lens of psychoanalysis offers us insight into the nature of grief in the *Nibelungenklage* Manuscripts B and C.²³ In this chapter, I draw on Freud’s concepts, but often use the terms ‘productive’ in place of mourning and ‘unproductive’ in lieu of melancholy because these terms (productive and unproductive)

²¹ Sigmund Freud, “Trauer und Melancholie,” in: *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 10., ed. Anna Freud (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1946), 428-446.

²² *Ibid.*, 429.

²³ For a discussion of melancholy and grief in late medieval literature see Werner Röcke, “Die Faszination der Traurigkeit: Inszenierung und Regelmentierung von Trauer und Melancholie in der Literatur des Spämittelalters,” in *Emotionalität: Zur Geschichte der Gefühle*, ed. Claudia Benthien, Anna Fleig and Ingrid Kasten (Köln: Böhlau, 2000), 100-118.

more precisely describe the differences between the representations of grief in the *Nibelungenklage*.

In the *Nibelungenklage*, collective and individual displays of grief are commonplace. Productive forms of grief involve ‘Trauerarbeit’ that includes actions such reestablishing social order and hierarchy, giving eulogies about the dead, and by engaging in some form of physical labor (i.e. collecting and burying the dead bodies). In the *Nibelungenklage*, as in Freud’s description of mourning, productive grief permits the person grieving to eventually move beyond his or her sorrow after a period of time. In contrast, a person who grieves unproductively submits completely to his or her despair and is unable to remain politically and socially active.

The Productive Male Lament

In response to the immoderate and transgressive nature of Kriemhild’s grief in *Nibelungenlied*, the *Nibelungenklage* poet sought to reestablish the familiar gender boundaries of the lament. Male figures, such Hildebrand and Dietrich, deal with the aftermath of the great slaughter differently than the women. The exception to the rule, as we will see below, is King Etzel. Men weep, and sometimes engage in more physical aspects of the lament such as bleeding from the mouth, but they also praise and honor the dead through words, carry various bodies to funeral biers, comfort the living, encourage others to grieve in moderation, and lay the groundwork for a new beginning. Most of the female characters, by contrast, are less productive when they grieve. Indeed the author makes a distinction between male and female displays of grief in one of the many scenes of collective grief:

wîp, meide und man,
 die klageten Rüdegêre
 sô herzenlîchen sêre,
 das türne und palas,
 und swaz gemûwers dâ was,
 antwurte von dem schalle.
 der ougen gruntwalle
 von herzen dô den vluz trouc.
 man sach dâ sinnelôs genuoc
 vil der schoenen wîbe.
 diu wât von ir lîbe
 was in gezerret sêre.
 vil manic maget hêre
 von der swarten brach daz hâr.
 ir het diu ungenâde gar
 oberhant gewonnen.
 mit bluot berunnen
 man manic antlütze vant.
 dâ wart von maniger vrouwen hant
 gein herzen geswungen. (C: 2252-71; [B: 2146-65])²⁴

[Ladies, maidens and men lamented Rüdiger so severely from the heart that the towers and palace and whatever walls there were resounded from the noise. Tears flooded through the barrier of the eyes, right from the heart. One saw there many lovely women beside themselves. Their garments hung completely in tatters from their bodies. Many noble young maidens had torn her hair. Unhappiness had gained the upper hand completely. One found many faces covered with blood. There many ladies' hands beat against their hearts.]²⁵

The narrator presents the audience with an explicit dichotomy. In this scene men and women display their grief through tears, but it is women who tear their hair, rip their clothes, and beat themselves. Similar to the characters of Enite and Cadoc's wife in Hartmann's *Erec*, the women in the *Nibelungenklage* engage in physically detrimental gestures, but they do not follow Kriemhild in becoming a threat to society. Men, as we will see below, do engage in

²⁴ All quotations of the *Nibelungenklage* Manuscripts B and C are from Bumke, *Die >Nibelungenklage<*. The C redaction appears first in the parentheses followed by the corresponding strophes in the B Manuscript.

²⁵ All English translations of the *Nibelungenklage* manuscripts are my own.

more physical lamentations than seen in *Erec* and in the *Nibelungenlied*, but they do not rip out their hair, tear their clothes, or die of grief.

In the *Nibelungenklage*, the poet describes men, even those who possess authority, lamenting the dead, but most descriptions of their grief lack detail. The narrator describes Dietrich and Etzel's reaction to Iring's corpse:

daz wart geklaget dô genouc
mit Ezele dem rîchen
vil harte klagelîchen²⁶
von dem herren von Berne.
si sâhen vil ungerne
die sînen tiefen wunden. (C: 1120-25; [B: 1092-1097])²⁷

[He was also mourned by the Lord of Bern, who along with Etzel lamented severely. They did not like seeing his deep wounds.]

It is clear that both Dietrich and King Etzel greet Iring's death with great sadness, but how they mourn, whether it be through tears, screams, and/or more visceral modes, is uncertain. In passages in which the narrator offers more detail, it is clear that men convey their grief differently than women.

Real men in the *Nibelungenklage* seek to reestablish order in the wake of devastation by dealing with their grief often through action that is productive for society. Men do not dwell on their sadness, but rather talk about it, attempt to pick up the pieces by asking for assistance, and try to move on. Dietrich, for example, takes an active role in honoring the dead. He gives a eulogy when Etzel's people are unable to stop their lamenting for Kriemhild (C: 777-90; [B: 759-70]). In an attempt to bring closure to those who survived, Dietrich

²⁶ In redaction B, the adjective "harte" is missing.

²⁷ Manuscript B contains two additional lines that state that Hildebrand also grieved Iring's death: "der alte Hildebrant / alsô, daz man ez wol ervant" (B: 1099-1100). (The old Hildebrand also [grieved] which was quite appropriate.)

praises and honors Kriemhild for her beauty and her loyalty, in spite of her actions through which he lost his best kin (C: 792-811; [B: 772-91]). Dietrich therefore takes command of the situation and seeks to impose order on the devastated society.

The productive nature of Dietrich's grief comes into high relief when viewed against Etzel's response. While Dietrich's eulogy places closure on the past, Etzel dwells on it, publicly speaking of his disappointment with his brother Blödelin, who attacked his Burgundian guests (C: 905-49; [B: 887-931]). Furthermore, Dietrich picks up Kriemhild's dead body and commands other men to act by placing her on the bier (C: 812-14; [B: 792-94]). Indeed Dietrich consistently gives direction to those who need it, particularly grieving men. Despite his own grief, therefore, Dietrich conducts 'Trauerarbeit' and thus remains a productive member of Etzel's kingdom.

Similarly, Hildebrand acts in the face of his grief. He and Dietrich bury the various kings according to their rank and wealth (C: 2413-19; [B: 2299-304]). When Etzel does not take action, Dietrich and Hildebrand provide him with counsel. They advise him to have the blood washed out of the dead warriors clothes, their weapons cleaned (C: 2632-44; [B: 2531-39]), and then sent to orphaned children (C: 2657-62; [B: 2551-56]).

Even men who initially grieve immoderately and in an unproductive manner manage to overcome their grief and remain socially productive for their kingdom. Swemmel, who bears the burden of informing people about the slaughter (C: 2837-40; [B: 2721-24]), physically conveys the intensity of his grief in front of Rüdiger's wife, Gotelind: "dô brach ûz sîme munde / daz schrîen mit dem bluote" (C: 3204-05; [B: 3084-85]). ("A shriek broke out from his mouth along with blood.") Swemmel's grief is so overwhelming that he is unable to adhere to Dietrich's instructions to remain silent about Rüdiger's death and instead

tells Gotelind everything.²⁸ However, Swemmel is able to put his grief aside and, along with the other envoys, carry the news of the deaths to other characters, such as Brünhild.

Swemmel, like other male characters, therefore, has a physical and somatic reaction to his grief, but he is able to temper it quickly in order to fulfill his obligations.

In response to Kriemhild's excess in the *Nibelungenlied*, the *Nibelungenklage* poet emphasizes grief in moderation. Male characters in particular are often told to temper their grief. For example, Dietrich laments (in a monologue) Hildebrand's nephew Wolfhart's death, his loss of men, and his exile, which brought him and his men to Etzel's court (C: 1776-1840; [B: 1694-1750]). Having heard enough, Hildebrand, Dietrich's master-at-arms, demands that he stop:

“ôwê, vile edel wîgant,
wan lâit ir iuwer klagen stân?”
solde ich dâ mit iht vervân,
sô klaget ich immer mêre
disen degen hêre,
wander was mîner swester sun.
herre, irn sult es niht tuon,
wan triben wir immer dise nôt,²⁹
sô sint si doch leider tôt.
von jâmer wendet gar den muot,
wan klage diu ist niemen guot.“ (C: 1842-52; [B: 1752-60])

[“Alas, very noble warrior, when will you let your lament be? If it could change anything, I would always continue to lament this warrior here, for he was the son of my sister. Lord, you should not do this, for even if we continue to bear this grief, they will unfortunately remain dead. Turn your thoughts from sorrow for lamenting does no one any good.”)

Lamenting is certainly something that is admirable and indeed an excellent way to honor someone's death, but as Hildebrand points out, in this particular situation, Dietrich's

²⁸ Dietrich tells the messenger not to inform anyone on the road or Gotelind and Dietlinde about Rüdiger's death (C: 2788-89; [B: 2676-77]).

²⁹ This line and the next are missing from manuscript B.

immoderate lamentations are not productive in laying the groundwork for the new kingdom. Eventually Dietrich heeds Hildebrand's words and turns his effort to the process of rebuilding.

Similar to Dietrich, the Bishop of Passau tempers his own grief and then urges others to bring their lamentations to an end:

Vor leide erweinte der bischof.
über die stat und in den hof
huop sich grôziu ungehabe.
die pfaffen muozen lâzen abe
durch klagen vil ir tagezît,
wan dâ weinten widerstrît
die leien mit den pfaffen.
der bischof begunde schaffen,
daz si ir klagen liezen sîn. (C: 3453-61; [B: 3357-66])

[The bishop began to weep on account of sorrow. Throughout the country and court there was great dismay. The priests had missed much of their time at prayer on account of lamenting: for the priests competed with laymen in crying. The Bishop began to urge them to stop lamenting.]

This example, just as the previous one, illustrates the concern prevalent in the *Nibelungenklage* that grief can go too far. Here the Bishop is able to restrain himself, control his people and lead them to some form of normalcy. Though displays of grief are admirable and necessary there is a point in which a person and a court must overcome grief and move on.

Controlling one's grief is indeed a very important aspect throughout much of the *Nibelungenklage*. When word of Gunther and his brother's death reaches Worms, warriors and knights come to court in order to participate in communal grieving. The narrator explicitly commends a man's ability to temper his grief, associating moderation with wisdom:

Dô kom ouch dar diu landschaft,
der guoten helde ein michel kraft,
der drîer edele kunige man.
der wîse ez senftem began;
der tumbe es machte mêre.
jâ was des landes êre
bî stuole nider gesezzen.
dâ von was unvergezzen
daz si dâ klagen solden.
die besten niene wolden
vergezzen sô ir triuwe.

(C: 3807-17; [B: 3723-33])

[Thus inhabitants of the land came there, a large number of courageous warriors, the vassals of the three noble kings. The wise man began to ease off [his grief]; the foolish man did it more. The honor of the land sat at the foot of the throne and they did not forget that they ought to lament. The best were determined not to forget their loyalty.]

To grieve is to demonstrate one's loyalty and honor to those who died. However, wise men temper their grief while foolish men do not.

That Kriemhild's grief in *Nibelungenlied* was a source of concern for the *Nibelungenklage* author is becomes evident when the narrator highlights the part that male characters play in easing female figures' grief. Once the court in Worms receives word of the numerous deaths, the narrator states the following about the men:

sine senftem vil ir riuwe
Brünhilde der rîchen
und schieden wîslîchen
vil manic wîp von leide

(C: 3818-21; [B: 3734-37]).

[They eased greatly the pain and suffering of noble Brünhild, and, in their wisdom separated many a woman from her sorrow.]

Here the narrator again acknowledges a gender-specific aspect of the lament. Women are helpless when they grieve and thus need a man's assistance to temper their grief. This is certainly in response to the *Nibelungenlied*, in which various men tried but failed to ease

Kriemhild's grief. The above example also further illustrates the productive nature of the male lament. The female lament, as I will show below is, for the most part, unproductive.

The Unproductive Female Lament

The *Nibelungenklage* reestablishes specific aspects of the lament as a female-gendered response to grief that may be self-destructive and unproductive, but is not destructive for society. In contrast to Kriemhild's active response to grief, the female figures in *Nibelungenklage* do not seek revenge, but, similar to Enite in *Erec*, turn their destructive actions on themselves. As we have seen, many male characters in *Nibelungenklage* weep, sometimes even excessively, but eventually they temper their grief and then act productively. Most female characters render themselves helpless and inactive. In the end, the traditional female lament in *Nibelungenklage* is portrayed as unproductive, albeit inherently feminine.

Though, as I will show in this section, the *Nibelungenklage* poet expects women's sorrow to be excessive and self-destructive, he also stresses that women should, similar to the men, temper their grief. For example, Bishop Pilgrim asks Swemmel, the messenger, to tell his sister Ute, who has lost her four children, "daz si ir klagen laze sîn" (C: 3524; [B: 3428]). (That she should stop lamenting.) The bishop furthermore proposes similar moderation for Brünhild: "daz si klage ze mâzen" (C: 3539; [B: 4343]). (That she lament in moderation). Indeed, given the context of what happened in the *Nibelungenlied*, the bishop's advice suggests that he anticipates a horrible outcome if Brünhild and Ute do not control their grief: They could either take it out on society indirectly or on themselves, which would then create even greater sorrow in their communities.

In contrast to the male characters, such as Dietrich and Hildebrand, the female characters' expressions of grief are often severely self-destructive. At the beginning of *Aventuure 2*, the narrator depicts numerous women, who lament when they see the dead bodies in the great hall:

vil maniger juncvrowen hant
mit winden wart zebrochen.
dâ wart selten iht gesprochen,
niwan ach und wê. (C: 666-69; [B: 648-51])

[Many young ladies had broken their hands by wringing them. Seldom was anything said except alas and alas.]

Here the women deliberately take their grief out on themselves. Their hand wringing and moaning suggests that they feel helpless in the face of such death and devastation. In contrast to the depiction of male grief, the narrator does not tell us that these maidens soon start to participate in cleaning up the mess of corpses or reestablishing some sort of order. Instead these and other, often unnamed, female characters provide a backdrop of unrelenting lamentation to the men's actions.

Furthermore, the *Nibelungenklage* author explicitly establishes appropriate grieving behavior for women:

Vil manic magt von houbte brach
mit grôzem jâmer daz hâr.
vil maniges triutinne dar
vil lûte schrîende gie,
diu von den wunden enpfie
daz bluot an ir gêren.
die armen mit den hêren
wâren alle sô gelegen,
daz der bluotige regen
si hete gemachet alle naz.
swelch wîp daz versaz,
daz si den ungesunden
beweinte nicht ir wunden,
daz was unwîplîcher muot. (C: 726-39; [B: 708-21])

[Many young maidens tore hair from their heads with tremendous sorrow. Many beloved wives went about screaming loudly with their clothes stained by the blood of the wounds. Both the poor men and the lords were laid out in such a fashion that the bloody rain had made them all wet. Any woman who did not cry about the wounds of the dead there demonstrated unwomanly behavior.]

With his clear delineation of male and female forms of grief, and his assertions regarding feminine behavior, the narrator reestablishes gender boundaries that were overstepped by Kriemhild at the end of the *Nibelungenlied*. Here the *Nibelungenklage* redactor affirms that excessively self-destructive behavior is central to the female lament. Not only are “beloved wives” but all women expected to lament the dead. In presenting us with a universal female lament, the *Nibelungenklage* reflects similar notions to Hartmann’s eighty unnamed lamenting widows.

Specific female characters provide exemplary models of lamentation, even while their excessive grieving is marked as unproductive. Upon hearing of Rüdiger’s death, Gotelind and her daughter Dietlinde engage in conventional physical manifestations of lamentation: they scream and bleed from the mouth (C: 3243-46; [B: 3123-26]) and become unconscious (C: 3255-59; [B: 3135-39]). Like the typical lamenting lady, their behavior suggests that as survivors, they are at a loss when faced with the death of their loved one. Gotelind’s loss is so physically and mentally detrimental that she is unable to use words to convey her affliction (C: 3264-69; [B: 3144-49]) and eventually unable to recognize people (C: 3394-97; [B: 4268-71]). In accordance with Freud’s notion of melancholy, Gotelind loses interest in the outside world, becomes passive and is no longer compelled to live.³⁰ Furthermore, she,

³⁰ Freud, “Trauer und Melancholie,” 428-446.

like a melancholic, engages in self-torment and emulates her husband in the most extreme way.³¹ Gotelind is so overwhelmed that she dies, which is most definitely unproductive:

sine mohte niht ertougen die klage
umbe des marcgrâvin lîp.
des muose daz vil werde wîp
sterben vor dem leide (C: 4300-03; [B: 4234-37]).

[She was unable to suppress her lament for the life of the margrave [Rüdiger]. From that the honorable woman died from grief.]

Despite Gotelind's inability to temper her grief, the narrator comments that she is honorable. Her self-destructive actions, which lead to death and which, in a man would be dishonorable, are, commendable for a woman, although they are unproductive.

That the *Nibelungenklage* poet approves of the self-destructive forms of the female lament is further evident in the female figure Ute. Similar to Gotelind, Ute dies of grief shortly after discovering all four of her children have died:

Sît klaget ouch unz ûf den tôt
Uote diu tugentrîche
nâch den helden jamerlîche,
den ir vil lieben kinden.
niemen kunde ervinden,
daz si troesten kunde ûz klage.
dar nâch an dem vünften tage³²
diu vrowe lac vor leide tôt. (C: 4006-13; [B: 3952-59])

[The noble Ute also lamented unto death in misery for the heroes, her most beloved children. No one could find something that could console her in her lament. Thereafter on the fifth day the lady lay dead from her sorrow.]

Here the narrator identifies Ute as noble. Gotelind and Ute's death may suggest that feminine forms of grief are inherently politically and socially unproductive because their death causes

³¹ According to Freud, "Die unzweifelhaft genußreiche Selbstquälerei der Melancholie bedeutet ganz wie das entsprechende Phänomen der Zwangsneurose die Befriedigung von sadistischen und Haßtendenzen, die einem Objekt gelten und auf diesem Wege eine Wendung gegen die eigene Person erfahren haben." "Trauer und Melancholie," 438.

³² Manuscript B states that Gotelind dies after 7 days (B: 3958).

even more grief for those in the kingdom. However, the narrator approves of this form of the female lament, especially when compared to Kriemhild's grief in the *Nibelungenlied*.

The *Nibelungenklage* redactors reestablish appropriate forms of grief for women. As we have seen, in the *Nibelungenklage* grief is something to endure. It does not provide a space for female agency. In some instances death is the only answer to a woman's sorrow. King Etzel provides us with an important counter example to the gendering of the lament in the *Nibelungenklage*.

King Etzel and his Unproductive Grief

King Etzel stands in contrast to other men in the poem because he grieves excessively and fails to assist in the rebuilding of his own kingdom. He does not attempt to temper others' grief, but instead often seems to increase it. His lack of productivity (i.e. melancholy) leads others to scrutinize him and accuse him of foolishness and, more critically, effeminacy. Indeed Etzel loses his honor, which is closely connected to his masculinity. Unable to maintain his royal status throughout the *Nibelungenklage*, Etzel is eventually portrayed as utterly helpless and inactive. Etzel's excessive expression of grief resonates with Freud's concept of melancholy: He, similar to Gotelind and Ute, eventually loses interest in the outside world, is no longer compelled to live, and becomes passive.

That Etzel's grief is different from that of other men in *Nibelungenklage* is apparent at very beginning of the poem. In *Aventure 2* King Etzel is forced to reckon with the dead men and women, whose wounds continue to bleed in the charred Great Hall:

er begunde houbet und hant
winden alsô sêre,
daz ez nie künige mêre

weder ê noch sît was geschehen.
man muose Ezeln des jehen
daz alsô sêre gekleit
nie wurde mit der wârheit.
von decheiner slahte man
wie lûte er wuofen began!
als ob man hôrt ein wistenthorn,
dem edelen vürsten wolgeborn
diu stimme ûz sînem munde
erdôz in der stunde,
dâ er sô sêre klagete,
daz dâ von erwagete
beide turne und palas.

(C: 634-49; [B: 614-31])

[He began to wring his hands and [shake] his head so fiercely that it has never happened more to any king before. One would truly have to say that no one has lamented as much as Etzel. How loudly he began to wail! It was as though one were listening to the bellowing of a bison. How the voice of this well-bred nobleman thundered from his mouth! He lamented so loudly that the towers and the palace itself began to shake.]

Etzel's lamentation resembles Kaiser Karl's lamentation of his dead nephew Roland in

Rolandslied: Etzel, like Karl, takes action against his own body and laments more than any

other.³³ Indeed Etzel's displays of grief mirror those seen in heroic epics other than the

Nibelungenlied. The narrator depicts Etzel's grief as being loud, physical and very powerful,

similar to a battlefield. By comparing Etzel's bellow to a bison—a large, strong, mighty

animal—the narrator implies Etzel's sorrow is masculine in nature. Etzel's noble status,

furthermore, accounts for his strong reaction, which according to Albrecht Classen “is

reflected in his ritual performance of bereavement, which receives full attention by the

bystanders and the remaining members of the court.”³⁴ By noting explicitly that Etzel

laments more than anyone else, the narrator underlines that Etzel's grief is, however,

³³ In *Rolandslied*, Karl cries out loudly, pulls at his hair and beard (v. 7509-45). *Das Rolandslied des Pfaffen Konrad*, ed. Carl Wesle (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1985).

³⁴ “Death Rituals,” 38.

unusual, when compared to others in the *Nibelungenklage*. Despite Etzel's initial display of what can be called "masculine" or perhaps "royal" grief, his lament lasts too long and is not followed by action, so that it becomes dishonorable and effeminizing.

In contrast to Dietrich and Hildebrand, Etzel is unable to temper his grief, and does not even recognize that controlling his grief is the only honorable course of action for a man. Facing the numerous dead bodies in the Great Hall, King Etzel surrenders to despair:

Swie lützel vreuden ê dâ was,
ir was nû verre deste min.
er het verwandelt dô den sin,
daz er bî der stunde
wizzen niht enkunde,
ob ez im laster waere. (C: 650-55; [B: 632-37])

[Whatever little joy was there before, there was far less even now. He had changed his frame of mind to such an extent that he could not know at that time whether it was disgraceful for him.]

While Etzel's initial grief could be interpreted as kingly, this prolonged grief cannot. Gerd Althoff has shown that medieval kings often used performative crying as part of a public code of communication to negotiate power relationships, and affirm their status as rulers.³⁵ Etzel's grief, however, exceeds Althoff's model because he does not have control over his emotional display nor is his crying part of a public performance of power. As the passage above implies, Etzel becomes incapable of acting rationally.

The *Nibelungenklage* poet depicts Etzel in a manner that mirrors female figures in order to show us how men should not behave when grieving. Indeed the narrator goes to great lengths to establish Etzel's grief as unusual for the *Nibelungenklage* society. When Etzel sees Kriemhild's dead body, he: "fell upon her breast. He kissed her white hands and

³⁵Gerd Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter: Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde* (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 1997).

grieved terribly” (“viel er an die bruste. / ir wîze hende er kuste. / vil senelîche er klagete“ (C: 831-33; [B: 813-16]).³⁶ Similar to both Enite and Kriemhild’s reaction, Etzel cradles his dead spouse’s bloody corpse and laments. While Dietrich and Hildebrand either give an impromptu eulogy or clean up the mess when they see a dead body, Etzel renders himself, for the most part, helpless and useless. Etzel even expresses the feminine desire to die, despite his status as king. His words remind us of Enite’s speech in *Erec*. He states:

“daz müeze got geklaget sîn!
und muoz in ouch erbarmen,
daz er mich vil armen
niht lâze leben mêre
in disem grôzen sêre.
daz mich neme ouch der tôt.
des waere mir,” sprach der künec, “nôt.” (C: 1352-58; [B: 1288-94])

[“That must be lamented to God. And he [God] must also have mercy that he not let me, wretched man, live longer in this great sorrow. I need death to also take me,” said the king.]

Similar to Enite, who begs for death, Etzel too calls for God to take his life. Furthermore, Etzel grieves so severely that Dietrich explicitly accuses him of acting like a *bloedez wîp* (silly woman):

“ach, wê dirre swære,
gevreischet manz in diu lant,
daz ir mit wintender hant
stêt alsam ein bloedez wîp,
diu ir zuht und ir lîp
nâch vriunden sêre hât gesent!
des sîn wir von iu ungewent,
daz ir sus unmanlîche tuot.
nû solt ir, edel künec guot,
troesten vriuntlîche
mich armen Dietrîche.“ (C: 1020-30; [B: 1018-28])

³⁶ Britta Simon contends that in this scene the narrator points out Kriemhild’s breasts and white hands in order to reconstruct her as a courtly wife. The author also reestablishes her as a mother when her body is placed alongside Ortlieb’s on the funeral pyre. “Höfisch-Heroisch-Fragmentiert,” 185-186.

[“Alas, alas about this trouble, if a person in this country notices that you are standing here wringing your hands like some silly woman who shows through her behavior and appearance severe longing for her relatives. We are not at all accustomed to seeing you behave in such an unmanly fashion. Now good and noble king, you ought to provide some friendly consolation to me, poor Dietrich.”]

Grief renders Etzel impotent.³⁷

Etzel laments excessively and ultimately loses his ability to act productively as a rational honorable king. Following a lengthy verbal lamentation, Etzel collapses and as a result is criticized:

nâch dem worte er nider seic,³⁸
als ob er waere entslâfen.
dar umbe begund in strâfen
von Berne her Dietrîch.
er sprach: “ir tuot dem ungelîch,
daz ir ie wâret ein wîse man.” (C: 868-73; [B: 850-55])

[After his words he sank to the ground as if he had gone to sleep. For that Lord Dietrich von Bern began to reprimand him. He spoke: “You are not behaving like a wise man.”]

In his public disapproval, Dietrich von Bern conveys that he and others hold King Etzel to certain courtly standards and expect him to remain socially active so that he may restore order to their kingdom.³⁹ Instead of picking up the pieces and moving on as suggested by

³⁷ Ruth Mazo Karras states the following about Arthur, which stands in contrast to Etzel, “In the Alliterative Morte Arthure, when Arthur embraces and kisses the dead Gawain, spattering himself with blood and fainting away, his companions suggest that his grief is womanly: “to weep as a woman is not appropriate”—and that he must “be knightly of countenance as a king should.” Arthur’s extended answer indicates that he disagrees strongly. Even if Arthur’s grief is seen as excessive, however, it is not so unusual, and it in no way disqualifies him as a king or leader; the audience is not necessarily meant to agree that he has behaved effeminately.” *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 65-66.

³⁸ In contrast to C, manuscript B states “nâch der klage er nider seic.” (After he lament, he sank down.) This difference suggests that redactor B emphasizes the lament.

³⁹ Albrecht Classen criticizes scholars who deem Etzel’s behavior inappropriate for a king, “A calm, self-controlled, and resolute Etzel would be inappropriate in narrative terms here, as in fact no medieval ruler whose

both Dietrich and Hildebrand, Etzel makes a great nuisance of himself.⁴⁰ He gives himself over to being morally despicable; he vilifies himself and desires to be cast out and punished. He abases himself before everyone and even attempts to convince his own men that he is unworthy.⁴¹ Though he expresses remorse for what has happened to his kingdom he discloses no shame in how he conducts himself.⁴² When a person fails to feel shame, according to William Ian Miller, it typically indicated that the person lacks honor.⁴³ Furthermore, Etzel acts in an unfriendly manner towards those who still want to serve him (C: 2526-46; [B: 2434-54]). Unable to overcome his sorrow about the numerous deaths and therewith the loss of his honor, Etzel continues to act unproductively. Indeed he gives up his role as king:

“war zuo sol mir nû der lîp,
zepter oder krône?
diu mir ê vil schône
stuont in allen mînen tagen,
die enwil ich nimmer mêr getragen.
Vreude, êre und werdez leben,
daz will ich allez ûf geben
und wilz allez hin legen,
des ich zer werlde solde pflegen,
sît ez mir allez missezimt.
swenne mich nû der tût nimt,
daz ist mir harte unmaere,

entire family and army of men had been slaughtered would have assumed the behavior that these modern critics have demanded.” “Death Ritual,” 39. Etzel’s behavior, however, is not, according to the characters and narrator, proper in this text.

⁴⁰Freud, “Trauer und Melancholie,” 434-435. According to Freud melancholics make a great nuisance of themselves, and always feel slighted and as though they have been treated with great injustice.

⁴¹Freud, “Trauer und Melancholie,” 431. “Erniedrigt sich vor jedem anderen, bedauert jeden der Seinigen, dass er an seine so unwürdige Person gebunden sei.”

⁴² According to Freud on melancholics “Es fehlt Schâmen vor anderen, welches diesen letzteren Zustand vor allem charakterisieren würde, oder es tritt wenigstens nicht auffällig hervor.” “Trauer und Melancholie,” 438.

⁴³ William Ian Miller, *Humiliation: And Other Essays on Honor, Social Discomfort, and Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 116-124.

wan sô het al mîn swaere
genomen ende und al mîn nôt.
ich bin zer werlde doch immer tôt.” (C: 2560-74; [B: 2468-78])

[“Of what good to me now are my life, the scepter, and crown? Those [things] that suited me very well in all my days, I will never wear them again. I will give up everything my joy, honor, and a worthy life and I will lay it aside everything with which I should care in this world, since it all seems wrong for me. If death were to take me now—it would be a terrible thing, because then all my pain and all my sorrow would come to an end. I will nevertheless be perpetually dead to the world.”]

When Etzel gives up his crown and scepter, he figuratively removes his identity as a king.⁴⁴

His actions are similar to Shakespeare’s King Richard, who according to the historian Ernst Kantorowicz, slowly loses his king’s body—that is the spiritual and political body—to embody the natural (non-political) body. Kantorowicz discusses the political and natural bodies that both historical and fictional kings’ embody. The king’s natural body suffers and dies, but his spiritual/political body, surpasses the natural body and represents his position as ruler. Etzel’s lordship, much like King Richard’s, is eventually lost because, having lost his honor, he is unable to remain politically active.⁴⁵ No longer serving a purpose, Etzel gives into his grief, which disgraces him and separates him even further from productivity. As time passes, Etzel is unable to speak, faints and is described as neither alive nor dead but,

⁴⁴ Elke Koch argues that Gahmuret in *Parzival* removes his identity when he takes off his clothes. He, in contrast to Etzel, eventually assumes a new identity when he marries Herzeloide. “Inszenierungen von Trauer, Körper und Geschlecht: im *Parzival* Wolframs von Eschenbach,” in *Codierungen von Emotion im Mittelalter: Emotions and Sensibilities in the Middle Ages*, ed. C. Stephen Jaeger and Ingrid Kasten (Walter de Gruyter: Berlin, 2003), 155-56.

⁴⁵ Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies. A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton Press, 1957). With the defeat of his men, the death of his wife and child, and the destruction of his court by his relatives, it is clear that Etzel, the host, has lost his honor, which is according to Fredric L. Cheyette, “a public, political value, visible only in the eyes of others, in the eyes of the community of men and women whose respect alone made honor real.” *Ermengard of Narbonne and the World of Troubadours*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 202-203. Frank Henderson Stewart surveys the numerous meanings of honor across fields and claims in the German literary tradition, honor contains two aspects: external (others view of a person) and internal (moral character and integrity). *Honor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 11-12. Also see Julian Pitt-Rivers, “Honour and Social Status,” in *Honor and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. Peristiany, J.G (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 19-77.

according to Rasmussen, “incapable of leadership or lordship.”⁴⁶ In contrast to all the other men in the text, Etzel succumbs to his grief and collapses never to rise when Hildebrand and Dietrich depart:⁴⁷

im gap der jâmer solhe nôt,
daz er der sinne niht behielt
und alsô kranker witze wielt,

daz er gar unversunnen lac.
lebt er sît deheinen tac,
des het er doch vil kleinen vrumen,
wan im was an sîn herze kumen
diu riuwe alsô manicvalt,
daz in daz leit mit gewalt
lie selten sît gesprechen wort.
ern was weder hie noch dort,
ern was tôt noch entlebte.⁴⁸

(C: 4236-47; [B: 4186-97])

[The pain brought him into such anguish that he lost his awareness and possessed so little of his senses that he lay there unconscious. If afterwards he lived another day, he had little use of it. For sorrow had come into his heart so completely that his suffering let him speak hardly a word after that. He was neither here nor there, he was neither dead nor alive.]

It is at this point in the text that Etzel’s sorrow turns into despair and might be “considered a psychosomatic disease with catastrophic consequences.”⁴⁹ Grief is for Etzel, in other words, a severe illness, melancholy.⁵⁰

⁴⁶Rasmussen, “Emotions,” 185.

⁴⁷ Joachim Bumke argues, “Nur Etzel bleibt ungetröstet zurück und endet im Wahnsinn: für seinen Abfall vom Christentum trifft ihn die Strafe Gottes.” “>Die Nibelungenklage<,” 102.

⁴⁸ Manuscript C contains an additional eight lines regarding Etzel: “von ritten ellich groz gedranc; / waere ein tac eins jâres lanc, / sine waeren nimmer von im komen. / bî im heten si genomen / den tôt willeclîche. / Beide arme unde rîche, / die sâhen in als di sunnen an. / daz muose nû allez ende hân” (C: 4252-58).

⁴⁹Classen, “Death Rituals,” 40.

The *Nibelungenklage* poet recasts immoderate and never-ending grief as feminine, self-destructive and unproductive for society. It is, according to the redactors, acceptable and commendable for women, such as Gotelind and Ute, to die of grief, but for a man, especially a king, it is intolerable and even disgraceful for the kingdom itself. Immoderate grief as seen in the *Nibelungenlied* has the potential to destroy an entire kingdom, but in the *Nibelungenklage* the redactors demonstrate that despite Etzel's fall from royalty there is yet hope. The poet presents us with another model of grief, one in which women who lament may still rise above their sorrow and be productive for society.

A Productive Model of Female Grief

In light of the destructive nature of Kriemhild's grief in the *Nibelungenlied* and Etzel's unproductive grief in the *Nibelungenklage*, the *Nibelungenklage* manuscripts B and C, provide the audience with hope by recasting the lament as potentially productive and admirable for a female figure, much like Hartmann's Enite. The *Nibelungenklage* poet sought to reestablish a society where grief is still an integral part, but does not cause death and destruction.

In contrast to Ute and Goetlind, Rüdiger's daughter Dietlinde is able to be productive for society despite the death of her father, her betrothed and eventually her mother. Dietlinde, unlike her mother Gotelind, speaks out about her losses and stays politically and socially active. Immediately following her and her mother's physical lamentation, Dietlinde, similar to Dietrich, articulates publicly what she and more importantly her people have lost as a result of the numerous deaths:

⁵⁰ Elke Koch argues that Gahumert's grief, in Wolfram's *Parzival*, is an illness that does not go away until he takes on his new identity. "Inszenierungen von Trauer," 143-158.

“wâ wil mîn vrou Êre
nû belîben in den rîchen,
sît alsô jaemerlîchen
die êre tragenden sint gelegen?
wer sol nû vûrbaz pflegen,
sît ir verschwunden ist diu kraft?
des hete gar die meisterschaft
mîn vil lieber vater Rûedegêr.”

(C: 3274-81; [B: 3154-61])

[“Where will my Lady Honor now stay in the kingdom since those who bore honor have fallen so sorrowfully? Who shall now further rule if her strength sinks? My very dear father Rüdiger was the master of this.”]

In her verbal lamentation, Dietlinde, unlike Enite, acknowledges that the various deaths affect not only her, but also the kingdom. Indeed the future does not look bright for her and her people. In the midst of such a difficult time, however, Dietlinde does not reprimand herself verbally (though she briefly does so physically). Instead she, in keeping with Freud’s concept of mourning, is able to free herself from the lost objects (i.e. her father, mother and Giselher) and take on her new identity: a future ruler (C: 4348-53; [B: 4281-87]). Furthermore, Dietlinde takes on a role of action when she sends a note to Brünhild and Ute, who have lost their loved ones (C: 3400-10; [B: 3274-86]). Dietlinde bears a new responsibility that is heavy burden, especially since the kingdom lies now in ruin. Dietlinde manages to survive and according to the narrator:

Doch wart ir sider war genomen,
als ez ir êren von rehte zam.
irn was dâ niemen sô gram,
der ir redete deheiniu leit.
Alsus warte diu meit
mit truiwen und mit staete,
als ir geloubet haete
her Dietrîch dâ von Berne.
des erbeite si dô gerne.

(C: 4352-60; [B: 4286-94])

[She was taken care of later as was in accordance with her reputation. No one was so hostile that he would cause any harm to her. Thus the young maiden waited with

loyalty and steadfastness for that which Lord Dietrich of Bern promised her. For that she waited willingly.]⁵¹

The *Nibelungenklage* author illustrates that Dietlinde, a woman, has the potential to suppress her grief when duty calls. Here Dietlinde, who has lost most of her kin, rises to the occasion and acts. Her grief, indeed productive for society, stands in stark contrast to Kriemhild's grief.

Brünhild too grieves immoderately when she discovers her husband is dead, however, she, similar to Dietlinde, contributes productively to the rebuilding of the kingdom. Brünhild maintains her identity as a queen and mother, but only after she is told that she can remain in her position of power. When Swemmel, the messenger, recounts the battle and deaths to Brünhild, she initially laments excessively:

Dô huop sich der meiste schal,
der zen Hiunen ie geschach.
sô gâhes von herzen nie gebrach
bluot ûz deheime munde,
als ir dâ ze stunde
brast von grôzem leide.
die marcgrâvinne beide,
die dâ ze Bechelâren
mit grôzer klage wâren,
die enklagen nie sô sêre.
Brünhilt diu vil hêre
klagete wol in ir unmâzen.

(C: 3744- 55; [B: 3660-3671])

[The loudest scream broke out that had ever happened with the Huns. Never had so much blood burst from the heart from anyone's mouth, as it befell her [Brünhild] at that moment on account of her unbearable grief. The two countesses in Pöchlarn, who were also lamenting, did not however, grieve as much. For the noble Brünhild lamented without moderation.]

⁵¹ Dietrich comforts Dietlinde in her sorrow and promises to assist her by giving her a man who can help her rule the kingdom (C: 4324-35; [B: 4258-69]).

Here the audience anticipates that Brünhild too will die of grief because she cannot seem to control her reactions. However, Sindolt, the king's cup-bearer suggests that she temper her grief for the following reasons:

“vrouwe, lâzet iuwer klagen!
jâne kan doch niemen entsagen
wol dem andern den tât.
waere nû immer disiu nôt,
sine würden doch niht lebhaft.
der klage diu ungevüege kraft
müese doch ein ende hân.
Irn sît sô ein hit bestan;
ir mugt vil wol noch krône tragen.” (C: 3831-39; [B: 3747-55])

[“Lady cease your lament! After all, no one can keep another person from death. Were this grief now to continue, they would still not be alive. The immoderate power of this lament must have an end. You are not so alone, that you may not still wear the crown.”]

Sindolt's words suppress her grief in both manuscripts B and C. In Ms. B, however, Brünhild credits her survival to Sindolt's words: “wand sol ich immer genesen, / daz muoz von disem rate wesen” (B: 3769-70). (If I should survive then it must be on account of your advice.)

Indeed Sindolt's words actually keep her alive despite the intensity of her grief.⁵² As McConnell points out, “the remaining Burgundians may spend some time in abject lamentation, but the ‘ungefüege klage’ (B: 4009) is dissipated to some degree by their suggestion that young Siegfried be knighted and crowned.”⁵³

In contrast to the *Nibelungenlied*, the *Nibelungenklage* illustrates that the more excessive forms of lamentations, which women specifically display, can actually lead women, such as Dietlinde and Brünhild, to set aside their grief and become productive agents in society. Their grief is neither completely self-destructive nor destructive for society. A

⁵² Brünhild laid unconscious until water was poured over her (C: 4014-17; [B: 3960-63]).

⁵³ McConnell, “The Problem of Continuity,” 253

woman, according to the *Nibelungenklage* poet, does not need to transgress gender boundaries in order to obtain power. Instead she, unlike Kriemhild must temper her grief. Brünhild remains a queen and Dietlinde becomes a queen. Essentially both manuscripts show that no matter how severe grief is, it can still be productive and admirable.

Reconfiguring Kriemhild's Grief

In order to further reestablish the gender boundaries transgressed at the end of the *Nibelungenlied*, the *Nibelungenklage* poet recontextualizes Kriemhild's grief as beyond her own control and being born out of "triuwe." According to McConnell, the *Nibelungenklage* author "desired to preserve the 'moral' continuity of the Kriemhild figure throughout, and attempted to do so by underscoring, repeatedly, the queen's "triuwe," which does, in fact, harkens back to a moral framework based on a pre-Christian ethic."⁵⁴ Although both manuscripts reevaluate Kriemhild's grief, manuscript C, through often very subtle variation in wording, sheds a more positive light on Kriemhild by emphasizing her loyalty. These differences imply that the female lament was not a static motif, but instead integral to a medieval discourse on the courtly virtue "triuwe" and femininity.

The *Nibelungenklage* redactions B and C construct Kriemhild's lament in the *Nibelungenlied* as being beyond her own control in several places in order to reconfigure grief in a way that is not destructive for society. At the beginning of the *Nibelungenklage* the narrator states the following about Kriemhild's grief in the *Nibelungenlied*:

der jâmer si vil selten liez
geruowen einen halben tac,
wand ir an dem herzen lac,
wie si verlôs ir wünne.

(C: 100-04; [B: 76-79]).

⁵⁴ "The Problem of Continuity," 250.

[Because her sorrow seldom let her be for a half of a day, because it lay within her heart, she had lost her happiness

In the *Nibelungenlied*, Kriemhild instrumentalizes and exploits her grief to avenge her loss.

Indeed there are instances where it is unclear whether her sorrow is a feeling or part of a performance to provoke others into action. In the *Nibelungenklage* the narrator emphasizes that Kriemhild's sorrow was not a facade. Furthermore, the narrator demonstrates the constancy, severity and depth of Kriemhild's sorrow.

A second example demonstrates the severity of Kriemhild's sorrow. Despite acquiring more power and prestige by becoming Etzel's wife, Kriemhild remains in misery about Siegfried's death. Even those who try to comfort her, according to the *Nibelungenklage* poet, are unable. The narrator presents us with the following verses: *daz enkunde niht vervâhen, / irne weinten âne lougen / diu ougen irs herzen tougen*" (C: 120-22 [B: 94-96]). (That could not help against it, that the eyes from her heart overrun her with tears all the time.) Here as throughout the C and B redactions, Kriemhild's sorrow is so intense that she is unable to account for her actions in the *Nibelungenlied*

In order to reinstate the gender boundaries of grief lost in the *Nibelungenlied*, the *Nibelungenklage* narrator reinterprets Kriemhild's grief as a form of the courtly virtue "triuwe" (loyalty). Although she acted out, the narrator sees her as having acted out in accordance with her duties as a wife, as a participant in courtly society and by doing so he sanctifies her "triuwe" rather than demonizing her actions. In other words, he shows that Kriemhild did not transgress gender boundaries. Manuscript C, however, emphasizes her "triuwe" more explicitly than manuscript B. In the following example, redactions B and C show that Kriemhild's "triuwe" and suffering caused her to seek revenge:

Des ensol si niemen schelten.
 solter er des engelten,
 der **rehter** triuwen kunde pflegen, [“rehter” is absent from B]
 der hete schiere sich bewegen,
 daz er mit rehten dingen
 möhte niht volbringen
 deheinen **triuwen staeten** muot. [“getrivlichen muot” in B]
 triuwe diu ist dar zuo guot:
 si machet werdt des mannes lîp
 und êret ouch alsô schoeniu wîp,
 daz ir zuht noch ir muot
 nâch schanden nimmer niht getuot. (C: 165-76; [B: 139-150])

[No one should reproach her for this [her revenge]. If one must pay for it, that he illustrated correct loyalty, he would quickly give it up, any loyal intention in this right manner, that he would change is steadfast loyal heart. Loyalty is good for this: It awards worth to the life of man and it also honors a beautiful woman so that neither her bearing nor her disposition will ever cause her to be ashamed.]

The redactions clearly glorify and honor Kriemhild for her devotion to Siegfried. The additional use of the words “rehter triuwen” and “triuwen staeten” in manuscript C strengthen the significance of Kriemhild’s “triuwe” indicating it was a correct form of loyalty. Furthermore, C highlights both her loyalty and steadfastness. Anything Kriemhild does is thus in accordance with her “triuwe” to Siegfried. In the lines following the above passage, both the B and C redactions absolve Kriemhild of her role in the *Nibelungenlied*:

Als ouch Kriemhilden geschach,
 der von schulden nie sprach
 valschiu wort dehein man.
 swer ditze maere gemerken kan,
 der seit unschuldec wol ir lîp,
 wan daz edel werde wîp
 taete nâch ir triuwe
 ir rache in grôzer riuwe. (C: 177-84; [B: 151-58])

[As it also happened with Kriemhild, that no one ever spoke a false word with reason about her. Whoever can understand this story, he will note she is not guilty, for this noble worthy woman in great sorrow acted her revenge out of loyalty.]

The redactors further reinterpret Kriemhild's death as embodying the utmost form of "triuwe," rather than her representation as a 'she-devil' in the *Nibelungenlied*. Again there are slight variations in the redactions in which C emphasizes Kriemhild's loyalty more.

Redaction B states:

sît si durch triuwe tât gelac,
in gotes hulden manegen tac
sol si ze himele noch geleben.
got hât uns allen daz gegeben:
swes lîp mit triuwen ende nimt,
daz der zem himelrîche zimt. (B: 571-76)

[Since she lay dead on account of her loyalty, she will yet live many days in God's favor in heaven. God has given all of us this: Whoever always finds his end in loyalty, he is appropriate for the heavenly kingdom.]

Despite all that happened at the end of the *Nibelungenlied*, Kriemhild still remains in God's favor. Not only does Kriemhild die because of her loyalty, but also, according to Ms. C, she lived a life full of "triuwe":

sît si durch triuwe tât beleip,
und si grôz triuwe dar zuo treip,
das si in triuwen verlôs ir leben,
so hât uns got den trôst gegeben:
swes lîp mit triuwen ende nimt,
daz der zem himelrîche zimt. (C: 549-54)

[Since she remained dead on account of her loyalty and she lead her life with great loyalty that she lost her life through loyalty. God has given us the encouragement: Whoever always finds his end in loyalty, he is appropriate for the heavenly kingdom.]

These examples further illustrate the C redactor's particular emphasis of Kriemhild's "triuwe". Indeed redaction C uses the word "triuwe" an additional two times. In both versions, however, the redactor indicates the same outcome for Kriemhild: eternal life in heaven. Yet, manuscript C contains an additional 38 lines, which develop an even more positive depiction of Kriemhild:

sît si mit grôzem jâmer ranc
und si grôz triuwe jâmers twanc,
die si truoc nâch ir lieben man,
als wir von ir vernomen hân,
daz si pflac grôzer riuwe
durch liebe und durch ir triuwe,
daz si zwô sêle und ein lîp
wâren, dô si was sîn wîp,
dâ von si von schulden zam
der râche, die si umber in nam,
als uns vil dicke ist geseit. (C: 573-83)

[Since she suffered under great sorrow and she acted with great loyalty, which she bore for her dear man, as we have heard, that she suffered great pain on account of her love and her loyalty, that they were two souls and one body, when she was his wife, for that she was to blame and she took revenge, as we've been told at length.]

Her revenge clearly stems from the pain she acquired from the death of Siegfried. She then takes that pain and acts in way that demonstrates her loyalty.

Pointing to Kriemhild's grief as a form of "triuwe" does not explain, at least not for the B redaction, the destructive nature of her lament nor the action she takes against Hagen. The narrator explains further that Kriemhild's extreme grief, not only broke her heart but also her spirit: "dâ von was gesêret / beidiu ir herze und ouch ir muot" (C: 136-37; [B: 110-11]). (Because of this [Siegfried's murder], both her heart and also her spirit were broken.). Here the narrator implies that Kriemhild lacked the ability to act wisely. Manuscript B takes this further to state that Kriemhild was ill: "Dô lie siz gên, als ez mohte, / wan ir niht anders tohte. /daz kom von krankem sinne" (B: 241-43). (So she let things take their course because there was nothing else she could do. It all came about because she sick in the head). The B redactor sought to further explain Kriemhild's actions in the *Nibelungenlied* as being both part of an illness as well as a form of "triuwe." For the B redaction, it is not Kriemhild's grief that costs the lives of many, but her illness, which relates back to her femininity. Rasmussen argues:

Lord Kriemhild is both feminine-she loves too much, she suffers from *chranchem sinne*, that is to say a weak or deranged disposition that might be supposed to be characteristic of women in the Middle Ages-and yet she is not feminine enough. She does not die of grief; she acts on it. And because the problem of gender and lordship that Kriemhild poses cannot be solved, because this problem is embedded in the political structure of medieval lordship, it is as though (to speak figuratively, not literally) Kriemhild's spirit haunts *The Lament*, making its collective outpouring of grief appear at times like a giant exorcism.⁵⁵

As I show, however, the *Nibelungenklage* respond to Kriemhild's "spirit" or "illness" by attempting to insure that the horrible events that occurred in the *Nibelungenlied* never happen again.

Casting Blame in Manuscripts B and C

The re-feminization of Kriemhild's lament is the narrator's primary strategy to recontextualize Kriemhild and present her as a less harmful and dangerous character. But *Nibelungenklage*, as some scholars have shown, shifts the blame for the gruesome ending of the *Nibelungenlied* to Hagen, Siegfried and—to a certain extent—Brünhild.⁵⁶ According to the *Nibelungenklage* redactions, a man's arrogance can cause the downfall of society, but not a woman's grief. Similar to other scholars, I will show that *Nibelungenklage* redactions B and C follow their corresponding *Nibelungenlied* manuscripts respectively. I differ from previous scholars' interpretations by arguing that the *Nibelungenklage* poet explores the issue of blame to reestablish the gender boundaries that were lost at the end of *Nibelungenlied* and to further reconfigure grief as being honorable and loyal.

⁵⁵ Rasmussen, "Emotions" 188.

⁵⁶ See Fritz Knapp, "Tragodeia und Planctus," 152-170; Joachim Bumke, *Die Vier Fassungen*; Werner Schröder *Nibelungenlied-Studien*, 185-225.

In both *Nibelungenklage* manuscripts, the redactors blame Hagen's arrogance for the massacre and not the power Kriemhild gains through her grief. They do this to further exonerate Kriemhild from her role in the *Nibelungenlied* and to reinstate the position of a courtly woman as being loyal and honorable. In the beginning of the *Nibelungenklage* the narrator characterizes Hagen as arrogant:

Hagen der übermüete hêre,
daz siz lâzen niht enkunde,
sine müese bî der stunde
rechen allez, daz ir was. (C: 248-51; [B: 230-33])

[The arrogant Lord Hagen, she could not leave it be, she had to avenge everything that had happened to her.]

Instead of leaving Kriemhild alone after Siegfried's death, Hagen provokes her in the *Nibelungenlied* on numerous occasions. He takes her gold, brings Siegfried's sword to Hungary, and kills her and Etzel's son Ortlieb. Here the redactions imply that Hagen intensifies Kriemhild's urge to revenge.

Various characters pass judgment on Hagen for the massacre. For instance Hildebrand refers to him as a devil:

“nu seht, wâ der vâlant
lît, der es allez riet.
daz manz mit güete niht enschiet,
dâ ist Hagen schuldec an” (C: 1278-81; [B: 1250-54])

[Now see where the devil lies who caused all of this. That it could not be reconciled in good, it is Hagen's fault.]

This comment stands in contrast to all three *Nibelungenlied* redactions in which Hildebrand calls Kriemhild a she-devil. Even those who were friends with Hagen blame him. Rumold says: “mîne herren, die hân ich verlorn / niwan von Hagenen übermuot, / diu zallen zîten

schaden tuot (C: 4092-94; [B: 4030-2]). (I have lost my lords, all as a result of Hagen's arrogance, which often proves to be harmful.) The judgment passed on Hagen in this example suggests that a man's arrogance can cause the downfall of society and not a women's grief or loyalty to her dead husband.

Though both redactors accentuate Hagen's role in the great battle, manuscripts B and C differ at times, which suggests that the scribes followed the corresponding *Nibelungenlied* manuscripts. Redaction B, on occasion, downplays Hagen's role whereas C consistently demonizes Hagen. For instance, B implies that Hagen would not have been involved in the final slaughter, if Kriemhild had not asked Blödelin to fight (B: 1300-08). Ms. C, on the other hand, denigrates Hagen's character by emphasizing his arrogance and the role he played in the demise of Siegfried:

er morte mîner vrouwen man
niwan durch haz und durch nît.
daz habt ir wol vernomen sît.
er pflac vil grôzer übermuot
und nam ir allez ir guot:
ich meine der Nibelunge hort. (C: 1282-1287)⁵⁷

[He murdered my lady's man on account of nothing but his hate and his envy. You've learned about that since. He acted out of great arrogance and took all her wealth: I mean the Nibelungen treasure.]

By underscoring his act of violence towards Siegfried as a form of envy, the C redactor implies that Hagen's action was a deadly sin. He did not act in accordance with Christianity or his knightly duties. Although redaction B does mention that Hagen unfairly killed Siegfried, this redaction does not emphasize his culpability as much as the C redaction.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Also see C: 1365-84.

⁵⁸ See Jan-Dirk Müller for a discussion regarding the context of übermuot. "Die Klage-Irritation," 72. Bumke also hints towards this. "*Die Vier Fassungen*," 388.

Furthermore, Ms. C projects that Hagen's actions killing Siegfried and taking Kriemhild's money forces Kriemhild to react. This arrogance is mentioned in both manuscripts, but it plays a more substantial role in C. As Swemmel's men are riding through Bavaria they proclaim in manuscript B:

“got von himel, der sis gelobt,
daz et Hagen hât vertobt.
der kunde nie strîtes werden sat.
er ist nû komen an die stat,
dâ uns sîn übermuot
nû vil kleinen schaden tuot.” (B: 3521-26)

[“God in heaven be praised that Hagen has died. He could never get enough fighting. He has reached a point where his arrogance can scarcely cause any more injury.”]

The messengers publicly claim that Hagen's arrogance caused much injury. In manuscript C, however, the redactor is much more explicit on what Hagen did:

“Got von himel sîs gelobt,
daz et Hagene hât vertôbt!
ern wolde des tôdes niht enbern.
niemen in kunde strîts gewern.
er ist doch komen an die stat,
dâ er ist strîtes worden gesat.
man hâts im, waen ich, nû genuoc gegeben.
man gesach nie man sô ungern leben.
sîn übermuot in dar zuo twanc,
daz er nâch dem tôde ranc,
unz er den lîp doch hât verlorn.
er hât vil dicke sînen zorn
errochen an vil manigem man,
der nie schult hin zim gewan.
daz im got gebe leit!” (C: 3591- 605)

[“God in heaven to be praised that Hagen has died. He wanted to fight until death. No one could challenge him in battle. He has come to a place where he is finished fighting. I suspect one had given him enough. One never saw someone live so unhappily. His arrogance drove him to seek death until he lost his life. He had avenged his anger on many men, who never did anything to him. May God punish him!”]

Manuscript C implicates Hagen in the death of those who were innocent whereas Ms B. alludes to it, but is not explicit.

Both redactions further absolve Kriemhild from blame by highlighting the roles both Hagen and Siegfried played. Redaction B, surprisingly, however, emphasizes Hagen's role more when Rumold says: "waz het Sîvrit ir man / im ze leide getân? / der wart âne schult ermort:/ daz hân ich sider wol gehôrte" (B: 4047-50). (What did her man Siegfried do to him in pain? He was murdered without reason: that is what I have heard.) Not only did Hagen provoke Kriemhild, but he also took Siegfried's life. Rumold's statement, however, stands in opposition to the B redactor's judgment of Siegfried: "und daz er selbe den tôt / gewan von siner übermuot" (B: 38-39). (He himself met his death on account of his arrogance.) Manuscript C, on the other hand, claims that Siegfried dies on account of other people's arrogance, distrust and jealousy (C: 48-52; 64-67). Clearly the redactions do not agree on the reason for Siegfried's death, but they do agree that Hagen played some role in instigating the battle.

By casting the blame on Hagen for his arrogance and hate, the *Nibelungenklage* poet implies that a man, not a woman, was the root of the death and destruction of the Burgundian society. He therefore establishes gender boundaries within which women are not able to be destructive agents. The poet thus downplays Kriemhild's role (agency) in the *Nibelungenlied* and further emphasizes the lament as being admirable and honorable. Not only do the *Nibelungenklage* redactors participate in a discourse on gender, but also on grief. In the next section I will explore the variation in the representation of grief in the two manuscript redactions.

The Representations of Grief in Manuscripts B and C

The differences between manuscripts B and C suggest not only varying ideas about who instigated the battle, but also on the role of grief. In contrast to Werner Schröder, who argues that there are no principal differences in the use of grief terms between redactions B and C,⁵⁹ I have determined that the *Nibelungenklage* manuscript B redactor emphasizes men's grief more. The redactor depicts scenes where Etzel grieves more excessively and Hildebrand grieves in B but not C. Such differences suggest that the B redactor sought not only to emphasize all characters' grief including Hildebrand's, but also to illustrate more precise forms of grief that are productive and unproductive. In manuscript B the dichotomy between productive and unproductive grief is more apparent than in manuscript C.

In manuscript B, the redactor stresses the consuming and unproductive nature of Etzel's grief more than in manuscript C. When Etzel is first introduced in Ms. B, the narrator states the following about Etzel's current emotional state: "er hete leit und ungemach./des moth man wunder von im sehen" (He felt sorrow and despair. He knew nothing else.) (B: 619-20). These verses, absent from C, show the severity of Etzel's sorrow. He is unable to think about anything, including his duties as a king. Furthermore, his grief is so physically detrimental that in ms. B while Dietrich and Hildebrand clean up the great hall, he goes over to the bodies of his wife and child and reacts in the following manner:

vor jâmer wart im also wê,
daz er viel in unmaht.
in het der jâmer dar zu brâht,
daz im zu der stunde
ûzen ôren und ûz dem munde
begunde bresten daz bluot. (B: 2308-13)

⁵⁹ Schröder, *Nibelungenlied-Studien*, 185-225.

[Because of grief he was in such pain that he fainted. The pain had brought him to it that blood at that time burst out of the ears and mouth.]

Again manuscript B emphasizes Etzel's helpless state. Such reactions do not suggest productive behavior for a king. He, unlike Hildebrand and Dietrich who clean up the great hall, is powerless and inactive. He is not processing his sorrow successfully, but instead his grief is consuming him completely. When his people witness him reacting, they:

si begunden alle mit im klagen,
die den jâmer mousen schouwen.
ritter unde vrouwen
in jâmer klagelîche
bâten den künec rîche,
daz er den lîp iht sô verlûr
und daz er bezzern trôst kür:
daz waere in beidenthalben guot. (B: 2320-2325)

[They, who witnessed the pain, began to lament with him. Knights and ladies alike in terrible distress begged the noble king that he not lose his life and that he find a better means of consolation: That would be good for everyone.]

In addition to emphasizing Etzel's unproductive sorrow, the B redactor portrays grief that is productive more extensively than C. The narrator describes Hildebrand's productive form of grief on two occasions. First, Hildebrand laments as he stands in front of Kriemhild's body, rejoining her head with her torso: "dô hôte man Hildebrande klagen, / der si sluoc mit sîner hant" (B: 798-99). (Thus one heard Hildebrand lament, who killed her with his own hand.) His lament is just a break from his active work of cleaning the great hall. In spite of feeling a tremendous amount of sorrow, Hildebrand is able to convey his feelings while at the same time helping to bring order to Etzel's kingdom. Hildebrand also laments Iring's death: "ouch klaget in an den stunden / der alte Hildebrant / alsô, daz man ez wol ervant" (B: 1098-1100). (Hildebrand also lamented at the moment which was appropriate.) Again Hildebrand does not sit idly by and let his grief consume him, but assists in gathering the

bodies. When Hildebrand grieves the death of a loved one, he signifies his loss through weeping or lamenting and then immediately engages in an action that seeks to benefit Etzel's kingdom, an action that is indeed productive.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to use the motif of the lament as a lens to bring a discourse on agency, gender and grief in the *Nibelungenklage* into focus. The conflict in the *Nibelungenlied* is underlined by the desperation of the *Nibelungenklage* to reconcile the paradox of female grief. In essence *Nibelungenklage* redeems Kriemhild, by highlighting her “triuwe,” her grief, and placing blame on other figures. The poet uses several strategies to redeem Kriemhild, to reconfigure the gender boundaries, and to reestablish grief that is productive for society. In contrast to Rasmussen, I argue that the *Nibelungenklage* poet redefines grief as being either productive or unproductive for society. It is not always socially unifying, but it is no longer destructive for society. Grief can, however, be self-destructive, but only if the person is a female.⁶⁰ In opposition to what most scholars have claimed, I argue there are differences between the B and C manuscripts that imply varying ideas about agency and grief.

⁶⁰ Rasmussen claims the *Nibelungenklage* creates “a notion of grief as an emotion that is distinct from anger that is socially unifying rather than socially destructive.” “Emotions,” 185.

Chapter 5

Conclusion: Understanding the Female Lament

The End of the Lament as a Space for Female Agency: Gottfried's *Tristan*

The literary reworking of the female lament as a space for the female voice (i.e. agency) seen in *Erec*, *Nibelungenlied* and *Nibelungenklage* ends with Gottfried von Straßburg's depiction of Blanscheflur, Isolde and Queen Isolde in *Tristan*, composed around 1210.¹ From the death of Blanscheflur and Rivalin to the impending death of Tristan and Isolde, Gottfried's *Tristan* is permeated with sorrow and with opportunities to lament. But, although Gottfried comments on the motif, he does not elaborate on it.² In *Tristan*, the lament is not a space for female agency.

In his portrayal of Blanscheflur Gottfried illustrates that the lament is gendered and self-destructive, but it is not a context for female agency. When faced with the potential death of her secret lover, Blanscheflur, similar to Hartmann's Enite, torments herself in a typical heart-rending fashion:

und aber, dô sî vereinete
und sî ze clagene state gewan,

¹ Gottfried based *Tristan* on Thômas von Britanje's *Tristan* story, which survives only in fragments. For more information about Gottfried's *Tristan* see Will Hasty, "Introduction: The Challenge of Gottfried's *Tristan*," in *A Companion to Gottfried von Strassburg's "Tristan"*, ed. Will Hasty (Rochester: Camden House 2003), 1-19.

² Urban Küsters make a similar observation. He suggests that the wordless and tearless grief in Gottfried's *Tristan* is the end point of the literary reworking of the female lament in courtly narratives. "Klagefiguren: Vom höfischen Umgang mit der Trauer," in *An den Grenzen höfischer Kultur: Anfechtungen der Lebensordnung in der deutschen Erzähldichtung des hohen Mittelalters*, ed. Gert Kaiser (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1991), 66-71.

dô gie si sich mit handen an:
 die sluoc si tûsent stunde dar
 und niuwan dar, da'z ir dâ war;
 da engegen, dâ daz herze lac,
 dar tete diu schoene manegen slac.
 sus quelte daz vil sûeze wîp
 ir jungen, schoenen, sûezen lîp
 mit alsô clegelîcher nôt,
 daz s' einen anderen tôt,
 der niht von minnen waere komen,
 dô haete vûr ir leben genomen. (v. 1172-84)³

[And indeed, when she was alone and she was able to lament the circumstance, then she placed her hands on herself. She beat herself a thousand times with them there and only there, there where it was in her, there where her heart lie, there the beautiful maiden did strike. Thus did this sweet lady tormented her young, beautiful, sweet body with such doleful affliction that she would have taken away her life for another death that did not come from love.]⁴

Similar to Enite, Blanscheflur's lamentation is physically detrimental: She beats herself over and over again aiming deliberately at her heart from which her grief and pain emanates. In his description, Gottfried differentiates Blanscheflur's grief from the other figures in *Tristan* who lament Riwalin's mortal wound through the centrality of the heart in her grieving process,⁵ her self-torment, and the private nature of her lament. Though she is forced to lament in secrecy, Blanscheflur still engages in self-abusive gestures typical for a grieving female. However, she does not weep or cry out like Enite. Contrary to the female figures like Dido and Enite who speak out and self-reflect when they lose their husbands, Blanscheflur refrains from speaking entirely when she receives word that Riwalin is dead:

ir ougen diu enwurden nie

³ All Middle High German quotations are from Gottfried von Straßburg, *Tristan*, ed. Rüdiger Krohn (Stuttgart, Reclam: 2001).

⁴ All translations of *Tristan* are my own.

⁵ Elke Koch, Elke Koch, *Trauer und Identität: Inszenierungen von Emotionen in der deutschen Literaturen des Mittelalters* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 219.

in allem disem leide naz.
 jâ got hêrre, wie kam daz,
 daz dâ niht wart geweinet?
 dâ waz ir herze ersteinet.
 da enwas niht lebenes inne
 niwan diu lebende minne
 und daz vil lebelîche leit,
 daz lebende ûf ir leben streit.
 geclagete s' aber ir hêrren iht
 mit clageworten? nein sî niht. (v. 1726-36)

[In all this sorrow her eyes never became wet. But Lord God, how was it that there was no weeping there? Her heart had turned to stone. There was no life within it and for the living love and very real agony that, living, fought against her life. Did she lament her lord at all with words of lamentations? No she did not.]

Urban Küsters points out the following: “Anders als Dido ist Blanscheflur im Sterben nicht Subjekt ihrer Trauer, sondern—darstellungsmäßig—merkwürdiges, mit Verwunderung und Unbehagen betrachtetes Objekt.”⁶ Indeed Blanscheflur has no story to tell in Riwalin’s absence. Her identity is so entwined with his, that his death is her own demise.

That poets’ exploration of the female lament as a space for female agency ends with Gottfried’s *Tristan* is further evident through his depictions of other figures’ grief. After Riwalin and Blanscheflur die, Gottfried states:

ir muget wol wizzen, ungehabe
 der was dâ vil und alze vil.
 nune sol ich aber noch enwil
 iuwer ôren niht beswaeren
 mit z'erbermeclîchen maeren,
 wan ez den ôren missehaget,
 swâ man von clage ze vil gesaget;
 und ist vil lützel iht sô guot,
 ez enswache, der's ze vil getuot. (v. 1852-60)

[You must know that there was wild lamentation, much and overmuch. But I must and will not afflict your ears with matter which are too distressing, since too much talk of grief offends them and there is nothing so good that it does not pale from being said too often.]

⁶ “Klagefiguren,” 70.

Here Gottfried provides commentary on the motif of the lament. First, he indicates that he, as well as his audience, is familiar with this convention. Second, Gottfried passes judgment on the elaborate depictions of the lament: It does no one any good. Thus the portrayal of the lament for Gottfried does not play an integral part in the development of his female protagonists. For instance, when Queen Isolde and the younger Isolde lament Morold's murder, Gottfried only briefly interjects that both women engage in behavior that is typical for grieving women (v. 7165-71). He does not present the audience with any elaborate descriptions. According to Küsters "Die höfische Frauenfigur hat ihre Ich-Mächtigkeit, die sie im Erkenntnissspiegel der Klage erlangte, an ihren Körper verloren. Und die Sprache des Körpers bleibt unverständlich—für die Umwelt, für den Autor und für sie selbst."⁷ The connection between the female lament and agency that we saw in *Erec*, *Nibelungenlied* and *Nibelungenklage* thus disappears.

The Female Lament and Agency

It is the depiction of the female lament that makes *Erec*, *Nibelungenlied* and *Nibelungenklage* so intriguing. My dissertation has shown that the female lament in these three works is not just a simple convention that medieval poets used to depict grief. Nor is the female lament a static motif, a process of representation that Wilhelm Frenzen contends is "durchweg zu mehr oder weniger vollendeter Gestaltung, zu einer in Gebärden und

⁷ "Klagefiguren," 70.

Haltung abgeschlossenen plastischen Bildhaftigkeit und Anschaulichkeit gelangen.”⁸ Instead the female lament is a dynamic space in which female agency may emerge.

In contrast to many scholars, my examination shows that there is female agency in medieval German texts, but that this agency tied to the lament was perceived as problematic. Poets tried on the one hand to carefully delineate the space within which women could gain agency (*Erec*, *Nibelungenklage*, *Eneasroman*), and on the other to explore the potential of the powerful woman (*Erec*, *Nibelungenlied*). These moments of female agency are closely tied to the motif of the female lament. Some poets, such as the ones discussed in this dissertation, exploited the motif to make their female characters protagonists in stories of their own.

Enite’s lament, in *Erec*, expressed within the context of courtly conventions, allows her to gain agency that is productive for her role as queen. Implicit in Hartmann’s story is a comparison between Dido and Enite. Dido’s agency results in her suicide and is thus ultimately portrayed as a negative force in the text. Enite’s agency, by contrast, does not lead to her death, but to the successful use of her voice to save Erec’s life. The lament plays a crucial role in the story because it represents a counterpart to Erec’s adventures. In the lamentation scene, which takes place at the center of the narrative and arrests the linear development of Erec’s story, Enite arises to the challenge of protecting herself and her husband and thus proves herself to be an ideal queen and partner for her husband. Hartmann therefore presents us with a positive image of female agency, albeit framed carefully within the defined feminine space of the lament.

In the *Nibelungenlied*, Kriemhild’s lament also creates a space for agency, but this agency is portrayed as destructive and dangerous. Kriemhild’s agency poses a threat to

⁸ Wilhelm Frenzen, “Klagebilder und Klagegebärden in der deutschen Dichtung des höfischen Mittelalters,” PhD diss., Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, 1936, 27.

courtly society making her tale a cautionary one, warning the reader of the threat of a powerful grieving widow. The motif of the female lament is central to our understanding of Kriemhild and the way in which she is able to gain agency in the poem. The use of this motif differentiates the *Nibelungenlied* from other heroic epics in which the male lament plays the dominant role while female characters are relegated to the sidelines. The emphasis on the lament places the *Nibelungenlied* in dialogue with *Erec* and the *Eneasroman*. Like the *Eneasroman*, it identifies the dangerous potential of a woman with agency, but it allows its female agent to drive the plot and remain one of the central characters throughout the poem.

The *Nibelungenklage* poet downplays the threatening potential of the female lament, and instead provides his audience with diverse models of lamentation. He distinguishes between productive and unproductive lamentation. The traditional female lament is unproductive, but not dangerous. Lamenting ladies in the *Nibelungenklage* wring their hands, cry, tear at their hair and breasts, and go mute with sorrow, but they only destruction that they cause is their own. Male characters lament by eulogizing the dead, burying the corpses, and starting to rebuild society. Two characters cross these gender boundaries. Dietlinde, Rüdiger's daughter, is left as the ruler of her father's kingdom, and she rises to this challenge. We are left with an image of a female ruler able to lament productively and assist in the rebuilding of society. King Etzel, by contrast, laments with the ladies and is portrayed as an ineffective and effeminate ruler whose honor is lost when he fails to take charge. The *Nibelungenklage* thus comments on the *Nibelungenlied* by allowing transgression of gender boundaries, but eliding any threat or danger from the lamentation process.

The variation in the manuscript redactions of the *Nibelungenlied* and the *Nibelungenklage* support my argument that the female lament was not a static motif, but a

discourse in which diverse poets contributed around the turn of the thirteenth century. While a few scholars have looked at manuscript variation for these texts, much still needs to be done to determine the ways in which the specific manuscript redactions reflect and refract different perspectives. My study shows that one of the issues with which the redactors grappled was the representation of female agency.

Different from other scholars, I look across generic boundaries to establish a medieval discourse on the lament. By comparing the lament in the *Nibelungenlied*, the *Nibelungenklage*, and *Erec*, I call into question the traditional generic distinctions. Unlike most heroic epics, in the *Nibelungenlied* men do not lament, but instead the lamentation is developed as a feminine space within which women are able to gain agency. While several scholars have noted courtly features in the *Nibelungenlied* that are at odds with traditional notions of the heroic epic, no one has identified the motif of the female lament as a dominant courtly aspect of the text.

Lamenting Ladies and the Power of Grief: A Future Project

This dissertation has shown that there is a need to examine more thoroughly the motif of the lament in conjunction with gender and agency in twelfth and thirteenth-century German literature. I have restricted my investigation to three central works that fall within the period between the composition of Heinrich von Veldeke's *Eneasroman* and Gottfried's *Tristan*. In developing this project further it will be essential to broaden the scope of my primary sources and explore other genres. Lyric and short narrative forms such as the *Minnereden* will provide additional material to make the case that there was a lively discourse on the female lament that had at its core a concern with female agency.

Further analysis would also benefit from an examination of religious texts and their use of the lament. As Caroline Walker Bynum and others have shown, there was a medieval notion that extreme lamentation and physical self-harm could bring one closer to God.⁹ This is an important aspect of the lament and overlaps with literary portrayals. The figure of Sigune in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, for example, crosses over into notions of the religious significance of extreme lamentation. Sigune's lamentation is portrayed as a sort of religious penance or even martyrdom.¹⁰

In developing this project further, it will be essential to examine in more detail the classical antecedents to the medieval portrayals of the lamenting lady. Clearly Heinrich, Hartmann, and other medieval German poets knew their classical sources very well. If an argument is to be made for a specifically medieval discourse on female agency in the lament, then it will be essential to compare and contrast with the medieval sources the representation of Virgil's Dido and other well known lamenting ladies of antiquity.

Finally, an expanded study must take into consideration the French sources of the medieval German texts. In my chapter on Erec I discussed briefly some of the significant differences between Chretien's version and Hartmann's reworking. The most obvious difference is the group of eighty mourning widow that Hartmann adds to his *Joie de la Court* episode. Further comparison was beyond the scope of this dissertation, but it would undoubtedly be fruitful to examine cultural differences in the representation of the lament and female agency. Taking into consideration the differences between Virgil's Dido and

⁹ *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Literature*. New York: Urzone, Inc., 1991.

¹⁰ Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, ed. Wolfgang Spiewok (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1992).

Heinrich's Dido or Hartmann's Enite and Chrétien's Enide, would deepen and broaden this analysis. It may help us understand why depictions of grief differ so significantly. Moreover, it could shed light on a new understanding of grief specific only to medieval Germany.

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