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‘Hardly gear for woman to meddle with’: Kriemhild’s Violence in Nineteenth-Century Women’s Versions of the *Nibelungenlied*

Mary Boyle

Rendering the *Nibelungenlied* into English was a man’s game for more than sixty years, from the summaries of Henry Weber (1814) and Thomas Carlyle (1831) to the verse translations of Jonathan Birch (1848) and William Nanson Lettsom (1850).[1] Things changed in 1877, when Annie Aubertine Woodward became not only the first woman, but also the first American, to produce an English-language adaptation of the medieval text. *Echoes from Mist-Land: The Nibelungen Lay* was published in Chicago under the pseudonym Auber Forestier.[2] By 1905, Forestier had been followed by four other women: Lydia Hands (*Golden Threads from an Ancient Loom: Das Nibelungenlied adapted to the use of young readers*, London, 1880), Margaret Armour (*The Fall of the Nibelungs*, London, 1897), Alice Horton (*The Lay of the Nibelungs*, London, 1898), and Gertrude R. Schottenfels (*Stories of the Nibelungen for Young People*, Chicago, 1905).[3] All but the last appeared in more than one edition. Forestier intended her work for ‘the general reader’, or ‘American lovers of romance and chivalry’; Hands and Schottenfels both adapted the text for children; Armour and Horton aimed to produce close direct translations, in prose and verse respectively. These nineteenth-century productions thus range from near word-for-word translations to retellings whose main events broadly correspond to the events of the *Nibelungenlied*. All are based, as we shall see, on nineteenth-century German publications.

In brief, the events of the *Nibelungenlied* (*c.*1200) comprise the marriage of the

Burgundian princess, Kriemhild, to the heroic Siegfried, and Siegfried's murder by Kriemhild's kinsman, Hagen, with the approval of her brother, Gunther. Then we hear of Kriemhild's remarriage and her vengeance: the massacre of the Burgundian knights and the deaths of Gunther and Hagen, the latter at Kriemhild's own hands – for which she herself is killed. Since the thirteenth century, audiences of the *Nibelungenlied* have endeavoured to understand Kriemhild, or even to provide an excuse or rationale for her violent actions, whether in the anonymous poetic Appendix, the *Klage*, transmitted alongside the *Nibelungenlied* in all of the early complete manuscripts; the C recension of the text of the epic, which often seeks to reduce Kriemhild's culpability in comparison to the other two main recensions, A and B; or even a thirteenth-century Latin sermon attributed to Berthold von Regensburg, which rejects the characterization of Kriemhild as an archetype of female wickedness.[4] But while it is possible to see a change in Kriemhild's character in the medieval text, charted through her different roles – young woman rejecting love, Siegfried's proud wife, distraught and vengeful widow – this change, as recent commentators have argued, must not be understood as a continual process or an inner development, but as something dictated by narrative events. Modern psychoanalysis and emotional standards cannot straightforwardly be applied to the characters in medieval texts, nor can the expectations of character stability or continuous development we might have in classic realist novels. Nonetheless, as our nineteenth-century writers and translators rewrote the *Nibelungenlied* for their various audiences, they applied to their material, to differing extents, current understandings of violent women. The results can be said to show their writers operating in variable proximity to their source texts and producing a range of attitudes to, and explanations of, Kriemhild and her actions.

Analysing these versions of the *Nibelungenlied* is not about determining the accuracy of these English-language texts when compared either to a medieval German source or a

modern German translation. Such assessments were, in any case, already being done at the time.[5] Translation can never be a simple one-to-one equivalence, but is a complex and creative process of negotiation, with great potential for the translator's conscious or unconscious agenda to inflect the translation. This is the case even when translators claim fidelity, insofar as such a thing is possible, as their aim. The text created through the process of translation is a new work in new words, influenced by the context in which it was produced, and with the potential to exert a future influence in its new literary setting.[6] These new versions of the *Nibelungenlied* appeared not just in a different language, but also in a fresh social and historical context. They must thus be understood as the literary productions of late nineteenth-century England and America, but they are also based on the literary production of thirteenth-century Germany, and this temporal displacement contributes an additional contextual layer. Susan Bassnett applies Schleiermacher's classic translation binary[7] to the act of 'translating across time': reshaping a medieval text for a modern audience 'in terms shaped by the world … they inhabit', versus giving that audience the tools and information to bring them towards the medieval text.[8] Both of these strategies are employed by the nineteenth-century women rewriters of the *Nibelungenlied*. It is thus crucial to situate their rewriting of the *Nibelungenlied* within the prevailing literary culture.

As the nineteenth century advanced, women wrote and published their work with increasing frequency, both in Britain and America. Writing was nonetheless not considered a wholly acceptable female pastime, and the woman who did choose to make a career of it was likely to find her work judged more severely, and less generously paid, than that of her male peers. In this context, translation provided a compromise as an appropriate literary activity for women which protected them from any dangers or demands to which independent authorship might expose them.[9] They were able to use the cover created by a perception of translation as inferior to other forms of literary production to express creativity, and even to

pass comment on socio-cultural politics, in the guise of reproducing someone else's words. Translators often had control over which texts they chose to translate, and could then intervene in those texts, whether in minor ways through lexical choices or in more major ones, making unsignalled changes to their sources. Paratextual material (introductions, prefaces, footnotes, afterwords) provided further opportunities to shape readers' interpretations.

While the failure to acknowledge the creativity inherent in translation allowed women to express themselves in a literary context relatively free from censure, it also perpetuated the perception of translation as a subordinate and auxiliary literary activity, particularly in a male-dominated academic setting.[10] Translation, though, also provided an opportunity for women to work within this world and prove themselves equal to the task. Francis Thompson, the fin-de-siècle English poet, wrote of Margaret Armour's translation: 'It is hardly gear for woman to meddle with, this hirsute old German epic; yet this woman has made of it better work than most men could do.'[11] Annie Aubertine Woodward's decision to publish under an androgynous pseudonym, Auber Forestier, was therefore relatively unusual, especially by the latter part of the nineteenth century. Woodward/Forestier may have hoped to avoid her work being pigeon-holed as women's writing, but Thompson's comment indicates that women translators could reasonably expect their work to be judged on its merits, even when the subject matter was not considered wholly suitable. Nevertheless, our other translators might have had additional protection against gendered criticisms of their subject matter. Children's literature, into which category Lydia Hands' and Gertrude Schottenfels' work fell, was viewed as a particularly suitable arena for women, and they were far from the only writers to recast medieval epics for a young audience. Edward Bell's Preface to Alice Horton's translation, meanwhile, in which he claims to be 'jointly responsible' for the work (Horton, p. viii), could be seen as in line with masculinizing and professionalizing tendencies among

antiquarians at the end of the nineteenth century. Equally this may be coincidental, as Bell also had no hesitation in intervening in male-authored translations.

A far greater problem than the sex of the translators was the behaviour of the *Nibelungenlied*'s female protagonist. Female perpetrators of violence were a source of fascination both within and outside of fictional contexts in a society which assumed that, despite appearances, women were essentially dangerous, and the 'ghastly, destructive energy lurking beneath female spaces and feminine graces' could surface at any time.[12] Yet this energy was, under certain circumstances, excusable. In Arthur Conan Doyle's *Charles Augustus Milverton* (1904), for example, revenge-induced female violence is not condemned, and a woman is allowed to avoid consequences for an act of murderous vengeance – albeit a more proportionate act than Kriemhild's. Virginia B. Morris argues that 'by making … [her] crimes sympathetic, Doyle defies the convention that women's criminality is not normal'.[13] This, though, is not normal criminality: the revenge is almost unwitnessed; there is no involvement from the authorities in what is a very specific kind of allowable female violence; and once the woman's drastic action has been condoned by a man (Holmes), the social order is quickly restored. Doyle's story corresponds to the contemporary fear that, calm exterior notwithstanding, women were unstable and constantly on the brink of violently disrupting social norms. Rather than normalizing female violence, its literary representation more usually served to portray it as a problem which was rarely justifiable, and which required a re-setting of the social order in its aftermath, often by men. Indeed, although female violence was not necessarily depicted for an ideological purpose, in practice its effect was often the reinforcement of the social order through regulation of gender roles, particularly the behaviour of women.

Outside the textual realm, violent women preoccupied the justice system, and this itself had an impact on literature. Two opposing responses are particularly relevant here. On

the one hand, insanity sometimes provided an explanation for female violence by removing culpability. While higher absolute numbers of men than women were acquitted on the grounds of insanity, women were proportionately far likelier to be acquitted on this basis. Such acquittals allowed Victorian society to continue to interpret women as passive, lacking in power and agency, rather than as active disrupters of societal norms.[14] This is encapsulated in Jane Eyre's reproach to Rochester: 'you speak of [Bertha] with hate — with vindictive antipathy. It is cruel — she cannot help being mad.'[15] Bertha's violent actions are explained by her insanity, and therefore cannot be held against her. Both Forestier and Hands explore ideas of madness and culpability in their adaptations of the *Nibelungenlied*.

On the other hand, violent women, 'women who violated hegemonic notions of orderly femininity', attracted 'more severe punishment than those who seemed "less threatening" ', because they were perceived to have disrupted the social order in a more disturbing fashion.[16] This approach is evident in those *Nibelungenlied* translations which seek to emphasize the transgressive nature of Kriemhild's actions. It can be seen in Forestier's adaptation, as well as to differing degrees in male-authored translations of the text, including the work of her immediate predecessors, Jonathan Birch and William Nanson Lettsom (note 1, above), as illustrated by two examples from the same strophe, in which Kriemhild brings her brother's decapitated head before Hagen.[17] The description is bland in all recensions: 'sines herren hovbet' ('his lord's head'). Birch renders this as 'the ghastly, dripping head of his much honoured king' (Birch, strophe 1428), while Lettsom (strophe 2450) inserts the descriptor 'remorseless' before a reference to Kriemhild which is entirely unqualified in A, B, and C. Thus Birch's intervention is much the more radical, but Lettsom also follows the pattern of demonizing violent women.[18]

* * *

Only two complete nineteenth-century translations of the *Nibelungenlied* were produced by

women. Because they strive to stay close to their source texts, their presentation of Kriemhild does not veer far from the medieval narrative. In this, they shed a different light on women's adaptations of the text, and correspond to Bassnett's category of translators whose strategy is to bring their readers close to the original.

Margaret Armour provides little by way of introductory matter to the original edition of her prose translation. Published in 1897, it was illustrated by her husband, W. B. MacDougall. In 1908, Everyman published an (undated) edition of her translation without illustrations, and with a seven-page Introduction authored by 'M.E.' and 'E.R.', which focused strongly on the German national significance of the *Nibelungenlied*.[19] In the first edition, there is a six-strophe verse, seemingly inspired by the *Nibelungenlied*, along with a note stating that Armour has primarily followed Karl Simrock's 'arrangement of the mediæval text', with additional consultation of Bartsch and Niendorf, the latter being a translation. It is likely that she is referring to the 1892 edition of Simrock's parallel text version.[20] This, like all his translations, is based on A, but with inclusions from B and C. The parallel text edition corresponds to Armour's description of the first twenty-three strophes of the twenty-eighth *âventiure* appearing in parenthesis.[21] Armour's author's note concludes: 'I hope that the plain prose rendering I have attempted may not be unwelcome to those who like a translation to bring them as near as possible to the original.' Both the verse and the note are initialled 'M.A.' The characterization of the text as a 'plain prose rendering' is not quite accurate: she was criticized on more than one occasion for her heavy use of complicating archaisms.[22] Nonetheless, this is a translation rather than a paraphrase, and, particularly given her attempt to reach those readers who like to be brought 'as near as possible to the original', it is perhaps unsurprising that there is little authorial comment on or alteration to Kriemhild in Armour's version of the *Nibelungenlied*.

There are, however, some small points in her translation worth considering. She follows

Simrock's inclusion of passages from the C recension, including the additional strophes at the end of the nineteenth *âventiure* in which Queen Ute, after retiring to Lorsch Abbey, encourages Kriemhild to join her. These include the following passage, as translated by Armour: 'After that Kriemhild forgave Gunther, and yet, through his fault, lost her great treasure, her heart's dole was a thousand times worse than afore' (Armour, pp. 125-6). This had been rendered by Simrock (1892) as follows:

> Sît daz diu vrouwe Kriemhilt ûf Gunther verkos
> und doch von sînen schulden den grôzen hort verlôs
> dô wart ir herzenleide tûsent stunde mêr
>
> Seit Kriemhild König Gunthern wieder schenkte Huld,
> Und dann doch den großen Hort verlor durch seine Schuld,
> Ihres Herzeleides ward da noch viel mehr
>
> (strophe 1182)
>
> (Kriemhild then forgave/*returned favour to* Gunther, yet through his fault lost the great hoard. Then her heartache was a thousand times worse)[23]

Characteristically for the C recension, this inclusion is sympathetic to Kriemhild, and depicts her adversaries negatively. However, Armour's nineteenth 'Adventure' is immediately followed by a full-page image as a frontispiece to Book II, depicting Kriemhild holding Gunther's severed head. Facing this image is a full-page title: 'Kriemhild with the head of

Gunther'.

<Insert Fig. 1 asap at full page size>

<Caption: *Figure 1.* 'Kriemhild with the head of Gunther', Frontispiece to Book II, *The Fall of the Nibelungs*, translated by Margaret Armour (London, 1897). UC San Diego Library, California: PT1579.A3 A6.>

Although Armour's illustrator was her husband, it is unclear how much control she would have had over the positioning of images within the printed book. However that may be, Kriemhild's murder of her brother, which occurs at the very end of the narrative, is here juxtaposed with her forgiveness of him. This forecasting of the disaster to come is entirely in keeping with the medieval text, which explains in the first strophe that many knights will die because of Kriemhild, and continues to allude to inevitable catastrophe and betrayal throughout. The image of Kriemhild holding the head of her brother casts its shadow across the entire second half of the narrative.

There are two possible ways to interpret this juxtaposition. Initially it might be understood to reflect poorly on Kriemhild by implying that her forgiveness of Gunther is ultimately worthless, and will be violently reneged upon. In this reading, Kriemhild's textual expression of forgiveness is immediately followed by a visual image of a transgressive rejection of 'orderly femininity',[24] whether we read the violent act as the result of 'her heart's dole' or of anger, which colours the reader's impression of her for the rest of the narrative. More likely, the image is calculated to increase tension across the second part of the narrative by foreshadowing the tragedy to come, and by removing any false sense of hope indicated by the additional strophe describing Kriemhild's decision to forgive the man who has caused her immense suffering. It does not at this stage offer any comment on culpability, for which we

must wait until the end of the story.

The textual evidence for Armour's view of Kriemhild is subtle, even at the narrative's climax. Bearing in mind that any changes are very minor, her translation of Kriemhild's offer to Hagen may provide some clues:

> welt ir mir geben widere, daz ir mir habt genomen,
> sô megt ir noch wol lebende heim zuo den Burgunden komen
>
> Wollt ihr mir wiedergeben, was ihr mir habt genommen,
> So mögt ihr wohl noch lebend heim zu den Burgonden kommen
>
> (Simrock 1892, strophe 2482/2304)
>
> (If you return to me what you have taken from me, then you might well return home alive to Burgundy)

Armour writes: 'Give me back what *thou hast* taken from me, and *ye* may *both* win back alive to Burgundy' (Armour, p. 259; my italics). Although the pronoun 'ir', which could be singular or plural, is the same in both lines of the Middle High German and in Simrock's translation, Armour translates it so that it is clearly singular – referring only to Hagen – in the first line, and clearly plural – referring to both Hagen and Gunther – in the second, removing any ambiguity about Kriemhild's offer. Such an intervention, small as it is, must be understood as deliberate. Armour's Kriemhild blames Hagen exclusively for what she has lost, but makes it clear that his actions will have repercussions for Gunther as well. In other words, it answers the question over culpability posed by the image of Kriemhild with Gunther's head: it is Hagen who is ultimately responsible for the grisly end to Kriemhild's

forgiveness of her brother.

This has perhaps more implications for our reading of Hagen, who is about to tell Kriemhild that he will not reveal the treasure's location while any of his lords is still alive. In Armour's translation, there can be absolutely no question that he makes this statement in the full knowledge that his king's life depends on his answer. Armour thus places the responsibility for Gunther's death more squarely on Hagen. However, she then removes Kriemhild's assertion that her suffering is Hagen's fault: 'so habt *ir* übele geltes mich gewert', 'So habt *ihr* üble Vergeltung mir gewährt' ('you have granted me bad recompense') (Simrock 1892, strophe 2487/2309; my italics) becomes 'I come off ill in the reckoning', which complicates the relative morality of the two characters, because Kriemhild does not indicate a culprit or culprits. But when we take the image of Kriemhild holding her brother's head in conjunction with the narrative, we understand the image as a foreshadowing of near-unavoidable tragedy. The only possibility of averting disaster is explicitly rejected by Hagen. Kriemhild's actions are in no way condoned, but Armour tweaks the text to convey that she is not the sole architect of the catastrophe.

Alice Horton, like Armour, takes great pains to remain faithful to the medieval text. Her translation, unlike Armour's, is preceded by an abundance of prefatory material: not only the six-page Preface by her editor, Edward Bell, identifying Karl Bartsch's edition of the B recension as Horton's source (p. xi), but also Carlyle's full essay on the *Nibelungenlied*, by this point seventy years old and rather out of date; and a facsimile page (with transcription) from the St Gallen *Nibelungenlied* manuscript. Bell was not only Horton's editor, but with his brother co-proprietor of George Bell and Sons, her publisher. The decision to include Carlyle's essay is therefore likely to have been his rather than hers, probably with an eye to bulking out the volume for reasons of profitability.

The Preface is credited to Bell, but we cannot assume that Horton bears no

responsibility for its content. Rather than commenting on the substance of the *Nibelungenlied*, the Preface largely concerns how the translation, for which Bell takes joint credit, has been approached. He was certainly an interventionist editor. In the Preface to a George Bell collection of Goethe's letters, he thanks 'Mr. Slater for his translation of the Leipsic letters, which, however, has been revised throughout with a view to more literal exactness'.[25] Bell may well have influenced the form and style of the text, and he expresses very definite views on translation, arguing for both literalism and an equivalence of form as essential aspects. He sees prose as wholly inadequate for the task of translating the *Nibelungenlied*. This is presented as the view of both editor and translator, who 'have striven not to yield to the tempting idea – too often a delusion – that by sacrificing the letter they may preserve the spirit' (p. ix). This is clearly a direct criticism of 'Mr Auber Forestier', since it invokes Forestier's argument in her Preface that 'simple English prose' is preferable to 'a literal translation' because the latter 'often renders the spirit difficult of access while striving strictly to imitate the letter' (Forestier, pp. v-vi).

The process of translation, though, does not actually allow the translator to stick precisely to the letter of the original, and Bell concedes (citing Dryden) 'it is the business of a translator … to make his work *resemble* the original' (my italics). This subjective goal of resemblance takes precedence over the earlier valorization of 'close adherence' when it comes to decisions about form and language. With an appeal for 'latitude in respect to the metre', the translation appears in ballad form because, 'to the ordinary ear', the metre of the *Nibelungenlied* 'resemble[s]' ballad metre. In terms of language, 'suitable English' is 'English which is familiar to everyone in the Bible' precisely because it is temporally distancing: the desire is expressed to 'put English readers, as far as possible, in the same position as the German who reads the work in one of the several modern versions'. In other words, the aim is not to recreate the thirteenth-century *Nibelungenlied*, but to facilitate a

contemporary encounter with a text whose world is unfamiliar and discomfiting: ‘the task involves the presentation to a modern reader of a work which belongs to a distant and nebulous past, deals with a primitive and imperfect phase of human culture, and teems with motives which, if not eradicated from human nature, are no longer regarded as legitimate and are often repugnant to modern ideas’ (pp. viii-ix).

Bell does not discuss any specifics, but the decision to rely only on the B recension is relevant here: C is dismissed as ‘considerably altered … to suit the more courtly taste of a later period of culture’ (p. xi). This has the effect that none of the strophes more sympathetic towards Kriemhild which Armour translated from the C text make their way into this version. Readers of Alice Horton’s *Nibelungenlied*, then, are being prepared to be shocked by what they read, and no indication is made within the text that intervening audiences may also have struggled with the work’s values or world-view. The decision ‘to avoid words of merely modern use’ (p. ix), even alongside the decision to avoid deliberate archaisms, allows, even encourages, the reader to hold the text at arm’s length.

As to whether the Preface really does represent the vision of both Horton and Bell, our only evidence is the translation itself. The *Nibelungenlied* was the only medieval German work with which Bell seems to have had any association, and there is no reason to assume that he was familiar with Middle High German, though this is not evidence that he was not. Even if Bell were unable to read the medieval text, however, Horton’s process of comprehending the original is inseparable from the process of rendering it into the published English version edited by Bell. Perhaps all that can be said is that if Horton had opened other translations of which he was the editor, she would have been aware that he was an interventionist who advocated a literalist approach to translation, and that there is thus a reasonable likelihood that, had she not been sympathetic to his approach, she would not have worked with George Bell and Sons.

English syntax is the most frequent casualty of the self-imposed constraints under which Horton is operating, which often mean she renders the text half-line by half-line. This is in keeping with the distancing effect endorsed in the Preface. Occasionally, though, the metre demands (or permits) an addition or an omission, as for example when Kriemhild parades her son in order to antagonize Hagen, aware of the likely consequences:

> Dô der strît niht anders kunde sîn erhaben
> (Kriemhilde leit daz alte in ir herzen was begraben)
> dô hiez si tragen ze tische den Etzelen sun.
> wie kunde ein wîp durch râche immer vreislîcher tuon?
> (Bartsch 1870, strophe 1912)

> Since the conflict could not be brought about in any other way (Kriemhild's old sorrow was buried in her heart), she commanded Etzel's son to be brought to the table. How could a woman act more horribly in pursuit of revenge?

Horton renders this:

> Since means there were not elsewise to cause the strife to start,
> (Kriemhilda's olden sorrow lay graven in her heart)
> She bade them bring to table King Etzel's little son:
> How could a vengeful woman more cruelly have done?
> (Horton, strophe 1912)

Horton's inclusion of the word 'little' emphasizes the 'repugnant' nature of Kriemhild's

actions by heightening the child's vulnerability. The translation of 'durch râche' as an adjective, 'vengeful', then characterizes Kriemhild herself, rather than simply her actions, making her wholly depraved: the woman and her actions cannot be separated, nor those actions rationally explained. The word 'little' must be regarded as a deliberate intervention because an unqualified use of the word 'sun' is again translated as 'little son' two strophes later, while, when Ortlieb is killed, 'houbet' ('head', Bartsch, strophe 1961) becomes 'the infant's head' (Horton, strophe 1961) – which of course reflects at least as negatively on Hagen as it does on Kriemhild.

We see similar inventions towards the end: relatively minor, but with the effect of stigmatizing Kriemhild. The line 'Sie lie si ligen sunder durch ir ungemach' ('She had them separated, through her *umgemach*' (Bartsch 1870, strophe 2366), for example, becomes 'her evil mood obeying'. The word 'ungemach' can be read as *Unruhe* ('concern', 'disquiet'), *Verdruss* ('chagrin'), or *Klage* ('sorrow'),[26] and could certainly indicate a desire to inflict discomfort or suffering.[27] But while *Übelbefinden* is a potential reading, its meaning is not related to evil, a potential meaning for *übel*, but *Unwohlsein* or *Unpässlichkeit*,[28] namely 'indisposition', 'malaise', or 'ailment', relating to the meaning of *übel* as 'sick'. Horton has here chosen an interpretation which offers the most negative possible depiction of Kriemhild – and is incorrect. An inclination to view Kriemhild's actions negatively has thus inadvertently interfered with the goal of 'literal' translation. What is noteworthy about instances like this translation of *ungemach* is that an expectation of 'repugnant' behaviour in the text, as outlined in the Preface, can affect translation choices, even occasionally to the point of inaccuracy, despite the translator professing literal adherence to the source text. Horton, writing in the late nineteenth century, cannot conceive of Kriemhild's behaviour passing without censure at this point in the narrative. Her *Lay of the Nibelungs* bears witness to the impossibility of entirely literal translation: the receiving culture inevitably has some

impact on translation, no matter how much effort is made to avoid it.

* * *

Adaptations offer the greatest potential for analysing authorial perspective on Kriemhild, for they aim to bring the historical material to contemporary audiences, rather than vice versa. Forestier, Hands, and Schottenfels all attempt in various ways to excuse or downplay Kriemhild's actions, and these are best discussed in reverse chronological order, from Schottenfels' near-total rehabilitation of Kriemhild's character, through Hands' partial rehabilitation, to Forestier's complex approach, which initially seems to absolve Kriemhild, before suggesting that her transgressive behaviour has left her beyond redemption.

Forestier, Hands, and Schottenfels all used modern translations of the *Nibelungenlied* to produce their adaptations. Schottenfels provides no information about her source, while Forestier and Hands name Simrock as theirs (Forestier, p. vi; Hands, p. x). Given that Schottenfels adapted other German works for children, it is reasonable to assume that she was working from a German text and not an English translation, but it has not been possible to identify which. Simrock's work was a common first port of call for nineteenth-century *Nibelungenlied* reception in the anglophone world, and it is not unlikely that Schottenfels had access to it, though this can only be speculation. Because their treatment of their source material is relatively creative, and adheres to the narrative events in broad terms and not close detail, there is little further evidence available to narrow down their immediate sources.

Hands' and Schottenfels' work is in fact unusual amongst children's versions in following the German narrative to its bloody climax, rather than ending around Siegfried's death, and in being specifically identified with the *Nibelungenlied* itself, rather than a wider tradition. There were several anonymous male-authored children's books based on the Siegfried material. These often bear little relation to the *Nibelungenlied*, drawing instead on the Norse material, the late medieval *Hürnen Seyfrid*, or simply on knowledge of Wagner.

Thomas Cartwright's *Sigurd the Dragon-Slayer The Vikings' Hero (Sigurd the Dragon-Slayer: A Twice-Told Tale)* (1907) first rewrites the Norse material, and then begins again with an adaptation of the German, heavily based on Carlyle's essay-cum-paraphrase. A version by Mary MacGregor (*Stories of Siegfried, c.*1908) does include Kriemhild's revenge, but deals with it in five sentences, omitting any mention of Hagen's and Gunther's deaths as distinct from the other Burgundians, while the anonymous *Siegfried and Kriemhild. A Story of Passion and Revenge* (1912) relates the full narrative.[29] In common with many of these adapters, Schottenfels and Hands also take material from the Norse tradition, particularly when describing Siegfried's youth. Neither cites a source for this material, but it seems likely that they too were drawing on Wagner.

Forestier's adaptive approach is unusual in versions of the *Nibelungenlied* not aimed at children, but, given that she describes her work as 'holding with strict accuracy' to the *Nibelungenlied*, it is worth enquiring a little further into her source. What all three members of our last group of women adapters say and do not say about their sources is, in fact, of interest. There is no evidence that any was able to read Middle High German, and Forestier, the most likely candidate, dissembles on this point, declaring that 'The text used has been mainly that of Karl Simrock, who has been occupied with the publication of the Nibelungen Lay for upwards of half a century' (Forestier, p. vi). Simrock returned to the *Nibelungenlied* repeatedly after publishing his first translation in 1827, and Forestier's phrasing allows the reader to assume that she means an edition, rather than a translation, though even a cursory reading of her text suggests that she had recourse to the latter. We can return to Simrock's strophe 1334/1443 (A: 1334; B: 1391/1394; C: 1421) as a shibboleth to clarify the matter. In his main source, the A recension, it begins, 'ich wene der ubel valant Kriemhit [sic] daz geriet' ('I believe the evil devil thus advised Kriemhild'), and the B recension agrees with it. In several of his *Nibelungenlied* versions, including the 1868 parallel text publication,

Simrock replaces it with the corresponding strophe from C, which does not mention the devil. Forestier, however, at the relevant point in the narrative, describes the 'foul fiend' (Forestier, p. 122) inspiring Kriemhild to revenge. Forestier's references in her Introduction to the inclusion of Schnorr von Carolsfeld's woodcuts in 'Simrock's large sized edition of the lay' (Forestier, p. xv) are a further clue. Simrock only reproduced these woodcuts alongside his translation, in the two editions it went through preceding Forestier's 1877 publication, and never in conjunction with the medieval text. In his edition of 1867, Simrock's translation includes the C variation in strophe 1334. But in 1873, he translates the A strophe with its reference to the devil. Everything points to this edition[30] being Forestier's source.

We can now return to the question of whether Forestier also consulted the medieval text. While it cannot definitively be stated that she did not – and Simrock's 1874 student edition does not include the substitute C strophe – we know that she both used a translation and tried to obscure this fact. There is no reason to assume she had any proficiency in Middle High German, and the circumstantial evidence even suggests the opposite. She was, though, working from a full and – with all appropriate caveats – close translation prepared by a philologist. Then again, it must be said, so was Lydia Hands, whose statement that Simrock's 'edition … in modernized German enabled me to study [the text] in the original' might even point towards the parallel text. Hands' inclusion of the Schnorr woodcuts, however, suggests one of the illustrated Simrock translations as her source as well as Forestier's, although the same test as used above points to the 1867 version: Hands does not mention the Devil (Hands, p. 44). Even our most flexible adapter, Gertrude Schottenfels, may well have been working from a close translation like Simrock's. Ultimately, however, while our anglophone adapters may have relied on their modern German sources, they thoroughly shaped their own works.

Stories of the Nibelungen for Young People was in 1905 Schottenfels' first attempt to

adapt a work for children, but by 1909 she had also published children's versions of Wolfram's *Parzival*, as well as of works by Richard von Volkmann, Rudolph Baumbach, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. No paratexts appear alongside her *Stories of the Nibelungen* beyond a pronunciation guide for names, but her reworking of the narrative, and of Kriemhild's part in particular, is extensive, and results in an almost complete whitewashing of Kriemhild's character and actions.

She reports Kriemhild's desire for revenge when Siegfried's wounds bleed in Hagen's presence, though she absolves Gunther of his responsibility, writing 'She knew by this sign that Hagen was guilty of her husband's death, and she swore undying vengeance' (Schottenfels, p. 109), whereas the medieval Kriemhild assigns blame to both men (*Nibelungenlied* B, strophe 1043/1046). Schottenfels returns repeatedly to the theme of revenge – though only upon Hagen – when the hoard is stolen; during her years in Worms before her marriage to Etzel; and when Rüdiger arrives with Etzel's suit. Rüdiger then becomes a straightforward accomplice: 'when he found that revenge was what she longed for, he saw his opportunity' (p. 115). This is an alteration of the medieval Rüdiger's more general and conditional promise: 'er mv̊ses ser engelten vnt het iv iemen iht getan' ('had anyone done you harm, he would have to pay for it') (*Nibelungenlied* B, strophe 1253/1256). In Schottenfels' adaptation, then, Kriemhild's quest for revenge is not personal and private, but is endorsed by the society she joins through marriage. Despite this, Schottenfels gives no reason for her invitation to the Burgundians beyond what she gives Etzel: 'she was becoming ashamed of being a stranger in a foreign land without any kinspeople of her own' (p. 117). There is no extended meditation on her desire to revenge herself upon Gunther or Hagen (*Nibelungenlied* B, strophes 1388-94/1391-7). Even when the Burgundians arrive, 'for a few days all went well' (p. 128), and when the violence begins, Kriemhild has nothing to do with it. With no previous indication that anyone has planned anything, 'the Huns had fallen upon

Gunther's men and slain them all' (p. 128).

The greatest alteration, though, is Schottenfels' treatment of events at the end of the text, when Hagen refuses to reveal the location of the treasure hoard:

> she said that she would spare Gunther's life if Hagen would tell her where the gold was secreted.
>
> But Hagen would not tell his secret, even to save the life of his liege lord and kinsman. And so she ordered that both of them should be beheaded, according to the custom of these olden times. And thus at last was Siegfried's death avenged by the once gentle and beautiful queen.
>
> (pp. 130-1)

Like Armour, Schottenfels makes Hagen explicitly responsible for Gunther's death. Despite the indication that Kriemhild is no longer 'gentle and beautiful', this ending fundamentally alters her depiction and her ultimate fate. Kriemhild does not commit any act of violence herself, instead ordering someone else to execute Hagen along with her brother. We assume that this is Dietrich, who willingly delivers the two men to Kriemhild, with the sole proviso that he be the one to execute them: 'he sought Kriemhild, and made her give her word of honor that he, and he alone, should be permitted to put them to death. After that he turned the prisoners over into her keeping' (p. 129). Kriemhild presumably keeps her side of the bargain, as Schottenfels does not mention her breaking 'her word of honor'. This is a departure from the medieval text, in which Dietrich, handing Gunther and Hagen over to Kriemhild, asks her to let the foreigners benefit from their connection with him ('nu svlt ir di ellenden min vil wol geniezen lan' (*Nibelungenlied* B, strophe 2361/2364) and she reassures

him that she will gladly do this (‘Si iach, si tæat iz gerne’ (*Nibelungenlied* B, strophe 2362/2365). As we know, she breaks her word. Worse even is Kriemhild’s murder of Hagen with her own hands, as her own husband says:

> ‘Waffen’ sprach der fv̊rste. ‘wi ist nv tot gelegen
> von eines wibes handen der aller beste degen,
> der ie chom ce stvrme oder ie schilt getrvch!
> swi vient ich im wære, ez ist mir leide genvch.’
>
> (*Nibelungenlied* B, strophe 2371/2374)

> ‘Alas!’ said the prince, ‘how can it be that the best knight who ever came to battle or carried a shield now lies dead at a woman’s hands. Even though he was my enemy, this causes me great suffering.’

This is not to suggest that Kriemhild is perceived neutrally after the deaths she has caused, but that male characters co-operate with her up to this point, as illustrated by Dietrich’s delivering Gunther and Hagen up to her. To a nineteenth-century audience, even an adult one, a reversal of traditional behaviour and associated fears of ‘reverse penetration’ by a sword-wielding woman were no less horrifying than to a medieval one.[31] Where children are concerned, we must reckon also with fairy-tales as instruments of moral instruction, and it is clear from her opening (‘In the good old days of Long Ago’, p. 8) that Schottenfels is calling upon this genre. Kriemhild is not presented as the villain; our sympathies are to remain with her. Schottenfels therefore rewrites her actions to be compatible with societal norms, so that Kriemhild does not engage in direct violence, instead keeping ‘her word of honor’, offered to a knight. Kriemhild can thus, near enough, belong to the same category of princess as the

protagonists of those fairy tales judged appropriate for children. Active female violence is for stepmothers and wicked fairies, but even Snow White tacitly endorses her tormenter's fate, condemned by the Prince to dance in red hot shoes. Kriemhild is perhaps one step closer to the violence, having given the order for the beheading, but she is still held at a distance. Indeed, she may have desired vengeance on Hagen for years, but Dietrich is the first character to suggest that Gunther should be killed, and, as the sole person with authority to put either man to death, must be viewed as having the final say, even after Kriemhild has given her order.

Repercussions for Kriemhild are therefore minimal. She is absolved both of personal violence and of instigating the earlier violence. Neither Gunther nor Hagen is killed on the spur of the moment, or in order to force the other to talk, but in line with an honour agreement which gives ultimate authority to a male character, and in a manner 'according to the custom of these olden times'. Schottenfels' Kriemhild may no longer be 'gentle and beautiful', but we are left with the conclusion that, since she has kept her promise to Dietrich, and both circumstances and public opinion (in the form of both Rüdiger and Dietrich) are in her favour, she cannot really be in the wrong – albeit with the implied caveat that such behaviour would not be acceptable in the modern world.

Lydia Hands' treatment of Kriemhild is altogether more complex. Kriemhild is not rehabilitated, but her actions are given an explanation with contemporary resonance: grief-induced madness at the loss of her child. Hands characterizes her work as 'an attempt to bring the main features of the Nibelungen Lay before the notice of the younger portion of the British public', but is at pains to characterize her adaptation as generally faithful, only asking 'the indulgence of critics for occasional departures from the strict letter of the text' (Hands, pp. ix-x). Her object 'has simply been to collect some of the golden threads of beauty that lay scattered through the poem, and to braid them together in such a form as might be acceptable

to the dear young friends for whom the story was written' (p. x). Like Schottenfels, Hands feels that not all of the *Nibelungenlied* is appropriate for children. Trumping this, however, is her sense of an ethno-nationalistic duty to make the narrative available: 'a story so popular amongst our Teutonic cousins, ought not to be altogether unfamiliar to the youth on this side [of] the German Ocean' (p. ix). And so she signals to the adults to whom the Preface is directed both that this is not the real version of the story, and that she is aware of that fact.

As David Blamires observes, 'the transposition of German children's books into English was not a straightforward process. Even where books were conscientiously translated, they were frequently subject to excisions and alterations in order to make the material more acceptable to English readers.'[32] Hands endeavours to represent the major narrative events of the *Nibelungenlied*, and would therefore presumably meet Blamires' subjective standard of a 'conscientious' translator, but, as he indicates, this does not mean that she presents the text as she found it in Simrock. She adapts it to make it acceptable for her new young audience. Ultimately an 'acceptable' form turns out to mean cutting out all the sex – Brunhild and Gunther's wedding night, for example, is rewritten as 'a wrestling-match' (p. 27) – and keeping all the violence, but reducing Kriemhild's culpability on the legally sanctioned grounds of insanity. Clearly, this requires a fundamental rethinking of Kriemhild's narrative.

In Hands' version, Kriemhild's grief at Siegfried's death does not drive her insane. Initially, she is inclined towards revenge only in a rather non-specific fashion. Her transition to active violence occurs after Ortlieb's murder at Hagen's hands. This is not to say that revenge is not mentioned earlier; indeed Hands' Kriemhild listens to Rüdiger once he has 'hinted at Etzel's power to avenge her injuries, and to punish Siegfried's murderer' (p. 42). As with Schottenfels, then, Kriemhild's general desire for revenge is societally sanctioned. But the revenge remains detached from Kriemhild herself: she laments to God 'on account of

Siegfried's death, praying him to avenge the foul deed', while, entirely independently of any of her actions, 'Criemhild's wrongs had kindled wrath and indignation amongst the Huns' (p. 52). In the medieval text, while Kriemhild does involve prayer in her desire for vengeance, she asks that God use Siegfried's friends to avenge his death, rather than that he do so directly. This also occurs much earlier in the narrative, immediately after Siegfried's wounds bleed in Hagen's presence, revealing him as the murderer (strophes A 986–97; B 1042–3/1045–6; C 1057-8). Despite mourning Siegfried in her prayers (strophes A 1668; B 1727/1730; C 1770), Kriemhild does not at this point ask God to avenge his death, having by now taken matters into her own hands (strophes A 1692; B 1751/1754; C 1795). In contrast, as depicted by Hands, subsequent events are driven by the Huns, rather than by Kriemhild, who only commands action when urged by 400 knights – who remain the driving force. This invocation of external authority and public opinion is similar to Schottenfels' strategy for excusing Kriemhild. Here, her suggestion is legalistic, rather than vengeful, and directed exclusively at Hagen: 'she told them to come with her to confront her enemy, and if he did not deny the crimes of which she accused him *they* could decide whether or no he deserved death' (p. 53; my italics). For some time after the arrival of the Burgundians, then, Kriemhild is a fairly passive figure, with a rather abstract desire for revenge.

Things change only after the slaughter begins. At this point, Kriemhild is in another room, entirely unaware of events. On hearing about the violence outside, Hagen rushes at Kriemhild and Etzel's son and decapitates him so that – as in the medieval text – the child's head lands in his mother's lap. This is the turning point for Kriemhild: 'Then was there such a mighty wail of anguish and terror resounding through the palace, that it must have pierced the very courts of heaven' (pp. 59-60). This is a deviation from the medieval text, in which, as we have seen, Ortlieb's presence and death are far from accidental. The medieval Ortlieb is bait, a deliberate provocation to Hagen. His anticipated death is calculated to incite Etzel

and the Huns against the Burgundians. Hands' Kriemhild plays no part in his death, which turns her from a passive figure to a violent madwoman. After recovering from a fainting fit she 'rushed wildly into the hall, where they were holding parley. Her golden hair hung dishevelled upon her shoulders, and a fire as of madness glittered in her eye' (p. 60). Almost immediately 'a frenzy, as of madness, possessed Criemhild; her enemy should not escape, even though her own life should be the penalty'. It is at this point that she orders the hall to be burnt with the Burgundians inside (p. 65). The death of Kriemhild's son is thus clearly identified as the catalyst for madness, which is not mentioned before this point, and this madness triggers her indiscriminate violence.

Further violent outbursts are regularly prefaced with references to her state of mind, such as the 'feverish joy' with which she greets Dietrich, bringing her the captive Gunther and Hagen (p. 69). When it comes to the climax, we read that she 'caused her servants to go at once to Gunther's prison chamber and cut off his head. Then seizing it by the long hair which betokened his royal lineage, she re-entered Hagen's dungeon. Her eye glittering with the light of madness, [she held] the ghastly thing before him' (p. 71). Hands does not attempt to excuse Kriemhild for her actions, or to downplay them – indeed she emphasizes the violence and its consequences. The frequency and extremity of violence in Victorian children's literature, coupled with immense reticence about sexuality, has long been of scholarly interest. As Anthony Kearney explains, 'Victorian writing for children is often marked by an odd mixture of the prudish, the high-minded, and the horrific. Many writers who flinched from the remotest sexual allusion were happy to regale their readers with scenes of torture, violent death, and general mayhem, all set out in gory detail.'[33] But Kriemhild's violence, committed by a wife and mother, is problematic in a formerly sympathetic protagonist. Until this point, she has, on the whole, demonstrated 'true feminine propriety [which] resided in skills of control and concealment'; now she loses that control utterly.[34]

This is not simply a case of Mangham's 'horrors lurk[ing] beneath calm, deceptive, and beguiling feminine appearances';[35] Hands has, until now, cultivated Kriemhild as a likeable figure. The explanation that she has been driven mad by the murder of her son allows Hands to rationalize her violence, anchoring it in maternal loss. Hands thus simultaneously removes Kriemhild's transgressive action in sacrificing her son for revenge, and explains her later actions.

The idea of mothers murdering their children was not unknown to the Victorians, and insanity was a common ground for acquittal.[36] Hands, however, not only does not engage with this trope, but she subverts it. Kriemhild is a devoted mother. Samantha Pegg explains that female insanity was understood 'as a mechanism to preserve the idea of the female as moral guardian'.[37] This is precisely what Hands does: invoking madness removes Kriemhild's agency, and thus her guilt, while the madness itself is triggered by an external attack on the ultimate role of moral guardianship: motherhood. And given this extenuating circumstance, it comes as no surprise that Hands mutes the violence of Kriemhild's death – she is not hacked, screaming, to pieces. Instead Hildebrand, 'with his dagger struck her to the heart' (p. 73). The punishment remains death, to match her social and moral extinction, but the violence which brings it about is less extreme.

Forestier, like Hands, emphasizes the horror of Kriemhild's violent actions, while simultaneously providing some level of excuse. Like Hands, she admits to having adapted the *Nibelungenlied*, rather than having followed it precisely. She is clear about what she intends to produce: because the 'scholar prefers seeking the original … [and] the general reader is apt to be repelled by a literal translation', she has 'retold its tale in simple English prose, in style, so far as possible, adapted to the mode of thought and expression of our day and country'. Ultimately, her stated intention is to make 'Germany's national epic poem of the days of chivalry' available to 'American lovers of romance and chivalry'. She draws a distinction

between a past Germany and a present America, to be overcome by translation and an already-extant shared tendency towards chivalry. As if it were not clear enough that she regards her subject matter with distinct nostalgia, she describes herself as 'longing to awaken with loving hand long reverberating echoes from the mystic land of mist'. This temporal separation is to be reconciled by avoiding literalism – since the spirit of works of art 'belongs to all periods', language is 'outer crusting'. Yet despite her claim to be 'holding with strict accuracy to the incidents' of plot, her adaptation suggests that to reach 'American lovers of romance and chivalry', not just the language, but also the events of the narrative, must be altered (Forestier, pp. v-vi). While her adaptation follows the narrative of the *Nibelungenlied* reasonably closely, she takes a certain licence. Her treatment of Kriemhild is a particularly clear example: Forestier's horror at her violence is telegraphed through emotive language and a focus on its consequences. At first, she reduces Kriemhild's culpability by presenting the brutal revenge partly as the actions of a madwoman, and partly as dictated by supernatural forces beyond Kriemhild's control. Ultimately, though, Forestier seems unconvinced by either of her explanations, and Kriemhild and her violence are roundly and explicitly condemned.

Forestier sows the seeds of her supernatural excuses for Kriemhild early on. In the medieval text, after Siegfried has violently subdued Brünhild for Gunther, he takes from her her ring and girdle, which he gives to Kriemhild. We are warned that this will cause him grief later ('daz wart im sider leit', 'Das ward ihm später leid'; *Nibelungenlied* A, strophes 627-8, Simrock 1873, pp. 119-20). Forestier expands this statement, which in the medieval text refers to nothing more mysterious than human actions concerning the ring and girdle, as follows: 'A curse was on the ill-fated ring and girdle, and if they did not endow Kriemhild with the magic strength of their former possessor, they made her, nevertheless, the instrument of incalculable mischief' (p. 53). Later on, Forestier tells us that 'the day was destined to

come when dame Kriemhild would requite woe with woe' (Forestier, p. 94). While not as clear as the curse she assigns to the ring and girdle, this further emphasizes the sense that Kriemhild's actions are not her own, but are dictated by supernatural forces. Similarly, the narrator's aside 'Ich wene der ubel valant Kriemhit daz geriet', 'Der üble Teufel war es wohl, der Kriemhilden rieth' ('I think/*It was probably* the evil devil *who* advised Kriemhild') (*Nibelungenlied* A, strophe 1391/1394; Simrock 1873, p. 247) is rendered as a definite event: 'One night the foul fiend tempted her in her dreams … When she awoke, she found it impossible to shake off the impression made by this dream, and it haunted her by day and by night' (p. 122). Despite the supernatural explanation providing clear exculpatory potential, however, Forestier does not wholeheartedly maintain it as a rationale, also invoking insanity.

The effect in *Echoes from Mist-Land* is rather different to that in Hands' *Golden Threads* because, where Hands associates Kriemhild's (partially) exculpatory madness with her position as bereaved mother, Forestier introduces her madness with reference to her less sympathetic position as brooding widow contemplating re-marriage. Its first appearance follows Rüdiger's suggestion that he would avenge Kriemhild for any wrongs done to her. At this point, 'all the pent-up hatred and lust for revenge surged madly in her heart' (p. 110). The second half of the adaptation is punctuated by frequent references to insanity: Kriemhild is 'powerful and frenzied' (p. 170); 'the frantic woman' (p. 216); 'King Etzel's frenzied queen' (p. 216). These descriptions do not reflect the medieval text (or Simrock's close translation). For example, 'Den sal den hiez do zvnden daz Ezeln wip' (*Nibelungenlied* A, strophe 2048), which Simrock renders 'Den Saal in Brand zu stecken | Gebot da Etzels Weib' (Simrock 1873, p. 376; 'Etzel's wife commanded that the hall be set alight') becomes 'Etzel's frenzied queen gave orders to set fire to the hall' (p. 193).

The mysterious curse on the ring and girdle, however, may ultimately be the cause of Kriemhild's madness, and at times it appears that these two explanations for her actions

cannot be separated. When the Burgundians arrive at Etzel's court, her loss of mental control is combined with the sense of an inexorable external force – and a conscious decision on Kriemhild's part: 'Kriemhild stood by a window watching for the coming guests, while strange emotions surged madly through her heated brain. The old sorrow seemed suddenly uplifted from her heart, and an unnatural, fiendish joy took possession of this sorely-tried, sorrow-crazed woman, as she brooded over her plans of revenge' (p. 154). This passage is filled with stereotypical terms relating to female madness and lack of control, while words like 'fiendish' and 'possession' also suggest that Kriemhild is under the control of an external, demonic force – another common feature of depictions of violent female insanity.

The final clause, though, suggests a premeditation which overrides any mitigating factors. Indeed, despite the fact that the curse is mentioned before Kriemhild has any cause for anger, Forestier sometimes implies that the external forces only come into play once Kriemhild has decided to seek revenge, and that she is herself horrified by what she has caused ('even proud Kriemhild was affrighted at her hideous work', p. 181). Despite the regret this suggests on Kriemhild's part, in these cases the external forces are not portrayed as exculpatory; 'proud' Kriemhild herself is to blame, because she should have known what she would unleash:

> The whole dark tragedy arose through Kriemhild's determination to avenge her past wrongs, and yet in all her very darkest broodings she had never dreamed of such sweeping slaughter. She wished to single out Hagen for vengeance, and had to learn, in anguish, that once the promptings of evil are obeyed, it is impossible to control the progress of the work instigated.
>
> (pp. 190-1)

Such authorial comments are typical of the moralizing nature of Forestier's work. By the end of this adaptation we are given the impression that, despite the curse, Kriemhild is to be regarded as ultimately responsible for responding to the 'promptings of evil'. By the end, she is without redeeming features, and the brutality of her actions is stressed:

> 'I will put an end to this,' said Kriemhild.
>
> Then the frantic woman sped away, ordered her sole remaining brother's head to be cut off and brought to her, seized the bloody trophy by the hair and bore it herself into Hagen's cell. For awhile [sic] the lord of Tronje viewed his master's head with shuddering horror, then he thus addressed remorseless Kriemhild.
>
> (p. 216)

A comparison between the relevant passage in the medieval text (following Simrock's main source, the A recension), Simrock's translation, and Forestier's adaptation above, illustrates that Forestier is responsible for the majority of the changes, as well as the extent of her additions. This leaves us in no doubt that it is she who has determined that we are to be horrified by what Kriemhild has done:

> 'Ich bringez an ein ende', so sprach daz edel wip.
> do hiez si ir brv̊der nemen da den lip.
> man slv̊g im ab daz hovbet; bi hare si ez trv̊k
> fvr den helt von Tronege. dô wart im leide genv̊k.
>
> Also der ungemv̊te sînes hêrren hovbet sach,
> wider Chriemhilde do der reke sprach ...

(*Nibelungenlied* A, strophes 2306-7)

‘Ich bring es zu Ende,’ sprach das edle Weib.
Dem Bruder nehmen ließ die Leben da und Leib.
Man schlug das Haupt ihm nieder: bei den Haaren sie es trug
Vor den Held von Tronje: da gewann er Leids genug.

Als der Unmuthvolle seines Herren Haupt ersah,
Wider Kriemhilden sprach der Recke da …

(Simrock 1873, p. 420)

(‘I will bring it to an end,’ said the noble woman. Then she commanded that her brother’s life *and body* be taken. His head was cut off/*down*. She carried it by the hair before the hero of Tronje. It caused him great sorrow. When the sorrowful/*ill-humoured* man saw his lord’s head, he said to Kriemhild …)

Forestier alters the tone dramatically. The ambivalence of the *Nibelungenlied*, which allows Kriemhild to remain noble, despite her actions, is lost as she becomes ‘frantic’. Positive descriptions of Hagen, though, are retained, and his ‘shuddering horror’ grants him a position of relative morality above ‘remorseless Kriemhild’, revelling in her ‘bloody trophy’ - far more emotive language than is used in the medieval text.

Forestier’s decisions follow and even go beyond those of the male translators who preceded her. The tendency to emphasize Kriemhild’s transgression is evident even in the earliest versions of the *Nibelungenlied* in English. We can look, for example, at Henry Weber’s 1814 rendering of Hagen’s enigmatic response to Kriemhild, which makes no direct

mention of violence: ‘dv hast iz nach dinem willen vil gar zeinem ende braht |und ist ovch iv ergangen als ich mir het gedaht’ (‘You have brought it all to the end you wanted, and it has all happened as I would have thought’ (*Nibelungenlied* B, strophe 2367/2370). In Weber’s *Nibelungen Lied* this becomes: ‘Thou hast brought it to an end, and quenched thy bloody thirst; | All thy savage murders I prophesied at first’ (Weber, 208). This type of intervention is in line with Andrew August’s assessment:

> Middle-class ideals of femininity as developed through the nineteenth century expected women to be dependent, passive, and frail, as well as chaste, pious, and virtuous. Many women accused of crime, particularly violent crime, failed to live up to these models and threatened to destabilize the gendered order of society. Some have suggested that responses to female criminality, particularly violent women, were harsh precisely because of the violation of these gender norms.[38]

August is referring to women’s treatment in the law courts, but it is precisely this approach to female violence that we see in Forestier’s approach to Kriemhild. Despite an initially inexorable, external, and supernatural explanation for the catastrophe, and later invocations of madness, Kriemhild’s transgression is too great for Forestier to excuse. Her violation of gender norms, as she progresses during the narrative from a figure who conforms to the ideals August outlines to a woman engaged in extreme violence, means that she must be harshly condemned. It is no wonder, then, that when Hildebrand kills Kriemhild, he ends ‘her poisoned existence’ (Forestier, p. 217). The poison may have begun with her receipt of the cursed ring and girdle, but by this point, the ‘fair and once noble queen’ (p. 217) has no redeeming features left. The moral complexity of the medieval text, which allows Kriemhild still to be simply the ‘chvniginne’ (‘queen’; *Nibelungenlied* A, strophe 2313) at the moment

of her death, when she has murdered Hagen with her own hands, and to remain ‘daz edel wip’ (‘the noble woman’; *Nibelungenlied* A, strophe 2314) even after she has been cut to pieces, has no place in Forestier’s moralizing adaptation. ‘American lovers of romance and chivalry’ are presented with a much simpler conclusion.

<1 line #>

In these versions of the *Nibelungenlied*, rewritten in English by five late nineteenth-century women, three British and two American, we see a variety of approaches to writing Kriemhild’s violence. They overlap with one another, and are not always carried through to their full conclusion. The exculpatory strategies can be summarized as legalistic (Hands, Schottenfels, perhaps Armour), psychological (Hands, Forestier), supernatural (Forestier), and social (Schottenfels, Hands). To greater and lesser degrees, each of the five versions involves moral censure. But their differences go far beyond sympathy – or otherwise – for Kriemhild, though her violence is a useful prism through which to view them. What is at stake is how these female writers approached translation and adaptation as an activity. The two translators, Alice Horton and Margaret Armour, seem to adhere to the idea of translation as distinct from independent authorship. Horton does so most clearly, attempting even to ‘resemble’ the metre of her source text, with a male-authored Preface downplaying divergences from the medieval text. Both women endeavour not to intervene in their material, though they also bear witness to the impossibility of this ambition. Horton cannot avoid validating the Preface’s condemnation of ‘repugnant’ behaviour. In Armour’s work, through the use of illustration, we see a certain disavowal of Kriemhild and her actions, but whether this was Armour’s own decision, or that of her husband or her editor is unclear. In any case, in the subsequent, unillustrated edition, this comment is lost. There is also, potentially, a legalistic argument that, through a linguistic technicality, Hagen is made ultimately responsible for his and Gunther’s deaths.

The three looser adapters of the text make stronger interventions, despite both Hands and Forestier downplaying their alterations in paratexts. They thus fulfil the role of independent authors, while simultaneously disclaiming it. Forestier, Hands, and Schottenfels also make conscious attempts to address and alter Kriemhild's violence and its presentation. Schottenfels rewrites it so that Kriemhild is personally uninvolved. The violence is sanctioned and executed by men. We no longer have a violent woman. Hands largely anchors the violence in societal expectations of women and common excuses for female violence, and Forestier – under her androgynous pseudonym – experiments with a supernatural cause and a lack of personal agency, before ultimately settling on a moralizing rejection harsher than male translators accord Kriemhild. Through their alterations, including those features they obscure, but just as importantly through those they (attempt to) retain, these five women illustrate the complexities of the path a female translator had to navigate, while the rationale for those alterations is anchored within contemporary understandings of violent women.

Linacre College, Oxford

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[1] Henry Weber, 'Der Nibelungen Lied. The Song of the Nibelungen', in *Illustrations of Northern Antiquities*, edited and translated by Henry Weber and R. Jamieson (Edinburgh, 1814), pp. 167–210; Thomas Carlyle, 'Das Nibelungen Lied, übersetzt von Karl Simrock', *Westminster Review*, 15.29 (1831), 1–45; Jonathan Birch, *Das Nibelungen Lied or Lay of the Last Nibelungers* (Berlin, 1848); William Nanson Lettsom, *The Fall of the Nibelungers, otherwise the Book of Kriemhild* (London, 1850).

[2] The second edition (Chicago, 1889) is cited here.

[3] References to Schottenfels' adaptation are to Project Gutenberg's online transcription: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/35108/35108-h/35108-h.htm> (accessed 9 November 2020).

[4] See William Layher, ‘ “She was completely wicked”: Kriemhild as Exemplum in a 13th-Century Sermon: Image - Topos - Problem’, *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum und deutsche Litteratur; Stuttgart*, 138.3 (2009), 344–60.

[5] See, for example, Francis E. Sandbach, *The ‘Nibelungenlied’ and ‘Gudrun’ in England and America* (London, 1903).

[6] This point is made by Annemarie Drury, *Translation as Transformation in Victorian Poetry* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 9.

[7] ‘Either the translator endeavours to leave the author alone and moves the reader in his direction, or the translator endeavours to leave the reader alone and moves the author in his direction’ (my translation). ‘Ueber die verschiedenen Methoden des Uebersetzens’, in Schleiermacher, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 11: *Akademievorträge*, edited by Martin Rössler and Lars Emersleben (Berlin, 2002), p. 74.

[8] Susan Bassnett, *Translation* (New York, 2014), pp. 81, 101.

[9] See Susanne Stark, *‘Behind Inverted Commas’: Translation and Anglo-German Cultural Relations in the Nineteenth Century* (Clevedon, 1999), p. 34.

[10] Stark, p. 35.

[11] *The Works of Francis Thompson*, edited by Wilfrid Meynell (New York, 1913), p. 245.

[12] Andrew Mangham, *Violent Women and Sensation Fiction: Crime, Medicine and Victorian Popular Culture* (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 9.

[13] Virginia B. Morris, *Double Jeopardy: Women Who Kill in Victorian Fiction* (Lexington, KY, 2015), p. 146.

[14] See Jill Newton Ainsley, ‘ “Some Mysterious Agency”: Women, Violent Crime, and the Insanity Acquittal in the Victorian Courtroom’, *Canadian Journal of History*, 35.1 (2000), 37-55 (p. 40).

[15] Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, edited by Beth Newman (Basingstoke, 1996), p. 297.

[16] Andrew August, ' "A Horrible Looking Woman": Female Violence in Late-Victorian East London', *Journal of British Studies*, 54.4 (2015), 844-68 (p. 856).

[17] Nibelungenlied, A 2307, B 2367/2370, C 2429/2430. Unless otherwise stated, quotations from the *Nibelungenlied* refer to *Das Nibelungenlied. Paralleldruck der Handschriften A, B und C nebst Lesarten der übrigen Handschriften*, edited by Michael S. Batts (Tübingen, 1971). All quotations from this edition are identified by recension letter. B, the basis of most modern editions, is cited when A or C is not invoked as a translation's ultimate source. Strophe numbering follows Batts in giving first the numbering based on the manuscript tradition, then that of Karl Bartsch in *Der Nibelunge Nôt* (Leipzig, 1870) (B) or, where relevant, Adolf Holtzmann (C) in *Das Nibelungenlied in der ältesten Gestalt mit den Veränderungen des gemeinen Textes* (Stuttgart, 1857). Translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

[18] This is also true of many later male translators, for example, Alfred G. Foster-Barham, *The Nibelungen Lied: Lay of the Nibelung* (London, 1887), p. 440; John Storer Cobb, *The Nibelungenlied* (Boston, MA, 1906), p. 637; and, to a lesser extent, George Henry Needler, *The Nibelungenlied* (New York, 1904), strophe 2367, and Arthur S. Way, *The Lay of the Nibelungen Men* (Cambridge, 1911), pp. 323–4.

[19] The Introduction's authors were Ernest Rhys, the founding editor of Everyman's Library, and Marian Edwardes, a translator of German: Terry Seymour, *A Printing History of Everyman's Library 1906-1982* (Bloomington, IN, 2011), pp. 194, 107.

[20] *Der Nibelungen Liet. Vollständig mit Benutzung aller Handschriften*, edited and translated by Karl Simrock (Stuttgart, 1892).

[21] Simrock's other edition of the medieval text, a 'Schulausgabe' for students published in 1874, does not lay out the text in this way, and the first edition of the parallel text (Stuttgart, 1868), contains variations, particularly one in strophe 1334/1443 (Armour, p. 154), which do

not appear in Armour's translation. As it is relevant to Forestier, this variation is discussed below. Simrock's parallel texts include both A and C strophe numbering.

[22] Thompson (n. 11), p. 245; Sandbach (n. 5), p. 76.

[23] My italics register differences between Simrock's translation and the medieval text.

[24] August (n. 16), p. 856.

[25] *Early and Miscellaneous Letters of J. W. Goethe*, edited by Edward Bell (London, 1889), p. ix.

[26] Trier Center for Digital Humanities, *Mittelhochdeutsches Handwörterbuch von Matthias Lexer*, 2008 (print version Leipzig, 1873–6), *s.v.* 'un-gemach'.

[27] Cyril Edwards, *The Nibelungenlied: The Lay of the Nibelungs* (Oxford, 2010), p. 213.

[28] Bibliographisches Institut GmbH, *Duden*, 2020, *s.v.* 'Übelbefinden, das' <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Uebelbefinden> (accessed 9 November 2020).

[29] For a detailed analysis of children's adaptations of the Siegfried material, see David Blamires, *Telling Tales: The Impact of Germany on English Children's Books 1780-1918* (Cambridge, 2009), Ch. 20: 'Siegfried and the "Nibelungenlied" ' (pp. 353-70).

[30] *Das Nibelungenlied*, translated by Karl Simrock (Stuttgart, 1873; hereafter 'Simrock 1873'), p. 247.

[31] Mangham (n. 12), p. 195.

[32] Blamires, *Telling Tales*, p. 4.

[33] Anthony Kearney, 'Savage and Barbaric Themes in Victorian Children's Writing', *Children's Literature in Education*, 17.4 (1986), 233-40 (p. 233).

[34] Mangham, p. 67.

[35] Mangham, p. 210.

[36] Mangham, p. 28.

[37] Samantha Pegg, '"Madness Is a Woman": Constance Kent and Victorian Constructions of

Female Insanity', *Liverpool Law Review*, 30.3 (2009), 207-23 (p. 222-3).

[38] August (n. 16), p. 855.