ENVISIONING AN IDEAL STATE:
THE LITERARY POLITICS OF BETTINA VON ARNIM
FROM 1830 TO 1852

DISSERTATION

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By
Kathleen M. Hallihan, M.A.

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Dissertation Committee:
Professor Barbara Becker-Cantarino, Adviser
Professor Bernd Fischer
Professor John Davidson

Approved by

Adviser
Germanic Languages and Literatures
Graduate Program
ABSTRACT

Despite Bettina von Arnim’s (1785-1859) interest and participation in the Vormärz political discourse of the 1830s and 40s in Berlin, scholarship has traditionally focused on the literary aspects of her earlier texts, largely ignoring her later, politically charged works. My project explores Bettina von Arnim’s use of mythological and heroic imagery in her later writings, as it relates to her vision of an ideal governmental structure, which is based on the figure of the Volkskönig or “People’s King.” One of the many new ideas on government discussed in intellectual circles during this period, von Arnim’s Volkskönig model of government called for a strong and moral monarch, who would value the welfare and development of his subjects above all else.

I bring attention to the discrepancies between von Arnim’s call for a strong monarchy and her desire for progressive social reform, which demonstrate the tensions between the author’s cultural background in Romantic thought and her involvement in Young German and Young Hegelian intellectual discourse. The presence of such tensions illustrates not only Bettina von Arnim’s problematic role as an emerging female voice with her own formative concepts of nationhood, but the general complexity of nineteenth-century German debates on government.
Dedicated to my husband, Jason M. McAninch
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VITA

January 9, 1971 .................................................Born – Massachusetts, USA

1993.........................................................B.A. International Relations and German,
Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI

1996.........................................................M.A. Germanic Languages and Literatures,
The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH

1997.........................................................Fulbright Research Fellow, Bonn, Germany

1994 – 2004 ..............................................Graduate Fellow, Teaching, and Research
Associate, The Ohio State University,
Columbus, OH

PUBLICATIONS

Research Publication

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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BW Grimm

BW Pückler

BW Württemberg

JbBvA

JbFDH
Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts. Frankfurt am Main, 1902ff.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 SUMMARY OF TOPIC

During the 1830s and 40s, violent revolutions and popular uprisings took place throughout Europe. In March of 1848, soldiers in Berlin fired on agitated crowds, and King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia (reigned, 1840-1861) was forced to flee the city. During these dangerous times, Bettina von Arnim ¹ (1785-1859) used her connections and position as an aristocratic widow to evade government censorship and fight for civic and human rights. Von Arnim was formally prohibited, as all women in Prussia were, from political and professional activity. With publishing as her only means of political expression, her ground-breaking statistical survey of the heretofore-unrecognized oppressive social conditions of Berlin’s working class caused an international stir. Through her publishing, letter-writing campaigns, and social maneuvering, Bettina von Arnim became a best-selling author at age 50, influenced European intellectual politics, and fashioned herself as a private political advisor to the King of Prussia.

Despite von Arnim’s political writings and influence, scholarship has traditionally focused on the literary aspects of her earlier texts, largely ignoring her later, politically charged works. My project seeks to explore Bettina von Arnim’s use of mythological and

¹ Bettina/Bettine: While some scholars still refer to Bettina von Arnim as “Bettine,” most scholarship now uses “Bettina” to refer to the historical person, and “Bettine,” a spelling von Arnim sometimes used herself, to refer to the literary persona found in her works and letters. Although some still refer to Bettina von Arnim by her first name, following Edith Waldstein’s example, I have chosen to refer to her by her last name, as is typically done with male authors, adding the “von” in order to distinguish her from her husband, Achim von Arnim, who is commonly referred to as “Arnim.”
heroic imagery in her later writings, as it relates to her vision of an ideal governmental structure, based on the figure of the Volkskönig or “People’s King.”\(^2\) I will bring attention to the ambiguities and discrepancies contained within this concept, which demonstrate the tensions between the author’s cultural background in Romantic thought and her desire for social reform in the 1830s and 40s. The presence of such tensions illustrate not only Bettina von Arnim’s problematic role as an emerging female voice with her own formative concepts of nationhood, but the complexity of nineteenth-century German debates on constitutionalism, unification, and national sovereignty as well.

1.2 MAJOR QUESTIONS

The questions which concern this project are based on three basic premises. First, because Bettina von Arnim was influenced heavily by German Romanticism as well as the later social, political and intellectual trends of the German Vormärz period (approximately 1830 to 1848), elements of both Romantic and Vormärz thought appear in her writings. Secondly, the European revolutions and uprisings of 1848 were of pivotal importance to those concerned with politics and government at the time, Bettina von Arnim included. This project assumes, therefore, that there will be some significant differences between her texts published before and after 1848, and these differences will be explored in the body of this dissertation. Thirdly, Bettina von Arnim’s desire to make her opinions heard was the driving force behind her efforts at written communication. One of the main methods she employed to achieve this goal was to target multiple audiences in her writing. This approach contributed to the multilayered and multifaceted character of her texts, and often resulted in contradictions.

\(^2\) One of several models of government debated in intellectual circles during this period, the Volkskönig or “People’s King” model centered around the feasibility of a monarchical system, in which the king acts as a benign patriarch and spiritual leader, who is concerned first and foremost with the welfare of his subjects.
Given these assumptions, the questions I explore in this study are as follows:

WHAT: What are Bettina von Arnim’s views regarding governmental structure and social reform, as can be extrapolated from her writings? What can her mythological and heroic imagery tell us about her ideas concerning these subjects?

HOW: Are there any discernable patterns in her use of heroic and mythological imagery, and if so, on what factors are they dependent (i.e. audience, time in which she wrote, content)? How does her use of mythological and heroic imagery enhance or detract from her message?

WHY: What were her purposes in using literary imagery in her discussions? Was her use of this imagery helpful in promoting her views? What factors contributed to the author’s impact or lack thereof on her audience? Which writings warrant further investigation and why?

1.3 METHODOLOGY

In order to investigate these questions, I have chosen to analyze a limited set of original documents written by Bettina von Arnim, who began her career as a published author at the age of 50. In 1835, four years after the unexpected death of her husband and three years after the death of her beloved mentor Goethe, she debuted as the author of the book, *Goethe’s Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde*. Entering a new phase of intellectual and personal freedom, von Arnim would write five more books over the next seventeen years as well as various essays, articles and reviews, many of which were published anonymously. After having surveyed all of von Arnim’s published works, as well as several unpublished projects and numerous correspondences, I have found the

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Chapter two investigates the development of the *Volkskönig* model and elaborates further on von Arnim’s political vision.

Footnotes:
3 See Bibliography for a complete listing of Bettina von Arnim’s published books.
published text, *Dies Buch gehört dem König* (1843), and its sequel, *Gespräche mit Dämonen. Des Königsbuches zweiter Band* (1852), to be the most relevant to my project for several reasons.

First, the *Königsbuch* and the *Dämonenbuch*, as they are often called, hold the most significant information and imagery for my study because they share a dialogue which spans the events leading up to and following the uprisings in Prussia in 1848. They also reflect the mature stage of Bettina von Arnim’s ideas regarding social reform and political structures which had been nacent in her earlier works. As a result, the place and time in which the author was writing (Prussia, 1830-1860) find their strongest resonance in these two texts. Examples of this new emphasis are the author’s open criticism of the Prussian state’s role in pauperism and criminality.

Secondly, because of her interest in facilitating social and political change by influencing the king directly, the heroic and mythological imagery with which this study is concerned is most prevalent in these books. Finally, because these texts have been traditionally undervalued, they have remained comparatively uninvestigated by scholars, especially with reference to literary imagery.

While most of the following discussion concerns the two books discussed above, I also analyze passages from Bettina von Arnim’s correspondences with Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia from 1839 to 1850, and Crown Prince Karl of Württemberg from 1841 to 1844. These particular correspondences were chosen because of their chronological proximity to the *Königsbuch* and its sequel, and because of their thematic relevance.

Von Arnim used these correspondences, often developing them simultaneously with her texts, as a space to experiment with her ideas in the presence of their intended recipients. If, for example, her partner responded well to an idea, as Karl of
Württemberg did to her criticism of Prussian ministers, she might discreetly refer to this
discussion in her text, thus creating an insider’s dialogue within the published text. On
the other hand, if she felt that a correspondent’s response was inadequate, such as
Friedrich Wilhelm IV’s disregard of her advice to incorporate the young intellectuals into
his government, she might try to restate her argument in her text to further emphasize
her point. Sometimes, as was the case in her arguments with Karl of Württemberg
against debtors’ prisons, von Arnim would argue specifically against points made to her
in a letter, thus creating preemptive counterarguments to anticipated reader responses.
In addition to this intertextuality, passages from the letters sometimes illuminate,
sometimes echo, and sometimes contradict published passages, a phenomenon that is
in keeping with the nature of the published texts themselves, which are often
contradictory. This illustrates the linkages between von Arnim’s published works and the
correspondences with which they are associated.

These idiosyncracies in von Arnim’s writing comprise a dilemma that this project
tries to reveal and explain. I try to provide as much understanding as possible of Bettina
von Arnim’s ideas by elaborating on their cultural (i.e. historical, political, socio-
economic, and literary) context, but I approach the textual analysis inductively, to allow
the texts to speak for themselves. I have found this methodology helpful in the
interpretation of Bettina von Arnim’s writings because their multifaceted, inclusive, and
often contradictory nature does not lend itself to any one interpretative system. This
method is also in keeping with the author’s stated aversions to, and intentional
avoidance of, any one particular philosophical or theoretical system. An example of this
attitude can be observed in the character of Frau Rat in the Königsbuch, through whom
the author best reiterates what she had expressed in private letters and had striven to
avoid throughout her life and works: “Ein System? -- Ist das nicht Geistesdespotie! --
Das schrecklichste was ein Geist denken kann, das Einstimmen in ein System!” (BK 215) By presenting my close textual analysis within a cultural contextualization, I approach Bettina von Arnim’s writing in what I feel might be the least intrusive way of attempting to understand her work.

1.4 SURVEY OF SCHOLARSHIP

Although no one has yet investigated von Arnim’s heroic and mythological imagery and its contribution to her vision of an ideal nation, this line of inquiry has been facilitated by the scholarship of others, who have established Bettina von Arnim as a politically and socially conscious author. In the following survey, I highlight scholarship that is most relevant to my study by categorizing it into three main areas of influence: 1) scholarship pertaining to the retrieval and editing of Bettina von Arnim’s political letters and documents, 2) scholarship pertaining to the contextualization of Bettina von Arnim as a politically and socially conscious writer, and 3) scholarship pertaining to the interpretation of the content and style of *Dies Buch gehört dem König* and *Gespräche mit Dämonen. Des Königsbuches zweiter Band*.

Before I begin, however, I would like to credit two of the larger theoretical frameworks that have informed this undertaking. Most broadly, British anthropologist Clifford Geertz’s Cultural Studies approach to ethnographic description has led me to value the cultural contextualization of literary texts. While Geertz concentrates largely on the interplay of economic factors on the production of texts, his ideas have led me to a more general understanding of the benefits of locating works within their cultural and historical settings. This process and its effects will become more evident in the second section (1.4.2) of this survey.
A related approach is New Historicism as characterized by H. Aram Veeser, which considers literary texts in relation to history. With this type of contextualization, texts often become illustrative of larger political and economic decisions and outcomes (Veeser 14-15). As such, the ideas behind New Historicist criticism led me to investigate the extent to which Bettina von Arnim’s writings were representative of the politics and social issues of her time. After looking as closely as possible at the circumstances that surrounded the creation of her texts, New Historicism inspired me to consider how her writing may have impacted the larger political and literary spheres.

1.4.1 Retrieval and Editing of Bettina von Arnim’s Documents

Until the mid-twentieth century, Bettina von Arnim’s identity as a political writer of the Vormärz period was, when recognized at all, rarely given serious consideration. Even when intended to be laudatory, early writings concerning Bettina von Arnim and her works reflected prevalent notions of gender roles and developing aesthetic considerations that tended to devalue literature that contained overt political content.

The political ideas put forth in her writings faded quickly into obscurity in favor of her more sensational (auto)biographical and letter-books. Her later and more politically significant books, *Dies Buch gehört dem König* (1843), and *Gespräche mit Dämonen. Des Königsbuchs zweiter Band* (1852), found little resonance in scholarly studies, remained all but ignored until the 1960s (B/S 161).

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4 The term, “letter-books,” has been adapted by scholars from the German term, “Briefbücher.” Unlike more specific English genre classifications such as “epistolary,” “novel,” or “autobiography,” the German term leaves ample room for von Arnim’s unique style which combines elements from these, and many other forms. While Lorely French argues for the term “epistolary books,” I feel this designation is too limiting in its implication of a plot, as is typically found in epistolary novels (although it does provide a graceful tie to Bettina von Arnim’s grandmother, Sophie LaRoche, the first German epistolary novelist) (German Women as Letter Writers 209-213). Borrowing from Barbara Becker-Cantarino’s terms, I find the phrase “(auto)biographical letter-books” more descriptive, and at the same time more flexible in reference to that particular group of von Arnim’s works, which includes Goethe’s *Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde* (1835), *Die Günderode* (1840), Clemens Brentano’s *Frühlingskranz* (1844), and *Ilius Pamphilius und die Ambrosia* (1848), (*Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik* 238, 244-46).
Exacerbating this neglect was a general lack of knowledge of the extent to which Bettina von Arnim was politically informed and involved. Since her death in 1859, von Arnim’s predominantly conservative family had guarded her documents (housed at their Wiepersdorf estate) and made sure that any publications of them were carefully edited in order to remove and/or relativize her politics. For these reasons (and because he was Jewish,) turn of the century scholar Ludwig Geiger was denied access to the Arnim family’s collection of Bettina von Arnim’s documents. Despite this major obstacle, Geiger became the first researcher to circumvent the Arnim family’s efforts to emphasize only non-political characterizations of Bettina von Arnim, and in so doing brought new attention to her political writings.

Geiger suspected that Bettina von Arnim had corresponded with King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia and searched for letters that would have been received by the king. In the Königliche Hausarchiv Berlin, he located twenty-six letters from Bettina von Arnim to Friedrich Wilhelm IV, some of which contained lengthy enclosures of letters from others. Geiger also found two letters to von Arnim from the king. Altogether, the letters spanned the years 1838 (when Friedrich Wilhelm was still Crown Prince) to 1852. Geiger published these documents in his 1902 edition, Bettine von Arnim und Friedrich Wilhelm IV. Ungedruckte Briefe und Aktenstücke. The themes and imagery in these letters are very similar to the content of the Königsbuch and the Dämonenbuch and proved that Bettina von Arnim had attempted to influence the king through private correspondence. Despite Geiger’s somewhat unreliable editing and re-ordering of the letters, their publication provided evidence of the extent to which Bettina von Arnim was interested in influencing Prussian governmental practices.

Eventually, the money that could be raised from the sale of Bettina von Arnim's original documents became more important to the Arnim family than any scandal they
might cause. In 1929 the Arnim family sold as many of Bettina von Arnim’s letters and documents as possible through the Karl Ernst Henrici auction house. The German government purchased the letters between Bettina von Arnim and Friedrich Wilhelm IV, storing them in the Bundesarchiv, while other correspondences became scattered among those institutions and individuals who could afford them (Rudnick 12-14).

Unfortunately, the auction and the subsequent scattering of her letters during and after World War II makes it almost impossible to know whether any collection is complete.

Many of her political documents remained in what became the German Democratic Republic. They became available to East German scholars because of the ideologically encouraging atmosphere of the GDR for research on revolutionary political figures. This unprecedented access in the 1950s and 60s resulted in the further documentation of Bettina von Arnim’s involvement in Prussian and European politics. From the many political documents (now housed at the Goethe-Schiller-Archiv in Weimar,) scholars such as Werner Vortriede, Gertrud Meyer-Hepner, and Ursula Püschel were able to lay the groundwork for the recognition of von Arnim’s efforts to influence Prussian politics during the Vormärz period. The edited texts, which von Arnim wrote during the time between the Königsbuch and the Dämonenbuch, present unadorned versions of von Arnim’s ideas concerning political and social injustice, while simultaneously chronicling her growing frustration and disillusionment with the system that she was trying to influence.

For example, after the publication of the Königsbuch in 1843, Bettina von Arnim was forced to halt some of her publication projects in order to avoid truly dangerous repercussions. One of these projects was the Armenbuch, which was edited by Werner Vortriede and appeared in a finished format for the first time in print in 1962. This compilation of drafts was similar in form and content to the appendix to von Arnim’s
previously published *Königsbuch*. With this statistical survey of the economic and social conditions of Berlin’s poorest class, von Arnim intended to demonstrate in a factual manner that pauperism was a real and growing problem -- a problem that the wealthier citizens and the nobility chose to ignore despite its close proximity (B/S 105).

Based on related documents, it can be surmised that von Arnim had also planned to include similar reports on Silesian weaver families for whom conditions were even worse. She had received detailed reports on ninety-two such people from Friedrich Wilhelm Schloeffel in 1844, as well as a commentary written by him, which she included in the text. Silesian factory owner Friedrich Wilhelm Schloeffel was a leader of the Silesian socialist opposition movement in the 1840s and was regularly observed by Prussian and Austrian secret police (B/S 105-06). Because the authorities had also been aware of von Arnim’s connections to Schloeffel, she decided to give up her announced plans for the *Armenbuch’s* 1844-45 publication, despite having prepared the bulk of the text for printing.\(^5\) With his edition, not only did Vortriede carry out von Arnim’s project, but he also solidified knowledge of Bettina von Arnim’s involvement in the rebellions of the 1840s.

Perhaps it was her frustration with such barriers to expression that prompted Bettina von Arnim to raise a public scandal, as evidenced in Gertrud Meyer-Hepner’s edition of *Der Magistratsprozeß der Bettina von Arnim* (1960). This collection of original materials details the 1846 public scandal that von Arnim created while fighting the Prussian bureaucracy for the right to open a publishing house (B/S 117). On August 18, 1846 von Arnim refused to declare municipal citizenship (*Bürgerrechte*) in Berlin, which was a standard requirement for all who opened publishing houses in the city. Von Arnim

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\(^5\) Von Arnim’s connections to Schloeffel and the motivations behind her decision not to publish the *Armenbuch* are discussed in detail in Chapter Five.
engineered this symbolic protest against the lower bureaucratic (and what she considered philistine) elements of the government in answer to the censorship and bureaucracy to which she had been relentlessly subjected since the publication of her politically controversial Königsbuch three years earlier.

During her trial on August 20, 1846, von Arnim was sentenced to two months in prison plus fines due to the many insulting remarks she had made to various civil servants and judges both in person and in print. Excited about this verdict, she was determined to let herself be incarcerated in order to increase the already considerable public attention to her protest. She was encouraged by some friends and family who argued that in carrying out the sentence, the offending judge would only shame himself further.

Her politically powerful brother-in-law had other ideas, however. Friedrich Karl von Savigny (1779-1861) was a highly respected legal scholar and professor of Jurisprudence. He married Bettina von Arnim’s sister, Kunigunde Brentano, in 1803 and became a professor at Landshut, Bavaria, in 1808. Savigny was summoned to Berlin in 1810, where he helped found what is now known as the Humboldt University, the first university in Berlin. In 1811 he became a member of the prestigious Prussian Academy of Science and in 1814 served as a private instructor of law to Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm (later King Friedrich Wilhelm IV). His illustrious career culminated in his appointment as Director of the Ministry of Legislation (Leiter des Ministeriums für Gesetzgebung), which was a main branch of the Prussian Ministry of Justice (BW Grimm 412-13). It was in this capacity that Savigny drew up an agreement which would keep his sister-in-law, whom he often viewed as troublesome, out of prison. Although she signed the agreement at the last minute and under protest, she still refused to pay any fines (B/S 117-8). Meyer-Hepner’s documentation of this process was key in
demonstrating von Arnim’s tenacity, vigor, and methods of political protest, not to mention her love of a public scandal. Her study is also illustrative of the antagonistic relationship von Arnim had with many of her conservative relatives.

Sometimes von Arnim was able to resist her desire for notoriety and publish material anonymously or under pseudonyms. *An die aufgelöste Preußische Nationalversammlung. Stimmen aus Paris*, or as it is more commonly called, the *Polenbroschüre*, is an essay which von Arnim published under the pseudonym, “Seb. Albin,” in 1848. “Seb. Albin” was the pen name of Bettina von Arnim’s friend and translator, Hortense Cornu, who lived in France (B/S 122). Still craving some recognition, however, the dedication of the *Polenbroschüre* reads “Der Frau Bettina von Arnim gewidmet.” In this essay, von Arnim clearly and harshly criticized Prussia’s brutal policies toward Polish revolutionaries and called on the Polish and German people to initiate necessary social change. The sentiments expressed in this document provide a clear basis for understanding the obtuse imagery which pervades the latter part of the *Dämonenbuch*, a work which von Arnim published under her own name.

As if coming full circle from Geiger’s pioneering collection of letters, Ursula Püschel’s long awaited diplomatic edition of the correspondence between Bettina von Arnim and Friedrich Wilhelm IV underscores the importance of this exchange to the understanding of von Arnim’s later works. The anticipation of this significantly more complete edition and its implications for the fuller analysis of Bettina von Arnim’s later works is what inspired me to pursue this thesis. No one has yet used this edition of letters in an interpretative capacity, much less in conjunction with the literary analysis of the *Königsbuch* and the *Dämonenbuch*.

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6 In keeping with this edition, all quotes in this thesis are copied in their original orthography and syntax if available. Any orthographic deviations from modern spellings are the writers’ own. Where necessary, characters have been added to German quotations for grammatical correctness. Such additions are set off by brackets.
Püschel’s edition is comprised of, as she describes it, “alle derzeit auffindbaren Briefe” between von Arnim and the king, which date from 1839 to 1853 (BWFWIV/Püschel 17). Compared to the twenty-nine letters (only two of which were written by the king) present in Geiger’s edition, Püschel’s edition provides sixty-two letters between von Arnim and the king, twenty-one of which were from Friedrich Wilhelm IV (ibid.). The collection includes delivered letters as well as drafts and copies of letters. The editor clearly identifies instances where the authenticity of documents comes into question. She explains that not only did Bettina von Arnim write “unendliche Mengen von Entwürfen” that barely differed from each other (proving the meticulousness with which von Arnim planned and composed her texts), but also that there were often copies made of letters, either by von Arnim herself or others. Because of this situation, Püschel was conscientious in differentiating between letters that were actually sent to the king, those that are drafts, copies, or fragments, and those where the case is unclear (BWFWIV/Püschel 19).

1.4.2 The Contextualization of Bettina von Arnim as a Politically Active Writer

In addition to the retrieval and editing of von Arnim’s papers, her published texts are now easier to decipher because recent research on her political and social activities has uncovered the contexts in which they were created.

The first such study, Irmgard Tanneberger’s 1928 dissertation, was likely inspired by the surge of socialist ideas during the Weimar Republic. Ulrike Landfester quotes Tanneberger’s thesis, in which Tanneberger writes that Bettina von Arnim was the “erste sozialpolitische Schriftstellerin Deutschlands” (Tanneberger 62; Quoted in: Landfester 26). Hilde Wyss’ 1935 study balances Tanneberger’s portrayal of Bettina von Arnim by recognizing von Arnim’s Romantic influences in addition to her political and social
activities and characterizing her work as bridging the Romantic and Young German literary movements (Landfester 28). This characterization is important to my project because I explore the inconsistencies of von Arnim’s writing as being borne out of her acceptance of both Romantic notions of government and the developing concepts of social justice during the Vormärz period.

Almost three decades elapsed before Karl-Heinz Hahn expanded on how von Arnim used the printed word to express her political views in Bettina von Arnim in ihrem Verhältnis zu Staat und Politik. Hahn asserts that von Arnim’s political opinions were informed and that her actions were deliberate. He also argues that her private advocacy on behalf of the socially underprivileged and politically persecuted deserved to be included as part of her political activity, and not relegated to a separate category of female charity as had been done by researchers in the past. He concludes, however, that the mainspring of von Arnim’s political dealings are to be found in her texts, and that this author had a much deeper historical influence than commonly assumed (Hahn 46). While Hahn does acknowledge that his short study is not the “umfassende Charakterisierung und Bewertung der politischen Existenz Bettinas” that needs to be written, his focus on the importance of von Arnim’s political texts furthered my resolve to study them in detail (Hahn 13).

Such a comprehensive characterization of Bettina von Arnim’s political involvement was first attempted by Ingeborg Drewitz in her best-selling 1969 biography, Bettine von Arnim. Romantik, Revolution, Utopie. Currently in its fifth edition, this study has brought unprecedented attention to Bettina von Arnim’s social and political activities and writings. As proof of its popularity, this text has been translated into Italian, Polish, French, and Romanian (B/S 164-5; Becker-Cantarino, Review of Selbstsorge 278).
Drewitz’s cultural-historical approach places Bettina von Arnim solidly in the salon culture, thus in the intellectual circles and political debates, of Berlin in the 1830s and 40s.

In addition to gaining a general audience, Drewitz’s book also found readership in academic circles. As a Germanist living in the Federal Republic of Germany, Drewitz brought von Arnim’s political activities back into the critical discourse of West Germany which, since World War II, had focused on nineteenth-century images of von Arnim as Goethe-adopter and eccentric Romantic “child” (Becker-Cantarino, Schriftstellerinnen 269-270). Drewitz’s work lends itself to my study not only as further documentation of von Arnim’s circles of influence, but also as a guide to the interpretation of von Arnim’s writing style, which has a strong basis in salon discourse. In the next section, I elaborate on the implications of this choice of styles, which, with its free-flowing narrative and fanciful spontaneity, is in many ways opposed to traditional rhetoric.

Von Arnim’s unconventional stylistics were also noticed by the celebrated East German author, Christa Wolf. Wolf helped to foster the feminist rediscovery of von Arnim and others with Der Schatten eines Träumes (1979), an edition of Karoline von Günderrode’s writings. The foreword to the collection, Wolf’s “Nun ja! Das nächste Leben geht aber heute an. (Ein Brief über die Bettine),” discusses the ways in which Bettina von Arnim successfully circumvented social structures which limited female literary and public expression. Wolf also argued for reintegration of the Romantic aspects of Bettina von Arnim into studies of her life and works. This argument in the GDR was itself a political act which challenged the government’s ideological stance against German Romanticism, its authors, and its poetics (Becker-Cantarino, Schriftstellerinnen 272). Wolf’s characterization of von Arnim’s publications as acts of social and political defiance adds another level of political depth to her writings. Wolf’s
reiteration of von Arnim’s ties to both the Vormärz and Romantic periods also prompted me to further investigate the correlation between the author’s inconsistencies and her intellectual attachments to these two eras.

Katherine Goodman and Elke Frederiksen’s Bettina Brentano-von Arnim: Gender and Politics (1995), which appropriately borrows Wolf’s essay as its introduction, contextualizes Bettina von Arnim within the areas of biography, authorship, literature, history, and politics. This collection was the first of its kind in English to document and emphasize Bettina von Arnim as a political figure and writer, thus encouraging further English-language scholarship in this area. Of particular interest to my study are the articles by Lorely French and Heinz Härtl.

In “Strategies of Female Persuasion: The Political Letters of Bettina Brentano-von Arnim,” French analyzes how von Arnim used rhetorical strategies related to stereotypes of her gender, such as feigned ignorance of politics and current affairs, to safely critique the government and the church. French’s analysis unites the examination of von Arnim’s political writing and the feminist studies approach to von Arnim’s stylistics, which concentrated largely on von Arnim’s letter-books. My project takes French’s study further, insofar as I consider a broader sample of von Arnim’s political writings while focusing on the author’s use of literary imagery as a way to infer the content of her political and social opinions.

Heinz Härtl’s “Bettina Brentano-von Arnim’s Relations to the Young Hegelians” offers new background information that facilitates the comprehension of von Arnim’s complex imagery. First, Härtl provides letters, police reports, and publications, which document von Arnim’s regular contact with several members of this radical intellectual

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7 In German Women as Letter Writers 1750-1850, French expands her study of the relationship between Bettina von Arnim's works and the development of German women's epistolary writing using Goethe's Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde as an example.
group. The Young Hegelians who frequented her Berlin salon included figures such as religious radical, David Friedrich Strauss, the publishers Bruno and Edgar Bauer, and her most ardent admirer, journalist Moriz Carrière. Next, Härtl argues that their “simultaneous notoriety […] was far more than a superficial coincidence” (145). His examples demonstrate that their “mutual rapport and influence” was evidenced in von Arnim’s writings as well as in those from the Young Hegelian group (160). These connections help to explain possible influences and meanings behind many of the author’s criticisms of church and state.

Finally, the best general resource for understanding how Bettina von Arnim’s works were influenced by her environment is Konstanze Bäumer and Hartwig Schultz’s *Bettina von Arnim* (1995). Organized chronologically, Bäumer and Schultz present historically and politically contextualized biographical data in conjunction with descriptions and passages from von Arnim’s books and letters which recount key periods in her life. Bäumer and Schultz discuss the development and reception of von Arnim’s books during her lifetime, as well as her musical, artistic, and lesser known literary endeavors, and end the text with a comprehensive summary of Bettina von Arnim scholarship.

Despite its many strengths, Konstanze Bäumer evaluates Bettina von Arnim’s last works as primarily the products of the author’s attempts to stylize herself as a “bedeutende, epochenübergreifende Persönlichkeit der Zeitgeschichte,” and faults her for “sacrificing” her earlier poetic experimentation in favor of using her texts as a public forum for her political opinions (157-58). There is no question that von Arnim attempted to stylize herself; however, this urge is present throughout the body of her work. Bäumer neglects, however, to consider the possibility that von Arnim is allowing more space within her experiments for the political and social criticism that had always been present
in her writing. My project attempts to counteract this devaluation of von Arnim’s later works by examining them within the context of the experimental political literature of the Vormärz.

1.4.3 Interpretations of Bettina von Arnim’s Stylistics

It is necessary to examine the few studies that form the basis for my close textual analysis. First, feminist scholarship on Bettina von Arnim’s works has had such an impact on the growth of Bettina von Arnim studies, that it deserves brief mention. Concentrating largely on von Arnim’s early, less political (auto)biographical letter-books, scholars recognized how von Arnim blurred and blended actual letters, epistolary narratives, and autobiographical writing to create new texts which were neither entirely factual nor fictional. While this research made significant theoretical strides with regard to genre and poetics, the concentration on von Arnim’s early publications resulted in the prolonged neglect of her later works. This neglect implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) perpetuated the negative image of von Arnim’s political writings as aesthetically lacking.

On the other hand, the recognition of von Arnim’s stylistics as a rebellion against dominant patriarchal modes of communication made the case that all of von Arnim’s writings were, in a sense, political.

One scholar who did not leave von Arnim’s later works behind when analyzing the author’s poetics was Edith Waldstein. Waldstein was no doubt influenced by Drewitz’s recognition of the impact of Bettina von Arnim’s political salon on the content and style of her writing. In her comprehensive study, *Bettine von Arnim and the Politics of Romantic Conversation* (1988), she argues that von Arnim’s interpretations of key

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romantic concepts (the organic, *Poesie*, and *Geselligkeit*) were reflected in her synthesis of political, social, factual, and fictional elements within her literary works (94). To support her claims, Waldstein uses concrete examples to challenge the many critics who concluded that von Arnim’s later works lacked logic and form (95-6). Departing from Drewitz’s assessment of the *Königsbuch*, Waldstein asserts that the conversational style of this work is not careless and scattered, but rather was designed to create a sense of immediacy, as might have been found in a salon from that period. Waldstein contends that von Arnim intended this technique to draw the reader in and to encourage thoughtful interaction with the themes of her texts (87-88).

Similar research on von Arnim’s writing style appeared in the 1997 collection, *Salons der Romantik*, edited by Hartwig Schultz. Schultz’s own article, “‘Euer Unglaube an die Naturstimme erzeugt den Aberglauben an eine falsche Politik’: Fiktive Salongespräche in Bettines *Königsbuch*,” presented the style of the *Königsbuch* as one which “orientiert sich am Ideal des gesprochenen alltäglichen Deutsch” in order to appear spontaneous, natural, impulsive, and for these reasons, more honest (258-9). By examining the similarities between the historical context of the salon and the textual composition of the *Königsbuch*, Schultz, like Waldstein, refuted earlier assumptions that von Arnim had no stylistic strategy in her later works. Waldstein and Schultz are able to reframe the way a modern reader who is unaccustomed to the oral salon culture of the mid 1800s would approach von Arnim’s writing. Waldstein and Schultz’s recognition of this particular aspect of von Arnim’s poetics allowed me to navigate much more effectively through the author’s chaotic and anecdotal style.

The *Dämonenbuch* also exhibits a style that is more indicative of salon discourse than traditional written argumentation. In one of the very few studies that focuses on this work, “‘Charakter hat nur der, dem das Land der Ideale Chimäre ist,’ ” Ursula Püschel
describes von Arnim’s writing as non-linear, and comprised of “Gebilde, Sequenzen,” and “Höhepunkte” (303). Püschel argues that Bettina von Arnim never intended to create a unifying compositional system for the *Dämonenbuch* (298). As a result, key terms such as “Volk” and “Nation” were not strictly defined, and sometimes conveyed multiple and/or contradictory meanings (298). While this is true, Püschel does not suggest a reason why this seems to be von Arnim’s strategy. In my study, I suggest that the explanation behind von Arnim’s inconsistencies have to do with her conflicting backgrounds in Enlightenment and Romantic thought as well as new notions of social reform. Because of this, it is difficult to pinpoint von Arnim’s politics, but the way she presented her ideas was not caused by a failure to grasp the complexities of the various political concepts, but stemmed from, as I explain in Chapter Two, her belief that she could influence politics through highly stylized literature.

As opposed to smaller, isolated studies, Ulrike Landfester’s *Selbstsorge als Staatskunst. Bettine von Arnims politisches Werk* (2000) is the most comprehensive examination of von Arnim’s political writing. Landfester employs her concept of “Selbstsorge” as a unifying methodological principle, under which she considers all of von Arnim’s writing as political. According to Landfester, “Selbstsorge” represents Bettina von Arnim’s attempt to foster a way of governance, which, through the individual’s attempts to improve himself, will eventually improve the entire human condition. Crucial to this process is the role of the artist, who, through poetry, helps all segments of society communicate with each other in order to understand their part in this teleological process.

While ambitious, I find Landfester’s concept of *Selbstsorge* to be at times too broad. Because of this, Landfester’s study seems to lose its focus on von Arnim’s most political moments, which detracts from the wealth of excellent research she presents in
her text. The richness of the information and her ideas, however, far outweigh Landfester’s dense style and her attempt to bring a poetological uniformity to von Arnim’s writing. Because of its content, Selbstsorge als Staatskunst. Bettine von Arnims politisches Werk will remain a crucial reference text for scholars interested in the political Bettina von Arnim.

This Habilitationsschrift is divided into four sections, the first of which surveys von Arnim’s critical reception in detail and outlines Landfester’s methodological considerations. These considerations include the difficulties in classifying von Arnim’s works as either political or aesthetic, and the general lack of effort to unite the two classifications. In her second section, Landfester groups von Arnim’s various attempts to politically educate others. She devotes the third section of the text to her struggle with the question of whether von Arnim’s gender as an author in nineteenth-century Germany automatically makes her work political. The text concludes with her most original, but unfortunately shortest fourth section, which explores the various attempts, failures, discrepancies, and the ultimate outcomes of Bettina von Arnim’s most concrete political endeavors. Rather than working with such a large conception of “political,” I focus on this term as having to do with either von Arnim’s vision of an ideal governmental structure, or with her critique of the injustices caused and/or perpetuated by the state (i.e., corruption, neglect of the poor, and criminality).

Of particular interest for my study are Landfester’s section “II.3. Projekt Volkskö nigstum,” and sections IV.2-3, which discuss the Königsbuch and the Dämonenbuch in detail. Coining the phrase, “Projekt Volkskö nigstum,” Landfester carefully documents Bettina von Arnim’s attempts at Fürstenerziehung, or the education of future rulers. In this section, Landfester presents the first thorough account of the various portions of von Arnim’s correspondences and published works that are
dedicated to this task. Based on her data, Landfester describes von Arnim’s idealistic plan of grooming future rulers into Volkskönige, which I discuss at length in Chapter Three.

Landfester provides a nuanced argument that von Arnim was well aware of her slim chances at successfully promoting her pedagogical program of Fürstenerziehung. Landfester argues that the author’s skepticism vis-à-vis Friedrich Wilhelm IV was already apparent in her choice to publish the Königsbuch. Having already gleaned his disapproval of her opinions through their correspondence, Landfester posits, von Arnim must have realized that attempting to win over the king by publishing a text which openly criticized his government could only serve to further alienate him (166-69). Landfester’s reasoning correctly calls into question whether von Arnim was ever truly serious in her attempts to convince the king to change. My study picks up this line of inquiry and grapples with the question of why, being well-aware of the practical futility of her Fürstenerziehungs project early on, did von Arnim choose nonetheless to go to such elaborate lengths to develop her texts.

Because of Landfester’s attention to historical detail and reliance on original sources, her research has helped clear the path for the next level of scholarship, namely, the analysis of how the various elements within Bettina von Arnim’s texts contributed and/or detracted from her communicative and artistic goals. For example, in Selbstsorge, Landfester makes brief mention of several motifs and metaphors, including the hero, that are present in von Arnim’s texts. However, as shared with me in a personal interview, Landfester does not analyze how von Arnim used these devices in a literary context to develop her ideas (159-164). Landfester concludes her own survey with a call to use newly available materials for such projects: “Der gegenwärtige Stand

9 Ulrike Landfester, personal interview, July 2000.
der Forschung stellt damit einen Großteil der zu einer umfassenden Darstellung von Bettines politischem Werk notwendigen Informationen bereit, ohne daß allerdings bisher die methodische Grundlage einer solchen Darstellung konsequent konzeptionalisiert worden ist” (43). My study, which is the first to use both Landfester’s *Selbstsorge* and the newly available correspondence between Bettina von Arnim and Friedrich Wilhelm IV, works toward this goal.

In sum, it has taken a long time for scholars to determine what Friedrich Wilhelm IV acknowledged to Bettina von Arnim in a letter from February 18, 1852, namely, that she had not only been politically involved, but that she had even been influential: “Als Sie eine Macht waren, vor 1848 war ich, durch das Interesse welches Sie mir weihten geschmeichelt” (BW FW IV/Püschel 266). It has taken even longer for researchers to link von Arnim’s political agenda with her literary production. Due to the author’s controversial views and the historical devaluation of her texts based on traditional aesthetic standards, von Arnim’s later texts in particular have suffered a lack of scholarly attention.

There remains a need to examine the connection between poetics and politics in Bettina von Arnim’s later works, which do not necessarily assume the stylistic approach(es) she employed in her letter-books. My study explores this gap in scholarship by examining the relationship between Bettina von Arnim’s literary imagery as it relates to her political vision of the *Volkskönig* model of government. By viewing her later political works through this lens, I will to demonstrate the connection between the literary elements of her later writings and concepts of her political agenda.
1.5 FINDINGS

First, by analyzing the author’s use of heroic and mythological imagery in her political writings, I extrapolate a more complete picture of Bettina von Arnim’s vision of an ideal government. At the center of her vision was the Volkskönig, a benign patriarchal figure who, through his god-given abilities, would lead his subjects in the direction of individual spiritual development. Taken to its logical conclusion, such a system would lead to the total enlightenment of humanity. This outcome would also, however, ultimately eliminate the need for any kind of government. This model has several shortcomings. First, von Arnim erroneously assumed that the king would want to contribute to the elimination of his own position as monarch for the greater good of humanity. Secondly, her model assumes that the Volk would want to trust the monarch to lead in them this direction (or any direction, for that matter). Perhaps she never thought that the ultimate outcome would occur, and was simply seeking improvements over current conditions, but making concessions to reality in such an idealistic model seems counterintuitive. Lastly, within this arrangement she also assumed herself (the artist/poet) to be the crucial communicative link between the ruler and the people, thereby overestimating the role of art and literature to bring about change.

Secondly, in exploring how von Arnim empowered her artistic imagery for her political purposes, I discovered that her literary attempts at politics focused more on improving the ethics and morals of those in power rather than on providing realistic solutions to the existing social problems she saw so clearly. In order to inspire current rulers to achieve the high moral standards she felt would improve society, she used imagery to create positive and negative models of such behavior. The figures von Arnim employed exhibit her knowledge of a variety of sources and cultures, although von Arnim
would often alter her representation of a figure to better suit her purposes. For example, she modeled her Ganymede figure more after Hölderlin's portrayal than Goethe's because of her wish to emphasize the hero's independent courage rather than his interdependency with Zeus. Similarly, she reinvented typical Christian portrayals of Baal, turning the evil heathen diety into a god and ruler who placed the welfare of his people above his own desires for adoration.

Thirdly, in terms of her motivations for choosing to use such complex metaphors, von Arnim's highly stylized literary language was intended both to conceal dangerous criticisms in order to avoid censorship, and to appeal to an educated intellectual audience. Curiously, the images von Arnim used to enhance her Volkskönig remained predominantly male, further revealing von Arnim's fascination with strong male figures, both real and imagined. This fascination might provide a partial explanation for the author's insistence on perpetuating her idealized Volkskönig model despite her realizations that neither Friedrich Wilhelm IV nor her (male) contemporaries ever showed much interest in such a system. It is possible that the development of the Volkskönig figure and her continued appeals to the monarch in some way satisfied her need to attach herself to powerful men. It is also possible that von Arnim's commitment to the power of her own idealism made it undesirable for her to abandon her approach.

The above findings lead me to speculate on the effectiveness of Bettina von Arnim's methods, which in concrete terms of book sales and changes in government policies were mildly successful at best. More interesting to me, however, is considering why a person who was obviously intelligent, informed, and meticulous about writing,
would willingly present a platform for social change with such conflicting elements at its base. My study highlights the inconsistencies and ambiguities within Bettina von Arnim's work on a concrete textual level.

Her political writings expose interesting tensions insofar as her progressive social tendencies seem to stand in conflict with her views of an ideal state structure based on a strong monarchy. Von Arnim harshly criticized corruption within the state and the church, railed against a penal system which was cruel and biased against the poor, and brought international attention to the widespread poverty and disease in the Prussian capital, which the wealthy chose to blatantly ignore. Her criticisms, as well as her argument that many of these societal ills were perpetuated by state institutions, were in tune with the most radical critics of the 1830s and 40s, the times in which she wrote. Paradoxically, her solution of civilizing conditions by improving the moral character of the king and strengthening the monarchy, stemmed from her cultural and aesthetic background (and possibly her psychological makeup), which finds its roots in her upper class status and exposure to Romantic thought.

1.6 EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION TO THE FIELD

I not only hope to refocus scholarly attention on Bettina von Arnim's later published works and letters, but also to reinforce that her writing was a product of the times in which it was composed, as much as it was a product of her past. I also wish to encourage the task of using historical scholarship in conjunction with new editions for the purposes of analyzing these works. As such, I draw further attention to her writings as informed and, to some extent, mainstream Vormärz texts, a task which aims to deepen the understanding of the politics and literary trends of this complex period in German literature.
1.7 SUMMARIES OF INDIVIDUAL CHAPTERS

In Chapter Two, I elaborate on the development of Bettina von Arnim’s political and social ideas from 1830 to 1843 within the framework of her salon, focusing on her relationships with the Young German and Young Hegelian intellectual groups. This chapter demonstrates the extent to which Bettina von Arnim was informed and involved in the intellectual and political circles and debates of the time, providing a more comprehensive picture of her positioning within these political and theoretical discourses than has yet been presented. This chapter also describes von Arnim’s stances regarding social welfare and prison reform, and her individual attempts to enact change in these areas.

In Chapter Three I focus on von Arnim’s development of the Volkskönig model of government (also called Volkskönigtum) as a way of exploring the reasons why von Arnim steadfastly held to her belief in absolute monarchy as the ideal state structure. In this chapter, I examine key concepts of Fürstenerziehung, High Politics, Volkskönigtum, the Volkskönig, and von Arnim’s concept of Volk. I critique her model’s shortcomings and summarize its inconsistencies, with an eye to her various intellectual and literary influences. Lastly, I suggest an understanding of her literary politics within the context of the changes in how Western civilization viewed the relationship between subject and ruler that began in the eighteenth century and continues into present times.

Chapter Four explores the widespread use of mythological and heroic metaphors as tools of political expression during the Vormärz period, focusing on von Arnim’s Dies Buch gehört dem König (1843). Begun as a personal crusade to aid long-time family friends, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, Bettina von Arnim’s idea to “tell the king the truth” developed into an international sensation. Viewed by governments as a threat, by religious officials as heresy, and by liberals, socialists and radicals as a promising step
forward, it seemed that everyone, except maybe the king himself, had an opinion concerning the text. To ground my analysis, I frame von Arnim’s use of mythological imagery for political expression within both Romantic and Vormärz traditions, focusing for the first time on mythological scholar Friedrich Creuzer’s influence on von Arnim’s reception of mythology. The ensuing close textual readings highlight von Arnim’s treatment of Jupiter, Ganymede, Napoleon, and Baal as literary tools through which von Arnim elaborated on her vision of the Volkskönig.

Chapter Five showcases von Arnim’s oft-neglected sequel to the Königsbuch, Gespräche mit Dämonen. Des Königsbuches zweiter Teil (1852). Published after the failed German revolution of 1848, this work reflected the cynicism and maturity of its aging author. By this point, von Arnim had realized that her idealistic hopes would probably never materialize, yet she chose to write and publish this difficult work in an attempt to grapple with her changing ideas of the role of the Volk in the actualization of an ideal society. In this chapter, I examine her newly emphasized figure Siegfried within the context of earlier portrayals, and I consider whether or not her use of such imagery fit into he developing discourse on German nationalism.
CHAPTER 2
HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND THE EVOLUTION OF BETTINA VON ARNIM’S LITERARY POLITICS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A chronicle of major European historical, political, and intellectual events is important as a context in which Bettina von Arnim’s work can be understood. This chapter contextualizes the evolution of von Arnim’s social, political, and philosophical views prior to the publication of Dies Buch gehört dem König in 1843. The historical events I have chosen emphasize the fundamental shifts in the relationship between governments and peoples that took place in Europe from the French Revolution of 1789 and leading up to the uprisings of 1848. As I will show, the historical and intellectual developments from this time had a profound effect on Bettina von Arnim’s political and social views.

In von Arnim’s case, these views are often extremely difficult to pinpoint because of some fundamental inconsistencies. Namely, while von Arnim’s opinions on social reform were highly progressive for her day, her ideas concerning governmental structure and the need for a strong monarchy bordered on what is considered today to be reactionary. Although her social activism is well documented, much less attention has been devoted to an examination of her support for an aristocratic relationship between ruler and subjects and the possible basis for such views. This chapter considers the various influences on Bettina von Arnim’s politics to determine why the contradictions
between her social and political agendas developed, and will show that, although strange to a modern reader, such views were not necessarily uncommon in the German intellectual landscape of the Vormärz period.

2.2 1789 – 1843: HISTORICAL EVENTS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON BETTINA VON ARNIM’S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM

The decades preceding Bettina von Arnim’s literary activity comprise some of the most significant changes in social structures and intellectual thought in European history. The violent upheavals in social order brought about by the French Revolution and its aftermath led to the power vacuum that contributed to the meteoric rise of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821). The Absolutist order, which had already been destabilized by popular revolution, was propelled into further disarray when Napoleon crowned himself Emperor of the French in 1804. Poised to conquer Europe after having capitalized on the inherent instability of the fragmented German states, Napoleon forced the capitulation of Prussia in 1806, which secured France’s domination of German lands. During this period, Bettina von Arnim once had the opportunity to watch Napoleon as he marched through Frankfurt. Although this event occurred long before she became a published author, her image of the great conqueror and the impact of his rise and fall would become a recurrent theme throughout her later works, as I will show in Chapter Three.

After Napoleon’s defeat in 1815, power was restored to the monarchical rulers of Europe and a legitimist political climate was tolerated by a war-weary public and a developing middle class for the purposes of maintaining peace, order, and economic stability. This period, known as the Restoration, was characterized by increasingly repressive measures designed to strengthen and secure the power of the state against
popular uprisings. Developed mainly by Austrian statesman Clemens Wenzel Prince von Metternich (1773-1858), these measures included reductions in personal and political freedoms, with strict censorship being one of the most contentious. Along with many of her intellectual peers, von Arnim was against such restrictions because she believed that censorship hindered the free circulation of ideas, which severely limited the potential for a society to develop. For her part, von Arnim spent the majority of her most productive years as a writer embroiled in bitter and costly battles with Prussian censorship officials.

By 1830, similar repressive restrictions in France, along with other abuses of power by Bourbon King Charles X (1757-1836), culminated in the July Revolution in Paris, which was led by the French liberal intelligentsia and upper bourgeoisie. When Charles X abdicated, they set Louis Philippe (1773-1850) of the politically powerful house of Orleans on the French throne. Louis Philippe became known as the “Citizen King” (Bürgerkönig,) a title that reflected not only his popularity with the masses and his intentionally unpretentious persona, but more importantly, a change in government from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy. Also known as a popular monarchy, this model of government implied that the monarch’s mandate to rule came from the people rather than from God, which was a fundamental departure from the absolutist concept of divine right.

The crowning of the Citizen King symbolized a significant shift in how people (especially Louis Philippe’s liberal supporters) viewed their own relationship to their rulers. Whereas most people previously thought that they had no influence on the actions of those in power, now citizens began to believe that not only was it possible to have a say in government, but that it was their right. These events ushered in a period of great hope not only for the French liberals, but also for their German counterparts,
who were likewise from the upper bourgeoisie. It was within this philosophically hopeful context of emerging liberal discourse that Bettina von Arnim became inspired to express her own political thoughts in her literary works.

In general terms, German liberals of the 1830s and 1840s were a relatively small yet prosperous segment of middle-class, university-educated men. Like the preceding generation of German liberals, the younger generation shared an interest in increasing opportunities for economic development within a stable political environment. The support for reform within existing governmental structures, even by the liberals of the \textit{Vormärz}, was motivated mainly by their fear of the poor and uneducated masses, or the \textit{Volk}. Most liberals at that time believed that, if given the opportunity, the \textit{Volk} would resort to violent revolution and mob rule to bring about change. Also, because many liberals already held prominent positions within the Prussian state bureaucracy and had seen modest reforms since the end of the Napoleonic era, most felt that there was precedent and opportunity for reform of the current system from within. (Hohendahl, 50-52, 85)

Despite these commonalities with the older generation of reformers, German liberals of the \textit{Vormärz} were also interested in exploring the further development of representational models of government in Prussia, similar to those parliamentary and representative models already established in England, France, and Baden Württemberg. To this end, \textit{Vormärz} liberals advocated for the loosening of restrictions on the freedom of expression, association, and education. To some extent, liberal interest in expanding these freedoms was also the rebellious result of the Prussian government’s insistence on trying to limit them.

Slow bureaucratic reform, however, came too slowly for many segments of the population who had been adversely affected by the advent of the industrial revolution in
German lands. Since the 1830s, technological advances in production methods had been displacing cottage industries, resulting in the growing “fourth estate,” which was comprised of the destitute masses of rural poor, as well as by a growing proletariat in the cities. At the same time that job opportunities were decreasing, populations were growing, which resulted in a disproportionately high supply of human labor. With no precautions in place to keep wages stable, earnings went down. This situation generated widespread pauperism, leading to social problems such as the exploitation of women and children as unskilled workers, overcrowding in cities, and the rampant spread of disease among the poor. Discussion of these developments became an important component of liberal discourse and revolved around how to reconcile the desire for economic progress with concern for the human condition.

In spite of the attention that some writers gave to the problem of pauperism, many of those not directly affected by these disturbing societal trends preferred to ignore the fact that poverty was increasing at a much faster rate than that with which traditional private welfare measures could cope. Bettina von Arnim, however, was an exception. Family, friends, and acquaintances alike marveled at her personal efforts to help the poor. She gained fame for venturing into the poorest districts of Berlin to minister homeopathic remedies to cholera victims in the epidemic of 1831, an action which shocked and horrified many of her closest family members. Not only was this an extremely dangerous undertaking, but it was socially unacceptable for a woman of her standing to “lower” herself to the level of personally attending to the poverty-stricken and diseased.

Von Arnim’s efforts to provide for the needy went well beyond the cholera epidemic of 1831. Von Arnim regularly organized private fundraising campaigns, and used the donations to have clothes and shoes made by merchants whom she privately
commissioned. She then brought the goods to the poor herself so as to avoid the waste and corruption rampant in the few government agencies (such as the Berliner Armenkommission) that were supposed to be helping the poor, but were not (Werke III 750-52).

Part of the reason there was not more social welfare was that at this time poverty was not considered a public political issue, but rather as a private social issue which should be handled as it had been in the past, through the charity of local church and community efforts (Hohendahl 53). However, von Arnim realized that established charitable structures were not keeping up with the increases in need, and that in order to break the cycle of poverty, a stronger social welfare system was necessary. The need had grown so great that throughout the 1830s and 40s there was a marked rise in individual crimes, mostly related to the theft of food. While it was not widely recognized at the time, it has since been proven that in the regions in question, there existed a correlation between the growing population of destitute people, rising food prices and poor harvests, and individual theft crime (Tipton 56).

Bettina von Arnim not only perceived the relationship between poverty, debt, crime, and punishment, but was vocal in her criticism of state institutions and practices which exacerbated the cycle. She was especially critical of the institution of debtors’ prison because she viewed it as a cruel and demoralizing waste of time and resources, which punished the underclass for a situation beyond their control. Plummetsing wages combined with unfair taxation sent many heads of households to debtors prison, leaving families without their principle wage earner, thus increasing their hardship and debt. She argued that instead of punishment, those in debt needed training so they could improve their skills and thus their earning potential.
Von Arnim was adamant in her convictions that the system was wrong and that it was the state’s responsibility to treat the causes of poverty rather than to punish the results. In 1842, for example, she expressed her outrage against the policies of the relatively progressive state of Baden Württemberg in a letter to Crown Prince Karl, trying to shame him into improving the system. Although the two never agreed on the validity of debtors’ prisons, the fact that von Arnim dared to vehemently argue with the Crown Prince over this topic demonstrates her passion to this cause. (BW Württemberg 90-100).

Von Arnim did not limit her activism with regard to crime to the dilemma of debtors’ prison. She saw correlations between poverty and other types of crime as well. Von Arnim abhorred the harsh punishments still practiced within the Prussian penal system and argued passionately against the death penalty. As a result of her convictions, she was on the leading edge of the prison reform movement that had begun in England. In the late 1820s, both Bettina and Achim von Arnim attended the lectures of Nikolaus Heinrich Julius (1783-1862), a leader of the prison reform movement in Germany, and became personally acquainted with him. As a result, of this relationship, Bettina von Arnim based a significant portion of the Königsbuch on Julius’ theories, which argued that there was a connection between poverty, lack of education, and criminality, and that it was the state’s responsibility to help the people in both moral and practical education in order to reverse this trend (B/S 100-101).

Reformers like Nikolaus Julius and Bettina von Arnim had increased reason to believe that their efforts would result in programmatic changes in Prussia when Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, who had been critical of his father’s conservative politics, ascended the throne on June 7, 1840. Many liberals were hopeful that the new king would fulfill his father’s 1815 promise of a constitution. Although Friedrich Wilhelm IV
allowed liberals to entertain such beliefs, in reality he was himself a shrewd politician who was satisfied with the ministerial advisory structure of the government he inherited, and who had no intentions of sharing power with his subjects (B/S, 87-88). By 1843, many once optimistic observers realized that things were not going to change as they had hoped. It became apparent that Friedrich Wilhelm IV had no intention of honoring his father’s promise of a constitution, nor was he interested in initiating major policy changes or structural reforms.

It was not long before the new king’s unexpectedly strong legitimist leanings rendered him politically unpopular with those liberals and students who were fortunate enough to have the education and opportunity to be involved in the public discussion of politics. From an economic and social standpoint, however, it was the poorer classes who were suffering in increasing numbers under the strain of economic modernization. As such, the Prussian government’s continuing lack of willingness to enact modernization reforms exacerbated the growing social unrest brought on by the industrial revolution, which would finally culminate in the 1848 revolution in Berlin.

2.3 BETTINA VON ARNIM’S SALON: LOCATING VON ARNIM’S INTELLECTUAL CONCEPTS

In order to focus on how larger historical, political, and social trends shaped Bettina von Arnim’s views, the following section discusses the various people and ideas with which von Arnim was connected leading up to the publication of Dies Buch gehört dem König and Gespräche mit Dämonen. I have chosen Bettina von Arnim’s salon of the late 1830s and 40s as a narrative framework for the contexts in which her works were created, because that is where many of her ideas for her texts were developed and discussed. This framework also provides a fluid yet semi-structured backdrop for the
overlapping chronologies of Bettina von Arnim’s circles of contacts. A closer look at von Arnim’s exchanges with her many and varied guests reveals the extent of her participation in the intellectual discourse of her day, as well as her rhetorical prowess in bridging conflicting generations and perspectives during this period of social, economic, and political transition.

2.3.1 The Development of von Arnim’s Salon

It is difficult to determine exactly when the gatherings and musical evenings Bettina von Arnim had been hosting in Berlin since the 1820s became known as a salon, but in Petra Wilhelmy-Dollinger’s authoritative study, *Die Berliner Salons*, evidence indicates it was in the early to mid-1830s. Perhaps to allay the pain of the loss of her husband, her son, and several beloved friends between 1831 and 1835, Bettina von Arnim continued to surround herself with the cultural elite of Berlin, even though there was a caesura in salon activity at this time. The widely noted discursive gifts of the hostess combined with the publication of her debut work, *Goethe’s Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde* in 1835, however, served as an attractor which greatly increased traffic in her salon. Many university students, journalists, and young professionals just beginning their careers with the state were drawn to Bettina von Arnim, whom they considered a “Sympathisantin und Identifikationsfigur der jungen Generation” (*Werke III* 679). The reasons for this unlikely identification with a noblewoman in her fifties had to do not only with von Arnim’s affinity for the enthusiasm for young people, but also with her reputation for lively criticism of the state.

Wilhelmy asserts that von Arnim’s salon was one of only four to six that operated in the mid-1830s, partially due to the deaths of several notable salon hostesses, but mainly because of restrictions on personal freedoms which discouraged intellectual
gatherings where politics might be discussed (155-56). In this atmosphere, Bettina von Arnim's Berlin salon was unconventional because she actually encouraged such debates. Ironically, the conservative measures (most of which derived from the Congress of Vienna in 1830) designed to limit the discussion of topics of national, political and social concern only served to fuel the interest of the educated elite in debating them.

Proof that various timely social and political discussions took place in von Arnim's salon comes from numerous personal first-hand accounts written in journals and letters. For example, Max Ring (1817-1901), a young medical doctor and frequent guest, reported that von Arnim enjoyed pairing together individuals with conflicting political, philosophical, or religious views in order to increase the intensity of discussions. Some of these ideologically disparate pairings included, according to Ring,

[...] der zwar freisinnige, aber gemäßigte Hegelianer Werder, und der extreme, wegen seiner zersetzenden Angriffe auf das orthodoxe Christentum gemäßregelte Theologe Bruno Bauer neben dem konservativen aristocratischen Obermundschenk Pitt-Arnim, der sogenannte ‘Hofdemagoge’ und liberale Geschichtsschreiber Friedrich Förster neben dem streng gläubigen Philipp Nathusius, dem späteren Herausgeber des ultrareaktionären Hallischen Volksblattes. (Quoted in Wilhelmy 162)

This practice of pairing opposites likely developed from Bettina von Arnim's intellectual roots in German Romanticism, which often experimented with Friedrich Schlegel's concept of Romantic Irony: creating space for the existence and tension of opposites as a means of achieving a greater harmony.¹⁰

¹⁰ See F. Schlegel: Lyceum Fragmente Nr. 48, Athenäum Fragmente Nr.116, and Ideen Fragmente Nr. 69 & 74.
2.3.2 Von Arnim’s Interactions with Young Germany

Similar to the way von Arnim tried to bridge gaps in opinion within her salon, she herself was often cast in the role of a link between the older generation of German Romantics and a new generation of writers known as Young Germany (Junges Deutschland). According to Wilhelmy, although the Young Germans were generally too subversive and politically-oriented to be a regular part of Berlin’s cosmopolitan salon society, they did influence the literary landscape in German regions, and many found a comfortable haunt in Bettina von Arnim’s parlor (163-66). The exchange of ideas between Bettina von Arnim and the Young Germans contributed to their shared theoretical views on the function of literature in society, which directly precipitated Bettina von Arnim’s attempts to influence politics through literature.

The Young Germans included the journalists and publishers Ludolf Wienbarg, Karl Gutzkow, Gustav Kühne and Heinrich Laube, as well as author and publisher Theodor Mundt, and, serving as one of the group’s theoretical leaders, Ludwig Börne. Also associated with this circle via the collective ban on their writings in 1835, were famous poet and journalist Heinrich Heine, and the brilliant young playwright and essayist Georg Büchner. The prohibition of their works throughout German regions served to unite them in the eyes of the reading public, even if they themselves were not always united in opinion, or, as in the cases of Heine and Büchner, chose not to formally associate themselves with the group. But regardless of their stances on self identification, after the publication of Bettina von Arnim’s Goethebuch, these liberal and outspoken thinkers saw in von Arnim a link between past and present who helped them to both identify with, and separate from, their historical literary influences.

First, because of her friendship and correspondence with Goethe and those close to him, Young Germany marveled at von Arnim as someone through whom they
could reconcile their appreciation for the renowned literary icon with their aversion to his conservative opinions on the separation of art from politics. Although von Arnim had an immense (and arguably obsessive) knowledge and appreciation of Goethe, like the Young Germans, she did not believe that art should exist in isolation from public discourse on society or politics.

Secondly, von Arnim also served as a conduit through which the younger generation could come to terms with the aspects of German Romanticism that still held resonance for them. For example, they valued literary experimentation and the idea that art should be inclusive in terms of genre and content, which, for the Romantics, had often manifested in the blurring of boundaries between literary forms and content. For Young Germany, this translated into the valuation of prose (alongside of poetry or drama) as a viable literary medium, and even more importantly, the inclusion of political subjects in literary composition.

However, von Arnim also differed from her Romantic counterparts in key ways that appealed to the younger generation. Namely, unlike others from that era who had long since retreated into politically conservative Catholicism (like Brentano, F. Schlegel, and Eichendorff) or had otherwise removed themselves from mainstream literary and political discourse, Bettina von Arnim remained in touch with current issues and was very critical of the government and the church with reference to poverty, criminality, and corruption. In contrast to her conservative stance on the preservation of the monarchy, von Arnim’s practical and theoretical interest in social issues set her apart from the myopic tendencies of other aging Romantics, and resulted in the decidedly “liberal” tone

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11 See F. Schlegel: *Athenäum* Nr.116, 451; *Ideen* Nr. 95.
of her salon (Wilhelmy 156). So, for reasons both artistic and political, Gutzkow, Mundt, Kühne, and Börne became regular guests at Bettina von Arnim’s salon in the 1830s, and still others, including Heine, would occasionally visit.

At these gatherings, a favorite topic of discussion was the function of literature in society. They rejected German Classicistic and Romantic notions of the isolation of art from politics and instead sought to transform literary discourse into a means of informing their audience and stimulating discussion. This discussion, they believed, would lead to the development of public opinion, which would bring about social and political progress. The belief that public opinion could have any significant impact on the autocratic governmental structures of the 1830s may seem naïve to a modern reader. It is therefore important to emphasize that at that time, especially given the perceived victory of the public will in France, many educated Germans, especially those who did not wish for violent revolution, convinced themselves that such notions were plausible.

At the core of this thinking, as Hohendahl argues, was the Young Germans’ faith in the earlier Enlightenment concept of the “universality of rational discourse,” which presupposes the capability of people to understand and participate in political debates (Hohendahl 119). Ludwig Börne in particular, who had a close and mutually influential relationship with Bettina von Arnim, advocated the development of literary discourse into an “instrument of political enlightenment” (ibid.). Supporting this initiative were the rises in literacy rates and educational levels, and advancements in technology, which enabled writers to reach a larger audience through printed media. Because censorship limited the opportunity for direct public political communication, however, literature and literary criticism, with their capability for indirect expression, became the discursive modes of choice. The preferred media in which to discuss literature were newspapers, journals, flyers, and pamphlets, because they were easier to distribute and more difficult to
confiscate than books. However, even books were becoming more affordable and accessible through the development of lending libraries.

All these factors led to the choice of prose as the Young Germans’ preferred means of written expression and, as a result, the professional categories of journalist, essayist, and literary critic received new emphasis. As evidence of this new focus, many Young German authors were also the publishers and editors of journals such as the *Deutsche Revue* (Gutzkow / Wienbarg), *Literarischer Zodiakus* (Mundt), *Telegraph für Deutschland* (Gutzkow), and *Dramaturgische Blätter* and *Zeitschwingen* (Börne) (Hohendahl, 119). They used these forums to promote their views on literature, culture and politics, as well as to review each other’s work.

Within this intellectual context, Bettina von Arnim’s ideas were not only known by the writers of Young Germany, but they were also respected. No incident better illustrates von Arnim’s role within this circle than Gutzkow and Wienbarg’s written invitation asking her to write for their planned representative publication, the newspaper *Deutsche Revue*, in September of 1835 (Landfester 256-57).

2.3.3 Theory Becomes Practice: The Göttingen Seven Incident and Bettina von Arnim’s Attempt to Exert Influence in the Public Sphere Through the Written Word

Two years after the writings of Young Germany were banned in Prussia, an event occurred which prompted Bettina von Arnim to use her literary ability and social connections to attempt to enact change. On November 18, 1837, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, along with five other University of Göttingen professors, protested against the recall of the provincial constitution of Hannover. For this act of protest, which came to be known as the Göttingen Seven Incident, King Ernst August of Hannover dismissed all
seven professors from their university positions. The three professors who were identified as initiators of the protest, Friedrich Georg Gottfried Gervinius, Christoph Dahlmann, and Jacob Grimm (whose brother Wilhelm was also involved) were banished from Hannover. Despite widespread sympathy among the intellectual community for the seven professors, no German states would offer them positions after their dismissal (Werke III 710). In order to help the brothers Grimm find new appointments, Bettina von Arnim embarked on an individual writing campaign which reached the highest levels of government. The success of her efforts not only encouraged her to pursue her aspirations of gaining political influence, but also allowed her direct correspondence with King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia. Both of these positive outcomes led directly to the development of the Königsbuch.

Of the three professors who were banished from Hannover, Georg Gottfried Gervinius (1805-1871) was the only one with whom Bettina von Arnim was not closely acquainted. Nonetheless, their cultural production does intersect in a manner relevant to this project. Despite his involvement as one of the Göttingen Seven, which was but one incident in a lifetime of political activism, Gervinius is now best known for his five-volume literary history Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung (published 1835-1844), in which he established the basic scheme for the formation of the traditional canon of German literature. Most notably, Gervinius established the concept of the teleological development of literature, in which he portrayed the work of Goethe and Schiller as the pinnacle of German cultural literary evolution (Hohendahl 142-45). Gervinius’ normative approach to literature did not leave much room for Bettina von Arnim’s writings, which were seen by him not only as epigonic, but, because of the author’s gender, as a general symptom of the decline of the male gender’s literary ability (Landfester 260). Given this information about Gervinius’ legacy to the study of German literature, it is
ironic to consider his involvement as a key figure in the Göttingen Seven incident, which began a direct chain of events that inspired so much of Bettina von Arnim’s later literary political production.\(^\text{12}\)

From a political point of view, however, Gervinius’ canonical construction was also intended as an impetus for the German nation to turn from the study of its artistic past towards the development of its political future (Hohendahl 142). Because the climax of artistic literary production (i.e., cultural identity) had already been reached, he argued, attention could now focus on nation building. To support this aim, in 1848 Gervinius became a member of the Prussian National Assembly, where he was an even stronger advocate of democracy than he had been at Göttingen in 1837 (Hohendahl 76).

More closely connected to Bettina von Arnim’s work was Friedrich Christoph Dahlmann (1783-1860), who is known for his achievements as professor of political, legislative, and criminal science. After his dismissal from Göttingen, Dahlmann continued to develop his career as a prominent scholar and politician. In 1845 he became a member of the prestigious Prussian Academy of Science in Berlin (Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften), and in 1848 Dahlmann also became a representative in the Prussian National Assembly.

Unlike Gervinius, whose politics became more radical as time went on, Dahlmann remained what Hohendahl terms a “moderate liberal” (52). His views are actually representative of many mainstream liberal thinkers of his day, especially in terms of reforming the system from within and in his discomfort with the prospect of sharing power with the uneducated masses. Through personal contact and correspondence around the time of his dismissal, there is evidence that Dahlmann had

\(^{12}\) Gervinius’ unintentional role in inspiring Bettina von Arnim’s political involvement might make an interesting point of departure for a study on the relationship between the gendered aspects of Gervinius’ literary theories and the influence of his political activities on women’s writing from this time period.
direct influence on the development of Bettina von Arnim’s own thoughts on government. She thought so highly of his articulations, in fact, that she eventually took some letters that he had written to her, and forwarded them directly to Friedrich Wilhelm IV as a means of expressing her own opinions to the King. Without Dahlmann’s prior knowledge or permission, she sent the letter packet, which included her introduction of Dahlmann’s letters, two copies of Dahlmann’s letters to her, her copied reply letter to Dahlmann, and some closing words that von Arnim directed to the King. She urged Dahlmann to continue to correspond with her on political matters so she could keep forwarding his letters to the king. Her bold actions, however, had apparently alienated him because, as she wrote to Friedrich Wilhelm IV, “Dahlmann beantwortete mein Schreiben nicht” (BW FW IV / Püschel, Nr. 8d\(^1\)).

Bettina von Arnim’s involvement in resolving the injustices of the Göttingen Seven incident, however, were mainly motivated by her personal connections to Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, who were old and dear family friends. Beginning in 1838, she made it her personal mission to find the Grimms new positions through the limited means available to her -- personal networking and letter writing. As the months went by, however, she became utterly dismayed at the lack of tangible and truly public support for the Grimms, who were well connected and respected scholars.

She took particular issue with her brother-in-law, Friedrich Karl von Savigny (1779-1861), who, in addition to being their friend, had also been their teacher.\(^14\) At the time of their dismissal, Savigny was the most prominent advocate for historical law (as opposed to French civil law) in German regions and his opinions were respected by those at the highest levels of power. He had even instructed the Crown Prince in law in

\(^{13}\) The “d” in this citation does not refer to a draft version of a letter, but rather to the original letter packet, which Püschel divided into four sections in order to differentiate between the various components of the packet: (a & b) two of Dahlmann’s letters to Bettina von Arnim, (c) her reply letter to Dahlmann, and (d) her concluding remarks to the King.
1817. Because of his achievements and positioning, he was, in Bettina von Arnim's eyes, the most logical and able individual to help find the Grimms positions in Berlin. Rather than employing his power and influence to advocate on behalf of his friends, however, the conservative Savigny chose to remain silent. His silence, combined with the frustration of over a year's worth of failed efforts behind her, caused von Arnim hold Savigny personally responsible for the Grimms’ continued unemployment \((\textit{Werke III 710-11})\).

Finally, two years after their dismissal, Savigny had not yet even come out in public support of the Grimms, and Bettina von Arnim composed a biting letter to him, openly accusing him of having acted half-heartedly and with cowardice. By conducting what she termed the “Politik der Ehrfurcht,” or politics of deference, she argued that those in power patronize rulers by hiding from them knowledge of errors or problems, thus depriving the monarch of the opportunity to act accordingly with full knowledge.

\[
\text{Ich weiß wohl, daß Du so nicht würdest zu dem König reden; denn einem Fürsten die Fehler mitteilen, die in seiner Regierung vorfallen, oder ihm einen höheren Standpunkt zuweisen, das wär wider die Politik der Ehrfurcht, mit der Ihr die Fürsten behandelt wie die Automaten, [...]. Ihr haltet den Fürsten nur die Reden, auf die sie eingerichtet sind zu antworten ohne aufzuwachen; (Bärwalde, Nov. 11, 1839 in BW Grimm 256)}
\]

Rather than to perpetuate lies of omission based on what other, less enlightened individuals deem as unfit for the king to hear, von Arnim suggested that the king should be told the full truth. To shelter a ruler in this manner, she argued, will only lull him/her into a false state of complicity and limit his/her ability to develop:

\[
\text{denn die Wahrheit würde sie wecken, und sie wären dann keine Automaten mehr, sondern selbständige Herrscher, und die Staatsklugheit würde dann nicht mehr mit Niederträchtigkeit verbunden sein, sondern in Weltklugheit sich verwandeln, die aus Gottes Weisheit ausfließt. (BW Grimm 256)}
\]

\[^{14}\text{See page 11 for more information on Savigny.}\]
If she were given the same chance, von Arnim continued, out of true deference for the King’s abilities, she would inform him as much as possible. Choosing not to do so, she concluded, is tantamount to treason.

- Siehest Du, da bin ich auch einmal ganz anders, ich würde grade aus Ehrfurcht, die Euch abhält, die Wahrheit zu sagen, sie meinem Herrn und König nimmer vorenthalten können, ich würde glauben, Ihm nicht die reinstre Wahrheit (das heißt die sich verklärende, nach der die Weisheit strebt) zu sagen, das sei Sünde der Verräterei, die Todesstrafe verdient. (BW Grimm 256-57)

By invoking an accusation of treason, von Arnim implied that those who willfully limit the king’s power to make decisions not only impede, but actively damage the state.

Imagining herself in a position of power such as Savigny’s, she then explained that, in her opinion, the practice of full disclosure of issues to the ruler forms the basis of her ideal -- a state built on truthful and open communication between rulers and subjects: “Ich würde dem König das Licht anzünden eines idealischen Staats, weil dies der einzige wahre ist, ich würde bei dieser Erleuchtung ihm dienen mit allen Kräften meines Geistes und mit denen meiner Liebe” (BW Grimm 257). Using Enlightenment metaphors such as “Licht anzünden,” and “Erleuchtung,” von Arnim reveals her faith in the capability of truth and rational discourse to bring about positive development.

This is the earliest known written articulation of von Arnim’s ideas concerning her vision of an ideal government, ideas on which she would later elaborate in the Königsbuch. From the above passages it is also absolutely clear that a powerful monarch is at the center of her ideal. It would, therefore, appear that despite her outspoken criticism of current conditions, for which she holds the government largely responsible, the monarch remained above this criticism.

So strong were her convictions as spelled out in her letter to Savigny, that on April 22, 1840, she sent a verbatim copy of this letter to Friedrich Wilhelm, whom she
knew would soon become King.\textsuperscript{15} The following month, Friedrich Wilhelm wrote back to von Arnim twice, responding positively to her attention and expressing a willingness to hear her advice. These first encouraging replies prompted von Arnim to maintain correspondence with Friedrich Wilhelm for the rest of her life.

Backed by a worthy cause and the belief in the power of the written word to influence history, Bettina von Arnim began circulating her political ideas among private contacts and soon thereafter sent her message straight to the top. When Friedrich Wilhelm IV secured employment in Berlin for the Grimms on November 2, 1840, she was elated. In reality, before he became king, Friedrich Wilhelm had been planning to grant Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm professorships in Berlin (Landfester 303). In a letter written barely a month after their dismissal, Friedrich Wilhelm asked a trusted advisor, Minister Altenstein, what he thought of bringing the Grimms to Berlin for two purposes: to politically snub the King of Hannover and to ensure for Prussia some of the best intellectual capital possible (Berlin, December 20, 1837 In: BW Grimm 201). At the time neither von Arnim nor those close to her had known this. Therefore, given her perceptions of her “victory,” it is no wonder that she began to believe that she could help change the world.

2.3.4 Von Arnim’s Interactions with the Young Hegelians

Between the time that the writings of Young Germany were banned (1835) and the Grimms’ move to Berlin (1840) a new group of intellectuals had begun to frequent von Arnim’s salon. The Young Hegelians, so named because of their association with the teachings of the philosopher Hegel, found a stimulating and challenging environment.

\textsuperscript{15} The sections from von Arnim’s letter to Savigny quoted above appear in von Arnim’s copied letter to Friedrich Wilhelm IV on pages 59-60 of BW FW IV/Püschel Nr.4.
at von Arnim’s salon in which to develop their ideas on literary discourse, politics, and religion. Guests at von Arnim’s salon from this circle included theologian David Friedrich Strauß, philosophy student and journalist Moriz Carriere, journalist Eduard Meyen, medical doctor and author Max Ring, legal scholar and political author Heinrich Bernhard Oppenheim, and the radical journalists and publishers Bruno and Edgar Bauer.

Von Arnim formed close and supportive friendships with several of the Young Hegelians’ most productive members, whose fundamental artistic and religious views she shared. These common beliefs, which were instrumental in the creation of her political works, existed in striking contrast to their political views. The Young Hegelians advocated for extreme changes in government structure which were consistent with their radical and progressive views on religion, literature, and politics, with the most radical members of the group opting for democracy. Von Arnim, on the other hand, insisted on the necessity of an absolute monarchy.

In many ways, the Young Hegelians were indebted to those from the older generation who kept regular company at von Arnim’s salon. For example, Börne’s theories on the politicization of literature and literary criticism inspired the Young Hegelians in their radicalization of literature as a political tool (Hohendahl 119). However, the Young Hegelians criticized the Young Germans for being too closely tied to Romanticism in what they considered an overly aestheticized and subjective representation of politics (Landfester 262).

This new group of intellectuals sought to make theory into reality by elevating the role of “mediation between the author, text, and public to a revolutionary act” (Hohendahl 121). The literary critic thus fulfilled the role of a translator, with the potential to transform new ideas into reality (ibid.). As a literary author, Bettina von Arnim chose the role of an originator of new possibilities, which explains why she did not present
programmatic solutions to the problems she identified in her works. It was the job of the critic to mediate her ideas into practical reality by analyzing them and disseminating them among the public, thus influencing public will, which should bring about change.

Unfortunately for von Arnim and the Young Hegelians, these theories, while well intentioned, had several crucial flaws. First, given the level of their discourse, their assumption that the political public sphere (i.e., those who read and discussed criticism) could be enlarged solely by publishing in more accessible media (pamphlets, manifestos, newspapers) was misguided. Increasing the size (and thus the power) of the political public sphere beyond the relatively small number educated elite would have necessitated fundamental changes in society.

For example, in order to raise the educational level of the general population, restrictions on child labor would have to be instituted so that children could attend more school. An increase in adult wages was necessary, in order to enable adults to support their families without income from their children. Beyond these practical measures, even if the educational levels of the populace could have been raised, their theories assumed that an educated populace would, a) be interested in participating in discussions on political and social change affecting the greater population, and b) that they would be interested in the same types of solutions that those writing and mediating would be presenting.

Even more erroneous was the Young Hegelians' overestimation of the power of public will to influence those in power to change – especially to change in ways that would necessarily decrease the establishment’s own claims to power, such as a king ceding power to a parliament or individual voters. Without control of an army as a means of enforcing change, only economic leverage remained, and the nobility still controlled the majority of the wealth. Apart from financial concerns, there was no
impetus for those in power to change beyond their own wish to improve the lot of those beneath them. And while Bettina von Arnim and those in her circle may have been so altruistic, history exposed their naïveté.

Perhaps what made their lofty aspirations seem attainable was the compelling belief on which they were based, which has its roots in Hegelian philosophy: that spiritual and moral convictions constituted the driving force of change in the world and that literature was the expression of those convictions (Hohendahl 107). For von Arnim and the Young Hegelians, the earthly embodiment of these convictions took the shape of the immortal and transferable genius spirit, or Genie, which inhabited the most significant thinkers and doers of an age.

The pantheistic concept of the Genie, as developed by Klinger and later through Goethe and Hölderlin (all of whose works von Arnim knew well) is essentially the idea that God is not separate from human beings, but rather exists in every person (B/S 149). The degree to which this universal spirit of creation is present in an individual determines their level of spiritual awareness. Those in whom the level of spirit is the greatest are considered geniuses, and are the main contributors to the force of expansion and progression in history. All human beings are inherently capable of raising their spiritual awareness during their lifetimes, and as a whole the human race is destined for the highest degree of spiritual development, in which all will realize that, collectively, they are “God.” It becomes, then, the duty and privilege of the genius to raise the levels of awareness of those around him/her, often through art.

David Friedrich Strauß’s (1808-1874) essay, Ueber Vergängliches und Bleibendes im Christentum (written in 1838), explained the Young Hegelians’ reception of the tradition of the Genie as a criticism of organized religion: “…der einzige Cultus, welcher den Gebildeten dieser Zeit aus dem religiösen Zerfalle der letzten
ubriggeblieben, ist der Cultus des Genius” (Quoted from: Landfester 263). This underscores both Strauß’s and von Arnim’s firm belief that Christianity, in its role as the state religion, hindered the spiritual development of the individual. They felt that, rather than empowering the individual to attain greater spiritual awareness by encouraging equality and independent thought, the orthodoxy used its power and influence to secure its own position in society and to maintain the status quo.

In their fight against such abuses of power, it must have been encouraging to von Arnim when Strauß came out in public support of her, describing her as a *Genie* in her own right. In the same essay, Strauß argued for the recognition of von Arnim as a creative force: “…how long will it be until people see a new gospel according to John in Bettina’s letters? … It is the tendency of the time to worship the manifestation of God in those creative minds who have influenced and vitalized humankind” (Quoted from Härtl, “Young Hegelians,” 147).

Despite their agreement on the importance of literature to politics, the role of the *Genie* in human development, and the corruption within the Christian orthodoxy, Bettina von Arnim did not agree with the Young Hegelians on governmental structure. The Young Hegelians believed that pantheism translated into a de-legitimization of the office of the monarch. Generally, their argument was that if all humans are God, the privileged position of a monarch as a representative of the divine on earth did not exist; therefore, humans should be able to govern themselves. This assumption let to their support of representative forms of government.

Von Arnim, in contrast, could not abandon her belief that the monarch was, by necessity, a spiritually superior human being. She reconciled this assumption with her belief in the *Genie* by reasoning that monarchs possessed a true genius spirit naturally. Problems only arose when a ruler was somehow kept from realizing this true nature and
was thus hindered from carrying out the calling of enlightening the subjects. In the case of Friedrich Wilhelm IV, von Arnim was convinced that he was being blinded to his true mission by the old guard of advisors and ministers, whom he had inherited from his father’s government.

This opinion is evidenced in Moriz Carriere’s account of a conversation that he had with von Arnim in the late fall of 1840.


The above account reveals that von Arnim blamed established structures, including the church, for the apparent disconnect between current reality and what she perceived as the new spirit of the age. Rather than being free to lead the people in the direction of equality, spiritual development, freedom of thought and expression, and participatory government, the King was surrounded and enclosed by those interested in preserving their power at the cost of the greater good.

Von Arnim, faithful that the King was worth rescuing from this dilemma, was also confident that she could be the one to help him by formally entering the public political sphere as an author. Her mission to “öffentlich ein offenes Wort an ihn zu richten” (publicly direct toward him an open word), would take the form of an open letter to the king. In this manner, the Königsbuch became her artistic expression of an ideal reality,
which was intended to set the King on his proper path. At the very least, her text would begin a dialogue among her readers which, according to her beliefs and those of her contemporaries, was an act of true political revolution.
CHAPTER 3

VOLKSKÖNIGTUM: DISSECTING VON ARNIM’S VISION OF THE IDEAL GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The artistic product of Bettina von Arnim’s political ideas was *Dies Buch gehört dem König*, in which von Arnim propagated her model of the ideal relationship between the king and his people which she termed *Volkskönigum*. Accordingly, this model blended elements of the liberal discourse of the *Vormärz* with political philosophies from earlier periods. As a method of exploring this phenomenon, I focus on the evolution and characteristics of von Arnim’s ideal model of government and begin to grapple with some of the model’s incongruities and weaknesses.

In order to communicate with one of her main target audiences, future rulers, von Arnim chose to enter the traditions of High Politics and *Fürstenerziehung* (the education of new and future rulers), where she assumed the role of the wise older noblewoman who attempted to gain the ear of her protégé and provide him with trusted advice. Often, this advice came in the form of a metaphor for the ideal ruler, which represented a positive example to which the ruler should aspire. This communicative literary tool also epitomized von Arnim’s adherence to earlier notions of monarchy, which

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16 Bettina von Arnim tried to influence several members of the ruling class through her letters, the most notable being Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia, Crown Prince Karl of Württemberg, and the son of the Arch Duke of Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach, Carl Alexander. The first two correspondences have been published by Püschel and Landfester respectively. Although four of von Arnim’s letters to Carl Alexander appear in the recently published Klassiker Verlag volume IV of her collected works, this correspondence contains a wealth of material and its publication would make a significant contribution to the field.
stood in contrast to her otherwise progressive stances on social welfare, religion, and criminality. As will be explored in the following sections, one possible explanation for these contradictions is found in von Arnim’s inability to move beyond her philosophical background in medieval and Romantic notions of government, which took the form of patriarchal monarchical models.

While some may not consider a discussion of the character or ethics of a ruler to be in any way related to encouraging political change, I suggest that Bettina von Arnim believed that these issues lay at the heart of human interaction, and thus were central to building an ethical and benevolent state from the inside out. In contrast to her criticisms of society and politics, von Arnim’s ideal descriptions of the Volkskönig were not meant to provide a means of fixing the symptoms of society’s ills (crime, poverty, and corruption), but were rather designed to fix their causes (immorality, dishonesty, and greed). In the Königsbuch she explained the importance of morality to the realization of a Volkskönig-Genie and, as such, to the realization of an ideal nation:

Nein es ist vielmehr die Möglichkeit die Kraft einer vollkommnen moralischen Gesundheit darin verbürgt die das Genie des Heldentums der Wahrheit der Güte und Schönheit Schritt vor Schritt aus dieser Nation entwicklen wird. – Und wir Deutsche […] der Krankheitsstoff liegt doch auch in Uns. Denn so wie wir sind, sind wir miserabel! (BK 190)

Above von Arnim argued that complete moral health was the organizing principle and power through which genius, truth, good, and beauty could be fostered, and that these elements should form the basis of a nation. This morality, as exemplified by the Volkskönig, would eventually eliminate the causes of societal misery.
3.2 VOLSKÖNIGTUM: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE RULER AND THE PEOPLE

Von Arnim’s first known written reference to Volkskönigtum, or a system in which a true Volkskönig governs, appeared in a letter she wrote to Wilhelm Grimm from early 1839. This model of government represents a theoretical and artistic ideal which von Arnim thought was possible to achieve, or at least to work toward. The overarching goal of working toward this ideal was the evolution of human civilization. In the following excerpt from her letter to Grimm, she presented her ideas concerning the ideal relationship between a king and his subjects, and the greater purpose of developing such an association. In the description below, she also adopted what would become a characteristic rhetorical posture; Rather than dictate to her addressee what he should do, von Arnim explained how she would act in a position of power. This posture allowed von Arnim to offer her opinion while not overstepping social boundaries. It also underscored her subordinate position as a discursive partner.

[…] weiß ich wie ich einen Staat zu regieren habe; und wie ich alle Kraft aus den Herzen der Menschen als Fürst an mich ziehen kann; und wie ich mit dieser als einer höher organisierten Natur auf sie rückwirken kann; denn der Geist kann nur auf sich selber wirken, und so muß ich mit der Menschheit eins sein wenn ich auf sie wirke, und so muß ich ihre Kraft an mich ziehen können, um sie wieder zu kräftigen. (BW Grimm 68)

Volkskönigtum, then, is a state of unity between the ruler and the people, in which the ruler can summon his subjects’ collective energies, refine them, and channel them back into the people, thus strengthening and improving them. His ability to do this is based on his ‘more highly organized nature,’ or in other words, his natural state of higher spiritual and moral development.

Another important aspect of Volkskönigtum is conveyed through von Arnim’s use of the male gender in reference to the ruler. For example, the original German discusses the ruler (Fürst) in the masculine gender (as opposed to the feminine
equivalent, \textit{Fürstin}). This is typical of all of von Arnim’s descriptions of \textit{Volkskönigtum} since she did not target females in her attempts at \textit{Fürstenerziehung}. To underscore this point further, the term used for “People’s King” is the masculine, “\textit{Volkskönig},” as opposed to the feminine equivalent, “\textit{Volkskönigin}.” This choice of gender delimitation seems odd considering that female rulers existed at that time, and also in light of von Arnim’s own strong ambition to influence politics. However, in actuality it is consistent with her deference to strong male figures that was present throughout her life and works.

Another key aspect of \textit{Volkskönigtum} that appeared ad infinitum in later descriptions was von Arnim’s opinion that in order to achieve the necessary unity between the ruler and his people, there was no room for the traditional circle of high-level ministers and court advisors. According to von Arnim, these politicians were not concerned with the welfare of the people or the king, but rather with their own comfort, security, and power. A good illustration of this view is found in a letter to Carl Alexander of Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach, in which von Arnim explained the dangers of King Friedrich Wilhelm’s current advisory situation. This example, however, is unusual in that von Arnim mentions Prince Metternich by name as the main perpetrator of this Machiavellian system:

\begin{quote}
Ich meine daß keine Einflüsterungen gänzlich blinder und wahnwitziger Staatsmänner, unter denen der Fürst Metternich der angebetete Oelgötze ist ihn bewegen sollen dies Ich zu verläugnen oder er betrügt sein eignes Volk um den in ihm zur Geburt reifenden Keim seines eignen Selbstes. Denn wahrlich der Fürst ist nichts anders als der in den Eingeweiden des Volksgeistes sich bildende Keim der höchsten Mensc\-\textit{h}enwürde. (Berlin, July 24, 1843; In: \textit{Werke IV} 470)
\end{quote}

Von Arnim believed that these statesmen selfishly hid harsh societal realities from the king, thus limiting his ability to improve society. More grievous was that such practices kept the monarch from realizing his innate potential as a \textit{Genie}. She emphasized this true inner self above through the capitalization of the first person singular pronoun “Ich,”
which, in is not typically capitalized in German unless it begins a sentence. The last sentence related this inner “Ich” to the people, describing the ruler as the developing kernel of the highest order of humanity. Using graphic imagery, von Arnim then depicted the ruler as incubating within the body, or “Eingeweiden,” (bowels, intestines) of the Volk. Through this metaphor, von Arnim alludes to the unified and dependent nature of the relationship between ruler and subjects, a relationship which Ulrike Landfester generally describes as the “Ausbildung einer organischen Einheit von Fürst und Volk” (158).

In the above phrase, Landfester captures the idea of teleological development with the term “Ausbildung,” (“education” in a broad, developmental sense) which is a key principle on which the concept of Volkskönigtum is founded. For von Arnim, within the process of the evolution of the human spirit, the individual had the right and responsibility to evolve through active inward searching. However, an ideal society would foster individual growth, to allow humans to evolve most effectively. Within such a society, individuals could assist in each other’s development through the free exchange of ideas. The role of the king was to foster the growth of such a society and to model such development himself.

This evolutionary process is captured in the term “organische Einheit” (organic unity). “Organic” not only recalls the image of the king developing inside the body of the people, but also represented von Arnim’s notions of how this relationship developed: naturally, even mysteriously, and in accordance with the sometimes indecipherable laws of nature. Unfortunately, the organic aspects of the Volkskönigtum model remained abstract despite von Arnim’s repeated and varied descriptions – a fault in her model that certainly contributed to its ineffectiveness, although this characteristic may well have been inherent to the nature of these organic aspects.
3.3 DESCRIPTION AND ORIGINS OF VON ARNIM’S VOLKSKÖNIG

Due to Bettina von Arnim’s aspirations of Fürstenerziehung, descriptions of the Volk were secondary to her characterizations of the Volkskönig. The unified nature of the relationship that she envisioned between the king and people, however, makes it difficult to discuss the Volkskönig without revealing the author’s assumptions concerning the Volk. This section, therefore, focuses mainly on the roots and descriptions of Bettina von Arnim’s Volkskönig as they relate to von Arnim’s insistence on preserving a monarchy, while the following section addresses the nature of von Arnim’s vision of the Volk.

Despite growing skepticism regarding Friedrich Wilhelm IV’s interest in societal and structural reform, which began shortly after he assumed the throne in 1840, Bettina von Arnim remained steadfast in her support of the new king. She was convinced that he could realize his potential as a Volkskönig, if only he would listen to the counsel of the correct people (namely, herself). When Bettina von Arnim wrote to Friedrich Wilhelm IV about fulfilling his destiny to become a Volkskönig, the king was at first flattered by the idea. But his understanding of this term, as Michaela Diers explains, was much more traditional and conservative than von Arnim had intended:

Auch er versteht sich als eine Art Volkskönig, wobei Friedrich Wilhelm allerdings diese Idee in ihrer reaktionären Ausprägung vertritt…als gütiger Landesvater bestätigt, zeigt er sich milde gegen seine ‘Kinder’ und zu Zugeständnissen bereit. (108-09)

That Friedrich Wilhelm chose to identify with the metaphor of the Volkskönig within the tradition of the Landesvater (lord of the manor) or Hausvater (head of the household), is reasonable given the extent to which they were ingrained in the social and governmental culture of the time.

Texts describing this patriarchal model of guidance were known as Hausväterliteratur, and had a cultural influence in German-speaking regions since the
late seventeenth century. The first of such texts intended for a German audience were the *Georgica curiosa*, first published in 1682 by Wolfgang Freiherrn von Hohberg. *Georgica curiosa* were adaptations of ancient Greek and Roman texts which described how the male head of the household should manage his affairs and lead a proper life. In typical Baroque fashion, the relationship between the father and his household was seen as a microcosm of those of above and below, including the father’s position vis-à-vis his ruler and, the ruler’s relationship to God. A main aspect of the *Hausvater* relationship was the duty of the father to foster those under his care (erziehen), whether in the sense of cultivating crops, or overseeing the moral development of his wife, children, and servants. This expectation same held true for all levels of the *Hausvater* model.

Von Arnim certainly drew on this tradition in her appeals to the monarch to be an example to his people, although her implicit allusions to the *Volkskönig* as a *Hausvater* figure left much room for misinterpretation. Namely, in the *Landes* and *Hausvater* models, those under the wise patriarch are akin to children who are incapable of deciding what is in their own best interests. Therefore, whatever the patriarch thought was best was necessarily the correct course. Compared to a *Volkskönig*, a *Hausvater* did not have, nor did he aspire to have, reciprocal unity with those beneath him. As such, a *Hausvater* could act in what he felt were his family’s best interests, even if those subservient to him did not agree with his actions. In a *Volkskönigtum*, on the other hand, the *Volkskönig* must understand the needs and desires of his people because, as von Arnim argued, the people inherently possess knowledge of what they need to develop. What the *Volk* required was a leader of a higher spiritual level to help them organize these impulses.

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17 [http://www.deutsches-museum.de/bib/entdeckt/alt_buch/text1199.htm]
18 For a discussion of the concept of *Erziehung* in the broader context of the European theoretical tradition of Enlightened Absolutism, see Landfester 72-3.
Von Arnim explained this new relationship, which she sought to develop between ruler and people, in a letter to Carl Alexander von Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach:

[...] das Volk ist nicht mehr so kindisch [...] Kein Fürst kann mehr durch Protektorschaft der Volksbildung sich Anerkenntniß erwerben, denn es ist nicht mehr zu bilden, es will sich selbst bilden, und jeder Versuch es in beschränkteren Kreisen zu üben als in dem der Emanzipation, würde fehlschlagen. (Berlin, April 5, 1844; In Werke IV 485)

No longer the helpless and ignorant children of the past, von Arnim argued that the people had developed a self-awareness that merited a new way of fostering their development. The idea that the Volk were poised to take an active part in their own evolution required a new approach on the part of their ruler. Rather than the Haus- and Landesvater dictating the course of development for his people, von Arnim suggested a new Volkskönig for a new age, in which the ruler would act as an inspirational facilitator, who would guide the people in their journey of emancipation and evolution.

The reasons behind von Arnim’s belief in monarchy, while certainly numerous and complex, centered around this need for a moral leader. The most prominent influence on this core aspect of von Arnim’s Volkskönig figure is found in a work of Romantic political philosophy by Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg, 1772-1801). Novalis’ Glauben und Liebe oder der König und die Königin (Faith and Love, or, the King and the Queen), published in 1798, is a critical poetic reflection on the nature of the state and its relation to the people (Paschek 146). Both Glauben und Liebe and Bettina von Arnim’s writings communicate the central belief that absolute monarchy is the only system which can provide a secure and developmental environment for its citizenry, while at the same time supplying the moral component that people need in order to develop spiritually.

Novalis developed his theories on government in response to what he understood to be an emotional and moral deficit that had been created by eighteenth-
century enlightened republicanism. The relationship between the state and its subjects in this form of government was defined in a social contract. In this contract, the individual willingly forwent a certain degree personal freedom in order to benefit from the secure controlled economic and social environment provided by the state. The rules of this environment, often defined in a constitution, allowed for fair competition and a relatively safe living environment in which individual citizens were free to pursue happiness and prosperity. While this model encouraged economic development and personal security, Novalis argued that there was a deeper sense of belonging that was missing because of the state’s inability to provide the individual with spiritual meaning.

To Novalis, a familial relationship between rulers and subjects, which was to be modeled after the relationships in the royal family, made absolute monarchy preferable to constitutional structures. A constitutional setting, he argued, is an artificial relationship borne out of mistrust. On the other hand, when love is the binding force in society, there is a foundation of trust and acceptance on which to build. Novalis upheld the royal couple as the ideal example of familial love personified.

Ein wahrhaftes Königs paar ist für den ganzen Menschen, was eine Konstitution für den bloßen Verstand ist. Man kann sich für eine Konstitution nur, wie für einen Buchstaben interessieren. [...] Bedarf der mystische Souverän nicht, wie jede Idee, eines Symbols, und welches Symbol ist würdiger und passender, als ein liebenswürdiger trefflicher Mensch? (Novalis, Glauben und Liebe 45)

Unlike the adversarial relationship implicit in a constitutional government, Novalis believed that a monarchy eliminated the need for the guarantee of enlightenment liberties because these liberties are (ideally) already inherent in the love-based family structure. In other words, a monarchy can provide security, while at the same time giving its people a sense of personal belonging, because the familial structure personifies love and acceptance.
This sense of belonging was also what Bettina von Arnim sought. While she did invoke familial models as related to the *Hausvater* structure, she often went beyond familial bonds, uniting the king and the *Volk* in one metaphorical body. Typically, she would refer to the king as the “head” of society and the people as the body: “Der Fürst im geistigen Sinn genommen hat auch einen Leib. Das ist sein Volk” (BK 40). Von Arnim used this metaphor to stress the importance of the spiritual connection that should exist within a *Volkskönigtum*. She equated this crucial, invisible connection to the mysterious impulse which causes a body to move by force of will. Anything that interrupted this direct connection was, therefore, detrimental to existence and growth. For example, she commented that the politics of the court interrupted the reciprocal connection between ruler and subject: “Dann tritt die Etikette vor und drängt sich zwischen Körper und Seele, daß die nicht auf einander wirken sollen” (BK 88).

Supporting both Novalis’ and Bettina von Arnim’s models of government was their assumption that rulers (especially those from royal blood lines) were exceptional human beings. Novalis argued that, “Der König ist kein Staatsbürger, mithin auch kein Staatsbeamter. Das ist eben das Unterschiedende der Monarchie, daß sie auf den Glauben an einen höhergeboren Menschen, auf der freiwilligen Annahme eines Idealmenschen, beruht”(47). Set apart from the rest of humanity, the royals were the ideal, and it was the belief (*Glaube*) in the presence of an ideal that was the key to satisfying the people’s need for the moral and spiritual edification:


By seeing in their rulers a perfected version of humanity, the people had models whom they could admire and emulate in the hopes of achieving perfection in themselves.
Similarly, von Arnim presented her *Volkskönig* as the pinnacle of human evolution: “nehmen Wir den Fürsten als der Menschheit höchste geistige Frucht” (Letter to Carl Alexander von Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach, Berlin, July 24, 1843; Quoted from: Werke IV 471).

The idealization of the monarchy, combined with the rejection of formal structures for mediation between ruler and subjects presents a particularly problematic area in the identification of von Arnim’s politics. While Novalis explicitly repudiated the need for a constitution, it remains a topic of scholarly debate as to whether or not Bettina von Arnim supported a constitutional monarchy. Given the direct and harmonious relationship she sought to forge between the monarch and the people, it makes little sense that she would be in favor of a constitution. On the other hand, she did occasionally give the impression in her letters that she was interested in seeing Friedrich Wilhelm IV honor his father’s promise of constitutional reform.

Some examples of von Arnim’s duplicity appear in her 1841 correspondence to Karl von Württemberg, where she seems to support a constitution by making the argument that a constitution would not threaten the power of the monarchy. “Wir sind nicht mehr auf der Stufe, wo Constitution die Kräfte der Einwirkung eines Fürsten zersplittern könnte” (BW Württemberg 42). In her next letter to him, she continued this line of reasoning, questioning the harm in granting the people a constitution: “diese ewige Lebensfluthen zwischen Geist und Gefühl, ist die einzige Wirkung zwischen Fürst und Volk, zu gewaltig um Constitution zu fürchten oder von ihr abzuhängen” (Bärwalde, November 3, 1841 in: BW Württemburg 55). In both examples, however, the existence of a constitution is clearly secondary to the strong bond between *Fürst* and *Volk*.

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She then characterized the denial of a constitution as a sign of weakness on the part of the monarchy because, she contended, if the monarch were to deny the people a constitution, then he would be implying that his relationship with the people was not strong enough to withstand the presence of such a document. A truly secure relationship, on the other hand, would render a constitution inconsequential with regard to monarchical power.

Constitution versagen ist so wenig Ahnung von der lebenskräftigen Beziehung der Fürsten zu seinem Volk, ist so geistiger Mangel an Willensenergie, an Mache der Sittlichkeit, […] und dieser Unabhängigkeit zu seinem Nachteil sich bemächtigen ist Mißtrauen der Lohn für Hingebung. (BW Württemburg 55)

If the relationship between the king and the people is so ideal that it renders a constitution inconsequential, then why would the people need one in the first place? Unfortunately, Karl never questioned von Arnim on this point.

In reality, her thorny argument may well have been little more than a rhetorical ploy to ingratiate herself to Karl of Württemberg at the expense of Friedrich Wilhelm IV, since Baden Württemberg already had a functioning constitution in place, while Prussia did not. It is certainly possible that von Arnim was flattering Karl in order to secure her influence over him.

Given the conflicting evidence, I must take issue with Bäumer and Schultz’s conclusion that “Bettinas Programm ist und bleibt das der konstitutionellen Monarchie.”20 It is incongruent, for example, that a Volkskönig would have any need for such a formal document through which the people would seek to limit or curtail the power of the king. It seems much more plausible that free speech and good counsel would keep the lines of communication open between a king and his public, thus circumventing the need for a

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20 The full quote reads as follows: “Bettinas Programm ist und bleibt das der konstitutionellen Monarchie, wobei sie ihrem ‘demokratischen’ König als Identifikationsfigur des Volkes große Aufgaben zuweist” (“Bettina’s program is and will remain that of a constitutional monarchy, whereby she allocates great tasks to her ‘democratic’ king as a figure with whom the people identify”) (B/S 124).
constitution. Still, it is possible that von Arnim saw a constitution as a step in the development of Volkskönigtum which would protect the people’s rights while reforms were enacted. For example, such a document could serve to destabilize the power of the state bureaucracy while protecting and expanding the individual’s rights to expression and ownership.

Either way, convincing Friedrich Wilhelm IV to accept a constitutional monarchy was not one of von Arnim’s main goals; convincing him to ignore his advisors’ counsel in favor of hers, was. Overall, after careful research into the origins and description of von Arnim’s ideal governmental system, whose main inspiration was a text that clearly argues against constitutionalism, I would suggest that her ultimate goal was not a constitutional monarchy. Such a construct would only serve to dilute or impede the direct connection between the king and the Volk which she sought to establish.

3.4 WHO ARE THE VOLK?

Given the importance that von Arnim placed on the identity of Volkskönig as the embodiment of the spirit of the Volk, it seems strange how little space she devoted to their description. This section examines von Arnim’s specific characterizations of the Volk up to and including those in the Königsbuch, and attempts to deduce her perceptions and assumptions concerning the Volk based on written evidence.21 As noted in the previous section, one salient characteristic of the Volk was von Arnim’s belief in their new level of maturity, and hence their ability to participate in their own growth. This view can be related to the growing awareness of civic change brought on by the July Revolution of 1830 in Paris, as well as related waves of constitutional and

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21 In Gespräch mit Dämonen von Arnim went into more detail about the identity of the Volk, but because of the text’s post-1848 publication, these portrayals are discussed in Chapter Five, and within their new context.
voting reform movements in Belgium, England, and Warsaw, whose influence was palpable in political debates in Prussia (Kosseleck 420).

Other features of the Volk can be deduced from von Arnim’s descriptions of the Volkskönig. Broadly speaking, she viewed the people (and humanity in general) as still in need of salvation, the key to which was spiritual and moral development. Von Arnim’s model implies that the Volk both needed and wanted assistance with this development, and that the best sources of this help would come from those who were more spiritually advanced (Genies). She assumed that the public still wanted to be ruled by a king, as long as he was in tune to their needs: “Denn von Fürsten will das Volk regiert sein, der die höchste Großmut aus dem Volk selbst schöpfe und jeder andre Wille ist zu klein das Volk zu regieren” (BK 85).

And even though von Arnim realized that a society could exist without a monarch, she was clear in her explanation that this existence would not be ideal, and that such a society would eventually deteriorate:

Ein Fürst ohne Volk ist undenkar, aber ein Volk ohne Fürsten ist wohl denkar. […] Ja das Volk kann wohl noch ohne Fürsten ein Volk sein, allein ein wüster Boden dessen üppigste Naturkraft nur wuchert nur verschwendet aber nicht mit ordnenden Gewalten sich fortwährend entwickelt…. (Werke IV 472)

The first sentence in the above quotation recalls Novalis’ statement in Glauben und Liebe, that “kein König ohne Republik, und keine Republik ohne König bestehn könne, daß beide so unteilbar sind, wie Körper und Seele, und daß ein König ohne Republik, und eine Republik ohne König, nur Worte ohne Bedeutung sind” (48-49). Despite von Arnim’s assertion, which (with over forty years of hindsight) admitted the possibility of a non-monarchical republic, the point is essentially the same: the best kind of government is a monarchy. Without the guidance of a king, society would squander its richest resource, thereby forgoing their opportunity to develop.
Von Arnim’s references to Novalis imply her agreement with Romantic notions of the *Volk*, at least to some extent. Namely, she viewed a people as the incorporation of a nation in a patriotic sense, which, it is important to note, was not yet a modern nationalist viewpoint.²² Although she idealized the people’s desire for a monarchy, von Arnim’s *Volk* were not the idealized peasantry of the Romantic era. They were the *Volk* of the *Vormärz*: the rural poor, the improverished city dwellers, and the middle classes.

In addition to direct and implied descriptions of the *Volk* and von Arnim’s assumptions about what they wanted in terms of a ruler, what is most apparent in Bettina von Arnim’s writings is the importance of the unified relationship they should share with the king. The strength of this bond, she argued, should come from a shared national character and mutual understanding.²³

Here again, von Arnim stressed the organic interconnectedness necessary between monarch and subject. The closer the two entities are, the more their desires will seamlessly coincide. While von Arnim did not provide any discreet methods by which this communion was to be achieved, the language she used to describe the relationship is in concordance with her belief in the underlying method. Phrases such as, “Gefühl des Einverständnisses,” “sich geltend machen,” and “allgemeinen Weltorganismus,” connote what she understood to be entities unified through love. This belief in love as

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²² In a very general sense, “patriotic” in this context implies pride in, or love for, one’s country or nationality, whereas “nationalistic” connotes a similar pride or love, but takes patriotism one step further in the belief that one’s country or nationality is better than others.

²³ Letter to Crown Prince Karl of Württemberg from 1841. Although this letter is a copied version, because it has very few corrections, and since Karl’s reply directly addresses some of the material contained in this version, it can be safely assumed to be close to the original (BW Württemberg 153).
the binding force in the relationship between Fürst and Volk returns us to Novalis. At times, however, Bettina von Arnim expressed this bond through radically different imagery, which set her apart not only from Novalis, but also from her peers.

In its most original manifestation, Bettina von Arnim equated the intensity of the nourishing bond between the ruler and the people to that of a fetus being nourished in the womb. As Bettina von Arnim had seven children, all of whom she raised to adulthood, such imagery was readily accessible to her. This radical feminization of the Volk as a womb is one of the most fascinating aspects of von Arnim’s political discourse, and comprises some of the most striking imagery in her repertoire. This material, contained in her letters to Carl Alexander of Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach, appeared only very recently in edited form (Werke IV). Following is the first critical analysis of this powerful and unusual imagery.

In 1843, Bettina von Arnim sent a copy of her Königsbuch to Carl Alexander and took that opportunity to pursue a discussion with him concerning the text and her thoughts on the ideal state structure contained therein. In the first letter of this nature, von Arnim boldly introduced imagery which portrayed the king as a developing fetus in the womb. Through this metaphor, Bettina von Arnim conveyed not only the ideal depth of the connection between the two entities, but also her opinions on the crucial role of the people with reference to the development of the king.

Und wie das Werden des Menschenkeims vom Mutterleib abhängt, so hängt das höchste Ideal der Menschheit nemlich der Fürst in seinem Werden von seines Volkes innerem gesunden Geistestrieb ab der sein Mutterleib ist. (Berlin, July 24, 1843; In: Werke IV 471)

As the potential of a human being depends on the body of its mother during pregnancy, so the ideal of humanity (incorporated in the ruler) depends on the healthy inner spiritual

24 In fragment 4 of Glauben und Liebe, Novalis describes love as the organizing principle of the universe, of which the monarchy is a microcosm: *Meine Geliebte ist die Abbreviatur des Universums, das Universum
impulses (germinating power) of his people, expressed as the nourishing womb. This organic imagery also implies a level of sacrifice on the part of Volk, who must put their energies into the protection and development of the Volkskönig rather than completely into themselves.

Next, von Arnim elaborated on her image in order to emphasize further the necessity of this close connection:

Und das Volk in seiner Naturkraft geistiger Tendenzen ist ihm auch die Naturgemäße Vermittlung die diese Kräfte des Werdens ihm zuströmen, es ist ihm der Mutterschoos. – Wie können die Bande des Blutes zwischen Fürst und Volk innig genug empfunden werden? – Damit der Fürst werde darum ist die Menschheit sein nährendes Prinzip! (Werke IV 471)

The ruler’s potential is nourished by the power and life of the people, whom von Arnim equated to a womb (“Mutterschoos”), and the connection between the king and people should be as close as the placental connection (“Bande des Blutes”) between womb and child.

Such graphic imagery, which glorified the pregnant female body as the nourisher of life, is both rich and memorable. Von Arnim’s feminization of the Volk is at once an empowerment of the female in terms of strength and capability, and a disempowerment in its perpetuation of accepted gender roles. While the image called attention to the crucial role of the female as ensuring the future, it also implied that the highest calling of the female was to bring forth the (male) child.

Von Arnim, in fact, addressed the unusual nature of her metaphor, defending her choice to “reduce” the Volk to the function of (female) nourisher.

Da könnte einer staunen, daß das ganze Volk nichts sei als die nothwendige sinnliche Entwicklung des Menschengeistes als Fürst. Aber! – Muß denn nicht alles als Einheit sich zusammendrängen? – Sollten Wir glauben dürfen daß dieser Urkraft des Werdens sich das Geringste
die Elongatur meiner Geliebten. Dem Freunde der Wissenschaften bieten sie alle, Blumen und Souvenirs, für seine Geliebte” (43).
Rather than focus on their separate incorporations as mother and child, von Arnim focused on the concept of organic unity to which humanity is naturally drawn ("alles als Einheit sich zusammendrängen.") In other words, the Volk were not playing a separate role than the king; there is only one role – to both nourish and be nourished. Von Arnim then stated the relevance of this connection for the future Arch Duke, concluding that to be in discord with one’s own subjects is to be in direct conflict with one’s own source of existence and development: “Der Fürst der sein Volk im Widerspruch mit sich empfindet, ist im Conflikt mit den eignen Lebensquellen” (Werke IV 471-72).

After having digested the preceding imagery, the following quote assumes an added layer of meaning:

Ja das Volk kann wohl noch ohne Fürsten ein Volk sein, allein ein wüster Boden dessen üppigste Naturkraft nur wuchert nur verschwendet aber nicht mit ordnenden Gewalten sich fortwährend entwickelt in dem Keim den es nährt als höheres Prinzip der Gesammtheit; so wie die Mutter auch das erhöhte Lebensprinzip in der eignen Frucht ahnet und darum in Liebe zu ihr aufgeht. (Werke IV 472)

While it was not possible to have a baby (Fürst) without a womb (Volk), it was possible to have the reverse, but only in a barren state in which it is impossible to realize the ultimate potential. A leaderless Volk, as an empty womb, von Arnim argued, is deprived of the highest organizing principle of existence. A people without a king is incapable of knowing the highest principle or force in the universe: love (also read: God). This notion clearly underscored von Arnim’s argument for monarchy as the ideal form of government.
3.5 SUMMARY

In Chapters Two and Three, I have attempted to provide an overview of Bettina von Arnim’s literary politics, which were both complex and, in some areas, plagued with contradiction. In Chapter Two, I focused on her intellectual and literary influences, and documented examples her socially progressive beliefs and activities. In Chapter Three I examined von Arnim’s portrayal of an ideal republic, in order to demonstrate the possible reasons for her adherence to absolute monarchism. Viewing the two aspects of her politics in conjunction, it seems as if Bettina von Arnim felt that the best way to achieve her goals for social welfare and societal evolution was through an autocratic form of government.

Even though von Arnim was aware that much of her political contribution took the form of an artistic ideal, many of her key assumptions with regard to human nature were so erroneous that any movement toward her ideal seemed to have been doomed before it even began. For example, her belief in the inherent goodness and perfectibility of the Volk seems, to a modern reader, naïve at best and dangerous at worst. It is also questionable if Bettina von Arnim’s limited knowledge of the fourth class (despite her efforts) was enough to make her an adequate representative of the people to the king. Her valorization of the Volk was, in its naïveté, also consistent with her view of Friedrich Wilhelm IV. Von Arnim’s belief (or wish) that the monarch was necessarily of a higher spiritual and moral caliber was simply not something that could be assumed. For these reasons, the prospect of cultivating Bettina von Arnim’s Volkskönigtum from the existing branches of the Volk and the Königtnum was highly unlikely.

From the perspective of literary and intellectual history, however, an in-depth look at von Arnim’s politics reveals interesting tensions and collaborations. The intellectually powerful legacies of the Enlightenment and German Romanticism, as well as those of
the Vormärz, had a definite impact on the formation of her views. As such, she represents an important transitional figure between Enlightenment and Romanticism, and the new generation of liberals and radicals, both in thought and deed. Bäumer and Schultz elaborate on this status in the following context:

Aus den vielfältigen poetologischen und philosophischen Bezügen zum ‘Zeitgeist’ um 1800 wird deutlich, daß Bettina ihre entscheidenden Impulse und Anregungen der Romantik verdankt, jedoch kann nicht übersehen werden, daß sich die inhaltlich und formal unorthodoxen Qualitäten ihrer Werke unter anderem auch auf deren epochenübergreifenden Charakter gründen. Die Autorin Bettina von Arnim steht literatur- und ideengeschichtlich als Vermittlerin zwischen den Positionen des metaphysisch orientierten Idealismus, der sich in der Aufklärung vorbereitete und als dessen letzte Phase die Romantik betrachtet werden kann, und den Anfängen eines ideologiekritischen Materialismus, der sich auf literarischem Gebiet durch die Doppelbewegung von Biedermeier und Jungem Deutschland und die zunehmende Hinwendung zum Realismus einleitete. (B/S 148)

Bäumer and Schultz argue that because of her transitional status, “die epochenüberspannenden thematischen und formalen Einflüsse und Überschneidungen in Bettinas Werk müssen substantiell stringenter erforscht werden” (148). This is clearly one of the missions of this project.

Despite their astute observations with regard to von Arnim’s transitional status as an author, Bäumer and Schultz do not contextualize her with regard to other writers of her day. In other words, was Bettina von Arim unique in her inconsistencies because of a limited capacity to understand the political social discourses going on around her, as has been previously assumed? The company she kept and their opinions of her clearly indicate that this was not the case.

Von Arnim’s advocacy of both state welfare and monarchism are illustrative of the ongoing shift in thinking, brought on by the Industrial Revolution, that social welfare (the responsibility for which had once rested in the private and ecclesiastical economic spheres) was becoming a responsibility of the state. Such hybrid mixes of socialism and
legitimism were not unheard of among the developing nineteenth-century political theories. For example, the idea of a “sozialen Königtums,” which would limit economically liberal policies in order to protect the growing proletariat, was among conservative theories of government developed around this time (Dräger 269).

Another perspective on the difficulty of determining one’s politics at this time is indicated by the writings of legitimist politician and writer, J.M. von Radowitz. In his 1833 article for the *Berliner Politische Wochenblatt*, titled, “Der deutsche Liberalismus,” Radowitz characterized, in predictably pejorative terms, the four “hauptsächlichsten Fractionen” of the German liberal movements. He identified the first group as those whose primary focus was national unification. He described another as those who were most concerned with constitutionalism, and a third as those who believed that a sovereign state (i.e., without public representation) should necessarily protect the best interests of the people. The fourth and largest group, he wrote, was comprised of those “Leuten von mäßiger und geringer Bildung, welche für ‘Freisinnige’ gelten wollen.”

Radowitz’s criticisms aside, these categories attest to the many developing variations already present in the early 1830s, the latter two of which could be used to describe aspects of von Arnim’s own political leanings. I suggest that Bettina von Arnim’s quirky politics were not unique, but rather, at least to some extent, indicative of the ongoing major shift in western thought concerning societal structures and one’s place within a civilization that crested with the Enlightenment and continues today.

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4.1 INTRODUCTION

Bettina von Arnim had great faith in her ideals. She was convinced that if the king were given the chance to know the truth about his government and current societal conditions, he would fulfill his potential as a Volkskönig and begin reforming (and transforming) the state. Bettina von Arnim believed that she could convey this “truth” to the new King of Prussia, and beginning in the late 1830s, publicly made it her mission to do so. Thus, “dem Könige die Wahrheit sagen,” quickly became a recognized catchphrase for her upcoming book, which she intended to dedicate directly to Friedrich Wilhelm IV.26

Aided by Alexander von Humboldt, von Arnim soon secured permission from the king himself to dedicate her book to him, which was highly unusual.27 With the help of some well-placed leaks, news of the book, its dedication, and the identity of its author appeared in newspapers all over German lands (Werke III 833-34). Despite its controversial content, Dies Buch gehört dem König was published in July 1843, mainly

26 Varnhagen actually recorded von Arnim coining this phrase in a diary entry dated December 7, 1840 (Werke III 831). Afterwards, it frequently appeared in announcements, reviews, and articles featuring news about Bettina von Arnim.
27 Friedrich Heinrich Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1839) was a respected natural scientist and scholar, who, after spending six years in America (1798-1804), returned to Berlin and became a member of the Prussian Academy of Science. During this time he also became an advisor to King Friedrich Wilhelm III on matters of art and science. Humboldt spent extensive time in France as the Prussian ambassador during the Napoleonic wars, and in Russia in the early 1830s. Thereafter he spent most of his time in Berlin as a trusted (albeit unofficial) advisor to the Prussian kings.
owing to changes in the censorship laws which eliminated the need for pre-publication approval for texts of considerable length.\textsuperscript{28}

Ironically, the person on whom the \textit{Königsbuch} arguably had the least impact, was the King. Although von Arnim sent Friedrich Wilhelm IV a preliminary copy of \textit{Dies Buch gehört dem König}, at the time of its publication the king admitted that he had not yet read the text.\textsuperscript{29} Despite her failure to influence Friedrich Wilhelm IV (certainly one of her main goals), von Arnim’s text, contrary to Landfester’s claims, had an impact on political discourse in Prussia in terms of inspiring thought and discussion among her peers. This impact was not only noticeable in published reviews, letters, and personal accounts, but can also be measured by the reaction of the authorities against her text. The text probably would have been confiscated in Prussia as well had it not been for its authorized dedication to the King. Indeed, Adolf Stahr’s “Bettina und ihr Konigsbuch,” (1843) a fifty-six page brochure containing excerpts from the most politically and religiously controversial arguments in the \textit{Königsbuch}, was immediately confiscated and banned. Von Arnim herself considered these measures proof of the success of both texts (B/S 104; Härtl, “Rezeption” 213-14).

Internationally, For example, the \textit{Königsbuch} was immediately banned in Austria and Bavaria, and von Arnim fell under increased observation by Metternich’s spies (\textit{Werke Iii} 851). In England the text was regarded as a rare and important representation of current political and social conditions in Prussia, and was hailed as a triumph over the politically repressive censorship laws (\textit{BK Commentary} 882-83). An example of this sentiment is found in an anonymous review published in the journal, \textit{A}

\textsuperscript{28} In an attempt to eliminate backlog, only newspapers, magazines, flyers, and other printed material under twenty print sheets (\textit{zwanzig Bogen}, or 320 pages) were still subjected to censorship before publication. All texts were, however, still subject to censorship, confiscation, and banning after publication (Staff 23-26). It was no accident that the length of the \textit{Königsbuch} is just over 320 pages.

\textsuperscript{29} See BW FWIV/Püschel 97.
New Moral World, from January 20, 1844 (Leeds, England). The author of the review stated that Bettina von Arnim, “a lady of what is called the highest rank in society, gives the king a lesson in Communism and atheism” (Quoted in Härtl, “Rezeption” 220). Research has shown that the author was most likely Friedrich Engels.30

Finally, while neither the text nor its author suffered immediate legal repercussions at the hands of the Prussian government, as a direct result of the views expressed in the Königsbuch, censorship of von Arnim’s subsequent publications tightened significantly. As was the case with many of her peers, censorship curtailed von Arnim’s publishing (the Armenbuch), caused her to self-censor subsequent texts, and to publish others anonymously (the Polenbrochure). Therefore, even if the Königsbuch did not result in concrete policy changes, given the amount of discussion and bureaucratic effort that it did trigger (not to mention its impact on von Arnim’s own political and literary production), existing evidence disproves Landfester’s statement that the Königsbuch, “letztlich nicht einmal kurzfristig wirklich auf das politische Gespräch in Preußen Einfluß zu nehmen vermochte,” (Landfester 319).

The main reason for the establishment’s strong reaction against the Königsbuch was the information contained in the book’s appendix (Anhang). The appendix consisted of a survey-style compilation that described the lives and economic living conditions of the poorest inhabitants of Berlin, and was based closely on a report given to von Arnim in early 1843 by the Swiss teacher Heinrich Grunholzer (1819-1873). Unlike the complicated language of the main text, which presented theories on the ills of society, the intentionally straightforward language of the appendix portrayed the realities to which the theories alluded (Hock, Replicas 97). This style made the information in the appendix approachable to practically any reader, even if the price – four Talers – did

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30 See also Helmut Hirsch, "Bettine lehrt ‘Kommunismus und Atheismus’. Zu einer Korrespondenz in ‘The
In order to illustrate this point, below are two of the shorter examples (with translations) of the many individuals and families profiled in the appendix:


In der gleichen Stube wohnt eine alte Witwe, welche ebenfalls Knochen sucht. (367)

The next entry is representative of the many displaced weavers and elderly in the city:


Bettina von Arnim’s decision to include this information was clearly a radical and dangerous one. Modern von Arnim biographer Fritz Böttger stresses the significance of von Arnim’s report in terms of its impact on history and social science:

_Vornehmlich wegen Veröffentlichung dieser Materialien hat das Arnimsche Königsbuch Epoche gemacht und wird in den Annalen als die erste nennenswerte sozialpolitische Schrift in der deutschen Literatur verzeichnet. (Tag und Traum 291)_

In his enthusiasm, Böttger does not draw attention to earlier survey models from other regions, which probably inspired Grunholzer and von Arnim, but Böttger’s

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31 At this time, a _Taler_ (also called _Reichstaler_) was equivalent to one silver piece and weighed 16.7g. One _Taler_ equalled thirty silver _Groschen_. One silver _Groschen_ equalled twelve copper pennies (_Pfennige_). A Silesian weaver earned between five and twenty silver _Groschen_ per week. Therefore, the price of the BK was equal to approximately two and a half month’s salary.
acknowledgement of the importance of von Arnim’s decision to publish it is nonetheless valid. At the time of its publication, the appendix of the *Königsbuch*, was one of the first texts of this nature to be published in Prussia.

Beyond the dedication, another reason that the *Königsbuch* was allowed to remain in circulation in Prussia was its complex and often difficult style. Most likely the product of both self-censorship and von Arnim’s own artistic whim, the poetics of the main body discouraged readership beyond educated intellectual circles. A main component of this style is elaborate mythological and historical metaphors, which contain the author’s opinions on government. As an introduction to the analysis of these complex metaphors, the following section provides the most complete discussion to date concerning the historical and literary contextualization Bettina von Arnim’s use of mythological imagery for political purposes.

The analysis itself focuses on how von Arnim uses the figures of the zodiac, as well as Jupiter, Ganymede and Napoleon to further elucidate her vision of the *Volkskönig*. My original research in this section led to a correction of prior scholarship, which assumed that von Arnim modeled her Ganymede figure after Goethe’s “Ganymed,” when Hölderlin’s Ganymede proved a much closer inspiration. Also, my discussion of a female German author’s literary treatment of Napoleon stands alone among the many studies of how various male German authors have instrumentalized this most influential figure for literary purposes.

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32 Some examples include Büchner’s “Der Hessische Landbote,” (1834), Philipp Lindemann,’s “Die Eigentumlose im Amt Eutin,” (1832), and Johann Karl Porsch’s “Der Arme im Wohlstand oder vorteilhafteste Armenhilfe [...]” (Nuremberg, 1840). The latter two texts are referred to in Landfester (321-22).
4.2 THE ROLE OF MYTHOLOGICAL IMAGERY IN THE POLITICAL LANGUAGE OF BETTINA VON ARNIM

Even though the appendix to the *Königsbuch* drew the most attention to the text, the main body was original artistic and theoretical vehicle of the author’s literary and political expression, and as such best reflects the author’s original intent to influence the king and her readership. Within the main text, von Arnim often veiled her criticism of current political and societal institutions with layers of highly stylized and complex mythological imagery. Once these rhetorical constructions are unraveled, her political ideas materialize, rendering apparent her desire for progressive social reform alongside her steadfast support of the monarchy.

In keeping with other aspects of her writing, Bettina von Arnim’s use of mythological imagery was influenced by the literary reception of mythology from earlier periods and the times in which she published. Von Arnim’s affinity for and exposure to Greco-Roman, Biblical, and Medieval came from eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century translations and compositions. German Romantic authors also influences von Arnim in terms of their innovative theories on the purpose and uses of mythology. For example, Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis posited the novel (*Roman*) as the ideal “universal-poetische” form, through which to absorb ancient mythology and develop new mythologies (Steinecke 185). Similarly, Bettina von Arnim favored the novel as a space for expression and experimentation in this regard, revising ancient mythological imagery to help develop her new myth of *Volkskönigtum*.

A related aspect of the Romantic literary reception of mythology important to von Arnim’s poetics is the use of mythology in developing historical and cultural identity. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, Clemens Brentano and Achim von Arnim, for instance,
valued a shared mythology (as they did a common language or customs) as a basis and justification for national cultural identity. This belief manifested itself in their search for, and celebration of, German folk tales and fairy tales as national poetry (Betz 16). Bettina von Arnim’s use of mythology in the development of a German national identity reflected these views, and is especially apparent in *Gespräche mit Dämonen*, where the hero Siegfried symbolizes the qualities of an ideal German king.

The most significant influence from Romantic circles came from von Arnim’s interactions as a young woman with cherished friend Karoline von der Günderode (1780-1806). This intense friendship, which ended tragically with Günderode’s suicide at the Brentano’s summer home, fostered von Arnim’s creative and theoretical development, especially with reference to mythology. A key influence on both Günderode’s scholarly pursuits and her suicide was her close intellectual and romantic relationship with married classical scholar Georg Friedrich Creuzer (1771-1858). As a Professor of Classical Philology at the University of Heidelberg from 1804 to 1845, Creuzer developed a multi-volume text on the relationship between myth and symbolism titled *Symbolik und Mythologie in der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen* (1810-22). Much of this work, which predeced what have since become accepted psychological interpretations, was developed during Creuzer’s relationship with Günderode. Creuzer and Günderode often corresponded on ideas related to Creuzer’s studies, and Günderode, in turn, discussed them with Bettina von Arnim. Creuzer’s influence on Bettina von Arnim (whether direct or indirect) was instrumental in the development of her understanding of mythology as a literary device.

Mythology scholar Heinz Goeckel explains Creuzer’s theories as follows: Creuzer suggested that mythology was representative of the spirit of a culture, and that when poets write about mythology, they project their own human aspect onto the
mythological figures. In a poetic composition, therefore, the perspective of the poet is
detectable, and that perspective is representative of a historical cultural moment. This
phenomenon, the first of what Creuzer termed “the three constants of myth,” is called,
“Erinnerung” (memory) (Goeckel 38-40). This concept applies to Bettina von Arnim’s
compositions because it is particularly in her mythological imagery that her historical and
political perspectives, forged in the Vormärz, come to the forefront, belying the text’s
earlier temporal narrative settings.

Creuzer’s second constant, “Indifferenz,” (indifference in the sense of “in
between”), referred to the dual nature of the mythological symbol as a metaphorical
representation. Here he described the inherent inadequacy of a symbol to refer at once
to both a tangible object and an intangible idea. Creuzer compared this state of limbo to
that of the soul:

Da mithin die Seele, so betrachtet zwischen der Ideenwelt und dem
Gebiete der Sinne schwebet, da sie beide miteinander zu verbinden und
im Endlichen das Unendliche zu erringen strebt, wie kann es anders
seyn, als daß das, was sie erstrebt und errungen hat, die Zeichen seines
Ursprungs an sich trage, und selbst in seinem Wesen jene Doppelnatur
verrate?33 (Quoted in: Goeckel 40)

Like the soul, Creuzer understood a symbol as having the ability to remain suspended
between the concrete and the ephemeral, thus uniting the two aspects. He also
recognized that in using a symbol, one attempts to contain the infinite within the finite,
thereby exhibiting the symbol’s own paradoxical dual nature. Together with Günderrode,
von Arnim developed Creuzer’s concept of Indifferenz into what they termed a
“Schwebereligion” (“floating/suspended religion”). This notion of Indifferenz, or
schweben, remains of central importance in grasping von Arnim’s poetics. Her use of

33 Creuzer, Friedrich, Symbolik und Mythologie, Part 1, 2nd ed. (Leipzig and Darmstadt, 1819) 57.
mythological figures as metaphors for the Volkskönig are a prime example of the concept of Indifferenz insofar as they are an attempt to bind the realm of utopian ideas with historical political reality.

Lastly, Creuzer labeled his third constant of myth, “Überraschung” (surprise), which referred to the inexhaustible room for variation within mythological symbols (Goeckel 40-41). Clearly, mythological imagery as a literary device is inherently attractive in its flexibility and universal appeal. In addition to the ability of mythological metaphors to suit various communicative situations, they can also possess multiple meanings within a specific context. As the following analysis will show, von Arnim seemed to revel in the limitless possibilities available to her in the realm of mythological imagery.

Unlike Romanticism’s generally optimistic relationship with mythology, the writers of the Vormärz had a difficult connection to this powerful rhetorical tool. On the one hand, Vormärz authors valued mythological imagery and symbolism as effective literary devices, with which most readers were familiar. These writers were less comfortable, however, with mythology’s connections to the upper classes, and saw mythology as a literary tool of the Restoration and its reactionary supporters (Steinecke 187). The most radically outspoken critics of the use of mythology, in fact, were the Young Germans and the Young Hegelians. They viewed verse (and by association mythology) as a genre of the Restoration and representative of conservative, reactionary, and traditional beliefs in religion and political structures that were characteristic of a bygone era (Steinecke 187; Betz 24).

What resulted from this ambivalence on the part of Vormärz writers was a movement toward experimentation with the traditional uses of mythology in literature. Koopmann comments, for example, on the many instances where myths were “aktiviert
und instrumentalisiert, [und] funktionalisiert” and put into the service of (anti-establishment) political, religious, philosophical, literary, social, and philological expression (8). As exemplified by Heine in his characterization of “Europa” in Deutschland, Ein Wintermärchen, mythological figures were often portrayed by Vormärz writers in terms of parody and irony.

Another palatable way anti-establishment authors chose to subvert the use of mythology was through creating new myths. Such myths often revolved around societal development, the creation of new realms of reality, and utopias. In addition to the new representations, traditional mythological portrayals were sometimes still used, resulting in the blurring between old myth and new (Steinecke 189-90). Bettina von Arnim’s use of mythological and heroic imagery in reference to Volkskönigtum is a prime example of such borrowing, mixing, and adaptation. Von Arnim used both traditional representations of mythological figures alongside her own alterations in order to create new type of king for a new era.

Von Arnim also used mythological imagery to enter into the male-dominated political and literary discourses of her day. The classical education afforded to male members of both the nobility and the educated elite made mythological references an easily recognizable sub-discourse (Steinecke 189). By skillfully “speaking their language,” von Arnim gave readers a way to identify with her writing, despite its unorthodox structure and style.

Another institutional factor in Vormärz authors’ use of mythology was the practice of censorship. During times of censorship, the use of metaphoric language and mythological paradigms increases as a protective method of writing due to their obtuse nature. Transference of arguments into the realm of myth and metaphor renders them less concrete and therefore less dangerous. The European Restoration was no
exception. During this time, much of the political writings were overlaid with mythic paradigms for the purpose of expressing subversive political ideas. Steinecke asserts that “die politische Dichtung […] benutzt […] das Mythologische als eine willkommene Verkleidung ihrer gefährlichen ‘Contrebande’ vor den Augen der Zensur” (192). While Heinrich Heine is probably the best-known example of such methods, Bettina von Arnim was among many who protected themselves by using mythological imagery in literary and political expression.

Even the most cursory glance at Bettina von Arnim’s works demonstrates that mythological imagery was of great significance in her writing. In addition to various cultural and institutional dynamics that encouraged the use of such imagery, von Arnim’s efforts to create an individual style and her desire for personal expression found rich reward in the realm of myth. The ensuing analysis illustrates how Bettina von Arnim combined mythological and heroic figures from Greco-Roman, Biblical, and European traditions to express and enhance her political vision.

4.3 ANALYSIS OF MYTHOLOGICAL IMAGERY IN DIES BUCH GEHÖRT DEM KÖNIG

4.3.1 Description of the Text

The main body of Dies Buch gehört dem König is set in Frankfurt in the year 1807, and is comprised of semi-fictional recorded conversations led by Goethe’s mother, Catharina Elisabeth (Textor) Goethe. In the text of the Königsbuch, she is called “Frau Rat,” which refers to Catharina Elisabeth Goethe’s title as the wife of Councilor Johann Caspar Goethe. As a young woman, the historical Bettina Brentano (not yet von

34 In the first edition from 1843, the spelling of Catharina Elisabeth Goethe’s title is “Rath.” In 1995 Klassiker Verlag edition, however, as well as in the accompanying commentary, the title has been modernized to “Rat,” with no “h.” I have chosen to retain the Klassiker Verlag spelling in order to remain consistent with the edition. In quotes from secondary sources that use the “Rath” spelling, that form will be retained.
Arnim) spent almost every day with the Frankfurt dowager during the two years before her death in 1808 (Böttger 285). Bettina Brentano did this both as a way to allay her grief over Karoline von Günderode’s suicide, and as a favor to Goethe, who had requested that she record his mother’s stories of his childhood, which he later included in his autobiography, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*.

In the *Königsbuch*, Frau Rat’s conversation partners include a vicar, a mayor, a young girl, a French magpie (*französischer Atzel*), and a young Swiss teacher. In clarifying and defending her views against the two older male representatives of church and state (who blatantly epitomize the status quo), the author speaks through both female characters, as well as through the French magpie and the younger Swiss man. Von Arnim’s division of personae between Frau Rat and the young girl reflects her autobiographical self at various stages during her life (i.e., her views, attitudes, actions). Frau Rat is not only reminiscent of the actual Catharina Elisabeth Goethe, but incorporates the mannerisms and opinions of the more mature, politically self-assured Bettina von Arnim as well, who was fifty-eight years old when the *Königsbuch* was published.

In keeping with von Arnim’s own exaggerated view of herself as a representative of the *Volk*, Frau Rat’s *völkisch* voice of experience and age, as Böttger describes it, is characterized by the wisdom and non-threatening manner of a grandmother figure. Frau Rat is also representative of a typical village wise-woman figure from the Romantic tradition, whose dialogic style lends the elderly woman more credibility because it reflects unpretentiousness and integrity (Böttger 285).
Complementing Frau Rat is the odd and often quiet, yet opinionated “Mädchen,” or “Bettine” figure, the same character that appeared in von Arnim’s first two books. The “Mädchen,” as she is called in this text, reflects a younger and more impetuous von Arnim, who speaks to the author’s real-life image as the Romantic Child. The ethereal and mysterious Mädchen also stands in symbolic opposition to the earthy and more realistic character of Frau Rat. This construct creates a tension the author attempted to resolve (in the spirit of Creuzer’s Indifferenz), by remaining a part of, and thus suspended between, both characters.

As its conversational style would indicate, the Königsbuch is not plot-driven. The text consists mainly of dialogue that leads the reader through multiple-framed narratives, debates, anecdotes, aphorisms, digressions and contradictions. In Part I of the text, Frau Rat holds conversations with the Mädchen and the “Pfarrer,” a fictitious vicar from Frankfurt. During these conversations, Frau Rat criticizes the church for its corruption and aloofness, and the state’s justice system, which she blames for creating a criminal class.

Part II of the text begins with the “Socratie der Frau Rat,” a lively discussion centered around the role of the state and the church in society. This exchange involves the aforementioned characters along with a fictitious “Bürgermeister” of Frankfurt. This lengthy section (again dominated by Frau Rat) revisits themes from Part one, stresses the need for education for all citizens, and elaborates on the role of the state in causing and perpetuating poverty and criminality. Frau Rat focuses especially on the unfairness and abuses of power perpetrated by the Prussian legal system (Hock, Replicas 96).

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35 See footnote 1 of this document for an explanation regarding “Bettina” vs. “Bettine.”
36 For more on the development of von Arnim’s personae throughout her published texts, see Hock, Replicas.
The “Socratie der Frau Rat” is followed by a shorter section, “Das Gespräch der Frau Rat mit einer französischen Atzel,” in which Frau Rat parleys over matters of religion and truth with a devil figure, who takes the form of a French magpie perched on the young Bettine’s head. The magpie, a gift from a French soldier during Napoleon’s occupation of Frankfurt, functions in the Enlightenment tradition of a Lucifer figure, imparting light, or knowledge, unto the listener (Hock, *Replicas* 96-97). As one who instructs, the magpie becomes the teacher and Frau Rat the student. The magpie radically espouses the coming of a new revolution of ideas which, it argues, will liberate humankind from the current oppressive structures of church and state (ibid.). While Frau Rat opposes the magpie’s arguments, the Mädchen sides with the harbinger, symbolizing a departure from the old world of violent (French) revolution and an arrival at a new age of spiritual and intellectual revolution.

4.3.2 Jupiter and the *Tierkreis*: Von Arnim’s Critique of the Court

According to von Arnim, Friedrich Wilhelm IV was the ideal person to lead his people into a new age. Von Arnim tried to inspire him to take the lead by creating flattering and positive behavioral models which reflected what von Arnim believed was his superior, god-like status. She then made these models even more attractive by setting them in rhetorical contrast to the earthly realm of superstition, corruption, and human suffering. As a result, von Arnim’s grotesque medieval and baroque creations are cast in entertaining opposition to the wisdom, power, grace, and beauty connoted by von Arnim’s figures of royalty and classical antiquity.

Von Arnim makes her first reference to Jupiter, the chief god of the ancient Greco-Roman pantheon and the god of weather, in Frau Rat’s story of her trip to a ball
held by the well-known and beloved Queen Luise of Prussia. In addition to the evident link between the king of the gods and earthly monarchs, von Arnim connects Queen Luise (and by association her son, Friedrich Wilhelm IV) with Jupiter through storm-related language such as “Blitz,” “Wind,” and, “Schneehagelweiß,” as well as the god’s symbol of an eagle holding lightning bolts (BK 25-27).

Queen Luise and Jupiter, as those on the side of power, wisdom, and reason, are contrasted with the other guests: advisers, ministers, and members of the court. The elaborate criticism of these guests begins when Queen Luise takes off her necklace and bestows it upon Frau Rat. The humble Frau Rat recounts how she called upon Jupiter and Apollo to grant her reason in order to quell an illusion that she was experiencing in her excitement:

Ich hab innerlich den Apoll und den Jupiter angerufen, diese menschen-begreifende Götter sollen mir beistehn, daß ich vernünftig bleib, und nicht alles um mich her für wunderliche Tiere halt, denn alle diese vornehmen Hofchargen kamen mir vor wie ein heraldischer Tierkreis. (BK 25)

Here, Apollo and Jupiter are enlisted to help Frau Rat counteract what she believes to be a delusional moment, in which she sees herself and the queen surrounded not by courtiers, ministers and advisors, but rather by animals.

Frau Rat compares the animals to those in a “heraldischer Tierkreis,” which is a metaphor derived from the creatures of the zodiac. Those beings, along with other animals found in medieval bestiaries and on coats of arms, had been used in European literary, political, and religious writings since the late middle ages as pejorative metaphors for members of the court. Some examples of the use of animal and Tierkreis imagery that probably influenced von Arnim include Goethe and Schiller’s cycle of “Tierkreis Epigrammen” and the accompanying epigram, “Literarische Zodiakus,” found

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37 The story is based on an actual historical occurrence that took place in Wilhelmsbad near Hanau on June 19, 1803, which Goethe’s mother reported to her son in great detail in a letter from June 24, 1803.
in *Xenien* from 1796, as well as later publications by writers in the Young German circle. Examples include Theodor Mundt’s 1835 publication of the journal, *Literarische Zodiakus*, Ludolf Wienbarg’s *Wanderungen durch den Thierkreis* (1835), and David Friedrich Strauß’s satirical verses, “Xenien. Ein Thierkreis,” which were published in Georg Herwegh’s, *Einundzwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz* (1843) (*Werke III* 921-22). Perhaps the most notable forerunner to von Arnim’s own use of this popular animal imagery is August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben’s poem, “Heraldisches. 23. April 1840,” from his controversial collection, *Unpolitische Lieder* (1840) (Schmitz, “Lebensrollen” 18).\(^\text{38}\)

After her initial mention of the *Tierkreis*, von Arnim elaborated on Frau Rat’s vision, creating an intricate and grotesque picture of the court. Despite her plea to the gods, Frau Rat is not able to return to her senses immediately. She still sees the party guests as animals, but with increasing clarity, she begins to analyze why she is seeing this *Tierkreis*. She and the reader are led to the conclusion that her vision, characteristic of thought inspired by the god of poetry (Apollo), is perhaps a truer vision of the crowd around her than it had been when the creatures appeared as people. Frau Rat begins to identify the animals in an encyclopedic manner, much as a scientist might record a list. “Löwen Büffel Pfauen Paviane Greife, aber auf ein Gesicht das menschlich schön zu nennen wär besinn ich mich nicht” (*BK* 25). This signifies a shift from feeling overwhelmed and surrounded, to a more composed state of mind, in which she can identify individual beings.

\(^{38}\) In 1846 Hoffman von Fallersleben lost his professorship in Breslau because of this politically critical collection (*B/S* 79). Because he had been banned from several cities, including Berlin, he could not secure work and fell on hard times. Bettina von Arnim, who had known him since the early 1820s, was one of the few people to publicly defend the persecuted Hoffmann von Fallersleben, and attempted to support him with the proceeds from *Gespräche mit Dämonen* (ibid.).
As the scene progresses, Frau Rat’s call for reason is answered, but not as originally expected. She deduces that the courtiers do not appear to her as human beings because there is something about them that is less than human: “Das mag davon herkommen, weil diese Menschengattung mehr eine Art politischer Schrauben oder Radwerk an der Staatsmaschine und keine rechte Menschen sind” (BK 25). In the following sentence, the names of animals are replaced in echoing order by five characteristics that describe this particular group. Each type of animal is linguistically supplanted by a characteristic, further de-humanizing the crowd.

Harthörig hartherzig kurzsichtig stolz und eigensinnig Volk, und es gehört immer der Zufall und ein Verdienst um sie, absonderlich aber ihre eigne Laune dazu, und noch gar viel andre Künste, um von ihnen bemerkt und gehört zu werden. Schreien und Poltern, oder gar Recht haben hilft gar nichts bei ihnen, ja besonders das Recht haben, das kommt der politische Staatsmaschine ihrer hochtragenden Nas immer in die Quer. (BK 25-6)

Each creature becomes merely a different aspect of the same group. None of the persons, therefore, can be seen as individuals at all, but rather only as various facets of the same problem, different cogs making up the wheel of the “Staatsmachine.” Frau Rat has now moved from an awe-stricken observer, to a reasoning critic of the court. In her seemingly delusional condition Frau Rat has become aware of a greater truth concerning the intolerance and small mindedness of the court. Frau Rat’s thought process, as represented syntactically within this passage, reinforced the author’s use of Jupiter and Apollo as symbols of reason, truth, and leadership. Symbolically, the gods helped Frau Rat’s thought process to move from confusion to composed observation, followed by associative thinking, and finally, to critical conclusions.

Bettina von Arnim’s use of this imagery is an effort to contrast the liberal, free-thinking, and dynamic salon-culture against the traditional, corrupt, and static culture of the court (Schmitz, “Lebensrollen” 18). Schmitz explains von Arnim’s concept of the court in the following manner: “Der ‘Hof’ gilt in der politischen Topographie, die sich
dabei ausbildet, als das Bollwerk eigensüchtiger Staatsmacht, und Bettines Haß auf die ‘heraldischen Tiere’, die Kamarilla und die Minister, variiert einen Topos bürgerlich-literarischer Hofkritik” (ibid.). Schmitz also alludes to the fact that, as a woman and before her marriage a member of the bourgeoisie, von Arnim was categorically excluded from an advisory position at court, and, therefore, her critique of this system was also based on its obstinate and exclusionary nature (ibid.). Von Arnim’s criticism of the court as hard of hearing, hard-hearted, short-sighted, proud, and obstinate “people,” with whom communication depends on luck, bribes, and mostly their mood, certainly set her within the tradition of “Hofkritik.” In addition, she also brought to this tradition her own criticism of gender exclusion.

After identifying the court in this manner, von Arnim advised the monarch to use his god-like wisdom and power to repair the system. Still at the ball, Frau Rat imagines herself as a king (not a queen) who acts as a model hero, ridding the court of corruption. Imagining herself as a man not only gave her authority, but also allowed the text to speak more clearly to Friedrich Wilhelm IV. As king, Frau Rat describes what she would do with the Tierkreis.

[...] und wie im Traum dacht ich wenn ich König wär ich hielt mir eine apparte Insel vor das heraldische Tiervolk, da könnten sie so fortleben bis sie sterben wollten, aber mir jederzeit unter den Füßen herum zu grabeln, daß man alle Augenblicke über sie stolpern müßt, das litt ich nicht. (BK 26)

Reminiscent of Napoleon’s banishment to Elba, Frau Rat would sequester the “Tiervolk” away where they could no longer impede reform. Then, with the accusation that it had become policy to leave injustices unresolved, von Arnim ended her first major public critique of the Prussian government: “[...] es ist Staatsprinzip das Unrecht nicht wieder gut zu machen, an dem halten die närrische heraldische Tiere wie die Klette” (BK 27).
Up to this point, von Arnim’s narrative layering consisted of a quasi-fictitious character (Frau Rat) relating a story of her visit to Queen Luise, during which she recalls dream-like musings. Such elaborate rhetorical acrobatics become understandable when one considers that in this passage von Arnim had just expressed her wish to remove all the king’s advisors and ministers. This solution was realistically impossible, but her point remained that the corruption and inflexibility of the court and government bureaucracy was a serious problem that only the monarch could solve.

Von Arnim continued to use the Jupiter imagery in later scenes to urge the monarch towards other types of reform, including reform of the justice system and the abolition of Prussia’s death penalty. According to von Arnim’s representations of Jupiter, the god’s great wisdom gave him the ability to see the true injustices and systemic problems within the greater societal structure. Having quasi-godlike potential, the earthly ruler should strive to maintain a similar perspective which would encourage the development of his innate wisdom. For instance, rather than to involve himself in the petty practices of the current justice system, the monarch’s role was to see beyond the daily ills of society into the true causes of crime. He could foster a change in perspective, which would result in a societal restructuring. Such a restructuring would allow individual and spiritual freedom, eliminating the cause of crime at its root. The role of the wise ruler as removed, yet not oblivious, is further expanded upon in von Arnim’s symbolic use of the hero, Ganymede.

4.3.3 Ganymede: Genie, Hero, Ideal Ruler

While von Arnim modeled broad guidelines for the king with her Jupiter metaphor, the Greco-Roman mythological figure most closely related to the Volkskönig is Ganymede. By combining, altering and adding to previous portrayals of Ganymede,
Bettina von Arnim created a courageous and enlightened genius-hero who symbolized the monarch’s inherent potential for spiritual greatness and leadership.

In Greek mythology, Ganymede was the son of King Tros of Troy (or Laomedon) and the Nymph Kallirrhoe (granddaughter of Skamander, the river springing from Mt. Ida). When Zeus spotted the beautiful young Ganymede tending a flock on Mt. Ida, the youth became the object of the god’s desire. Zeus brought the boy to Mt. Olympus by an eagle which was either Zeus himself or an eagle sent by him. There he became the cup-bearer to the gods and in some versions of the myth, Zeus’ lover. Hera was outraged, so Zeus dispensed with Ganymede, setting him into a place or honor in the constellation, Aquarius, also known as the water bearer.\(^{39}\)

Up until now, scholars have noted only Goethe’s poem “Ganymed,” as the reference for von Arnim’s portrayals of this figure. While this assessment holds true during von Arnim’s introduction of her Ganymede figure, upon closer inspection, it is evident that von Arnim’s Ganymede is much closer to Hölderlin’s portrayals of this mythological hero. The following analysis shows how von Arnim draws from both Goethe and Hölderlin, placing herself in their literary company. I will also illustrate where and how Bettina von Arnim developed her Ganymede figure to reflect her ideas concerning the *Genie* (which were also prevalent among the Young Hegelians), in order to create a model for the *Volkskönig*.\(^{40}\)

Goethe’s cycle of poems “Die grossen Hymnen,” (1774) in which “Ganymed” appeared, is representative of Goethe’s poetic development of the concept of the “Genie,” which inspired the Young Hegelian understanding of the term (Trunz, Goethes *Werke I* 473). As the title of the cycle would suggest, the idea of the *Genie* was not only

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\(^{39}\) Von Arnim chose not to emphasize the homosexual aspects of the tale, probably intentionally so, as it could have undermined her comparison of Ganymede to the king.

\(^{40}\) See pp. 52-53 for a discussion of the meaning and significance of the “*Genie*” as received and interpreted by Bettina von Arnim and the Young Hegelians.
an artistic concept, but also an inherently religious one. Through his Ganymede figure, Goethe illustrated the individual’s initial separation from the creator, which he referred to as “Verselbstung,” and the inherent tendency for the Genie to return to the creator. This return would result in an “unio mystica,” in which the individual would meld back into the eternal, through what Goethe called “Entselbstigung” (Trunz, Goethes Werke I 459).

The final lines of Goethe’s “Ganymed” poem illustrate this process as Ganymede answers Zeus’s call, thus returning to his creator:

In eurem Schoße
Aufwärts,
Umfangend umfangen!
Aufwärts
An deinem Busen,
Alliebender Vater!
(Goethe, Goethes Werke I 47)

In this verse, the idea of the reciprocal embrace (“Umfangend umfangen”) is the crux of the poem; the soul desires and accepts the reunion with the creator, and the creator desires and accepts the return of his creation. In this mutual embrace, the symbolic Entselbstigung of the individual is achieved. The underlying concept of the Genie, as well as the reunion of soul with creator (Entselbstigung) as symbolized by Goethe’s poem, was Goethe’s own interpretation of the myth.

Just as Goethe adapted the myth into a poem which expressed his own ideas of the poetic Genie and Entselbstigung, von Arnim adapted the Ganymede story to express her own concepts of Genie in reference to the Volkskönig. In her version, the relationship between Ganymede and the creator acts as a metaphor for the relationship between the Volkskönig and his people.

As with her discussion of Jupiter, von Arnim introduced Ganymede by way of a negative example. In the section, “Frau Rat erzählt,” the dowager criticizes the
superstitious fervor of the Pietists, a religious sect in which, she asserts, faith often plays a secondary role to spectacle and gossip. Frau Rat elaborates that whereas superstition belongs to the earthly realm of the temporary and the corporeal, genuine faith is based only on truths (Wahrheiten):

\[
\text{Nur Wahrheiten kann man glauben; aber die kann man auch nicht leugnen, man sitzt mitten drin als wär man hineingeboren, da wirft der Geist den alten durchlöcherten schmutzigen Madensack des Aberglaubens ab, und bewegt sich frei im Geniuswand der Wahrheit [...]} (BK 39)
\]

Here, the grotesque image of the “Madensack” (“a sack of fat”) describes mortals who, borrowing from Goethe's terminology, are still in the state of Verselbstung or isolation/separation from their source. The image of the Madensack symbolizes the transitory nature of the human body, and was a common metaphor in sacred as well as and secular texts since at least the sixteenth century (Werke III 926). This term, which a disillusioned von Arnim later used to describe Friedrich Wilhelm IV in Gespräche mit Dämonen, is one of the most negative terms in von Arnim's poetic repertoire (Püschel, “Chimäre” 301).

Fortunately, the Madensack is a transitional state. The above quote explains that when the soul tosses this covering off (i.e., becomes enlightened) it enters the realm of the divine. Next, von Arnim elaborated on the freed soul, clothed in the garments of genius (or of truth), which were not made “aus einem wollnen Unterrock und Holzpantoffeln der Demut,” or any other mundane or burdensome earthly attribute, but rather consisted of nothing less than, “ein Paar ungeheuere mächtige Flügel, mit vollen warmen Daunen der Menschenlieb” (BK 39). Made of all that is extraordinary, the garments of the soul (pure genius and truth), make it possible for the soul to soar to where, “er die allbelebende Sonn kann heraufkommen sehn, und kann sich satt trinken in ihrem Licht zum Morgengruß,” in other words, to paradise (BK 40).
In this manner, von Arnim created a contrast between the superstitious, ugly, and burdened earthly existence of the body, and the pure free soul of the *Genie*, which, powered by truth and beauty, moves upward toward its union with the divine. The author’s reference to the “allbelebende Sonn” (Apollo and the divine in general), reinforces the difference between the earthly and the divine. “Allbelebende Sonn” also refers to the source from which the genius-spirit draws its poetic and divine inspiration as well as its strength to continue its journey upwards through obstacles. Lastly, this phrase, which aurally complements Goethe’s “Alliebender Vater,” can be understood as an introduction von Arnim’s Ganymede, describing Ganymede as the boy (“Sonn”), and Jupiter/Zeus as father of the gods.

The build-up to von Arnim’s hero (and the similarities to Goethe’s Ganymed) continue as the soaring genius-spirit, “kann sich satt trinken in ihrem [die Sonne] Licht zum Morgengruß” (*BK* 40). Here, there are two important references; that of drinking oneself to satiety, referring to Ganymede’s function as cup-bearer to the gods, and secondly, the sun’s dawn greeting. Von Arnim’s “Morgengruß” recalls the beginning lines of Goethe’s poem, “Wie im Morgenrot / Du rings mich anglühst,” (*Goethe, Werke I* 46).

Up to this point von Arnim’s prose imagery clearly recalls Goethe’s poem. Next, Frau Rat’s exclamation of ““Aufwärts, aufwärts, zu Dir alliebender Vater!” -- --,” which appears both quoted and italicized in the text of the *Königsbuch*, explicitly introduces Ganymede as the hero to whom von Arnim had been referring in the previous passages (*BK* 40). The quote specifically refers to the last three lines of Goethe’s poem: “Aufwärts / An deinem Busen, / Alliebender Vater!” (*Goethe, Goethes Werke I* 47). Interestingly, von Arnim chose not to include the crucial preceding line: “Umfangend umfangen” (ibid.). I suggest that the reason for this is that while Goethe emphasized the
reciprocal nature of the *Entselbstigung*, or the releasing of the separated self back into the divine whole, von Arnim wished to stress the upward striving of the individual genius instead. As one who overcomes obstacles, and for whom everyday concerns are merely bothersome distractions in the quest for the truth and divinity, von Arnim's hero takes on the characteristics of a *Volkskönig*.

In fact, von Arnim's Ganymede-*Genie* figure has much more in common overall with the proud and tumultuous power of Friedrich Hölderlin's Ganymede, as depicted in his poem by the same name, and the in poem's forerunner, “Der gefesselte Strom.” In “Der gefesselte Strom,” the main character, the “Jüngling,” is a personification of a river, who is called by his “Vater,” Okeanos, to awaken.41 In the *Königsbuch*, von Arnim’s hero is also connected to his water-based lineage in a way that modeled action, triumph, and the righteous pride of the *Genie* who rises above everyday concerns. For example, von Arnim’s Ganymede braves the storms in his path and easily overcomes them:

... und [er kann] dann sich erheben, und nicht scheuen hinauf über die Gewitter-türmenden Wolken sich empor zu tragen. Ha! was kann den starken Fittig brechen dem Luftschiffer, ders verachtet etwas ins Aug zu fassen was unter ihm ist, der einer himmlischen Küste zusteuert. (BK 40)

Although von Arnim’s Ganymede is soaring upwards, his motion is still related to water in his journey through storms to heavenly shores. In this manner she united the upward motion of the mythological and the Goethean Ganymedes with the oceanic characterization of Hölderlin’s figure. Von Arnim’s hero is proud and powerful as seen by her word choice: “nicht scheren,”; Frau Rat’s “Ha!”; and his scorn (“verachtet”) of those things beneath him (literally and figuratively).

41 In the warmth of the coming spring, the “Jüngling” is urged to break his chains of ice and return to his father’s arms. Okeanos was one of the children of Uranos and Gaia, who were also the parents of storms and bodies of water. The connection to the mythological Ganymede (spotted by Zeus while tending sheep on Mt. Ida) is evident through his mother’s lineage: Kallirrhoe, the water nymph, is the daughter of the river, Skamander, which originates on Mt. Ida. Skamander is the great-grandson of Okeanos. In Hölderlin’s later “Ganymed,” the Okeanos remains as the father of the youth. Here the actual lineage from mythological
This same power and scorn of obstacles was also represented by Hölderlin’s genius figure. In “Der gefesselten Strom,” the “Jüngling” heeds his father’s call and easily frees himself from the ice:

Der Zauderer, er spottet der Fesseln nun,  
Und nimmt und bricht und wirft die Zerbrochenen  
Im Zorne, spielend, da und dort zum  
Schallenden Ufer und an der Stimme
(Hölderlin, Werke I 304)

Similar imagery is carried over to Hölderlin’s later version, “Ganymed”:

… Im Zorne reingt aber  
Sich der Gefesselte nun, nun eilt er  

Der Linkische; der spottet der Schlacken nun,  
Und nimmt und bricht und wirft die Zerbrochenen  
Zorntrunken, spielend, dort und da zum  
Schauenden Ufer und bei des Fremdlings
(Hölderlin, Werke I 319)

In his comparative analysis of both Hölderlin poems, Alfred Roman credits Hölderlin with the transformation of Ganymede from a “hellenischen Urbild, dem zart-schönen wehrlosen Knaben, der Zeus’ Liebe entflammt,” into a new “männlich-aktiv Ganymedgestalt” (81). In keeping with the gender dichotomy commonly assumed in late-eighteenth and nineteenth-century Germany, this description of Ganymede as the active male (as opposed to the passive female) also fits with von Arnim’s portrayal. The representation of the active male would have been a desired model for a monarch.

Von Arnim continued her associations between Ganymede and Jupiter’s qualities and the Volkskönig later in the text, directly urging Friedrich Wilhelm IV to take up this calling. As Frau Rat mulls over the evening’s revelations while on her way home sources is less important than the hero’s direct connection to water, as well as to the force of the coming spring, i.e., the call of the father for his son to return.
from the ball, she projects the positive influence that a *Volkskönig* would have on his people, referring to the new relationship between the ruler and his people as the first step towards paradise.

 [...] wenn einmal ein großer Geist geboren würde mit unverderbbarer fester Charakterstärke und der käm unter eine Krone zu stehen, wie ichs der Frau Königin damals in der Nacht auf meiner Heimfahrt hundertfältig gegönnt hab, und er begreift seine Mission recht, was er nämlich der Menschheit schuldig ist wenn er seine wahre Unsterblichkeit gründen will, nicht aus Eitelkeit sondern aus hohem weitsehendem Geist, der aus Ehrfurcht vor der Wahrheit sich keine Lüge erlaubt, in keinem Stück, nicht in der Politik und nicht in seinem Herzen, und nicht über seine Fehler, der würde eine unerreichbare Höhe über der Menschheit einnehmen. 

(*BK* 68-9)

Here, the “Charakterstärke” inherent to this “großer Geist” recalls the strength of character and resolve possessed by Ganymede, whose might was symbolized by his “mächtige Flügel,” and “starke Fittig” (*BK* 39-40). With his strength and fearlessness, he soared toward heavenly shores to fulfill his destiny. Like Jupiter, in order establish his status as an immortal hero, the ruler must rely on his “hohem weitsehendem Geist.” With this wisdom, the *Volkskönig* can soar above the mundane, recalling Ganymede’s ability to, “verachte[n] etwas ins Aug zu fassen was unter ihm ist” (*BK* 40). Both hero and ruler are neither distracted nor deterred by earthly concepts of vanity, petty politics, or of the fallacy of infallibility.

The idea that fallibility is a main characteristic of the *Volkskönig* is an interesting twist to traditional assumptions concerning monarchy. While fallibility may seem to run contrary to a figure that occupies “eine unerreichbare Höhe über der Menschheit,” von Arnim understood fallibility and a higher spiritual state to be mutually exclusive (*BK* 69). In her opinion, being able to admit to one’s mistakes demonstrated a higher wisdom and a more advanced form of honesty which would inspire trust in the people. Instead of

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42 These phrases are originally quoted on pages 98 and 100 of this thesis, respectively.
denying or covering up errors, von Arnim wished the king to admit to them so that they could be corrected, mainly because the concept of the infallibility of the monarch allowed no room to correct injustices. In an early letter to King Friedrich Wilhelm IV, von Arnim explains her thoughts on this topic: “Ich **will** mich geirrt haben würde ich als König sagen…Ich König, will meines menschlichen Rechtes mich bedienen, meinen Blick zu schärfen, die bessre Erkenntniß zu wählen, und den Irrthum zu verlassen… dann werden sie trauen […]” (BW FW VI / Püschel 71-72).

Von Arnim does not encourage the king to blame the same advisors and ministers that she blames for existing problems. If she had counseled the king to do so, the Volkskönig could remain infallible. Conversely, she could have openly blamed the king, instead of his government, as the one who is ultimately responsible for the state of his nation. She may have wished to do this, but chose not to since this approach would not have encouraged the king to listen to her. Perhaps in her efforts to encourage accountability for current problems, she lost sight of a more rational approach.

Next, Frau Rat predicts how this ideal ruler “würde eine unerreichbare Höhe über der Menschheit einnehmen,” and would stand as “ein glänzender Stern” on the throne (BK 69). The use of star imagery here becomes especially meaningful when one recalls the original fate of the mythological Ganymede, whom Zeus set into the constellation of Aquarius.

After the identification between Ganymede, Jupiter and the king has been recalled, von Arnim focused on the reasons why one should want to aspire to such an existence.

-- Das ist gewiß, die Menschheit würde hinter so einem Fürsten nicht lang zurückbleiben, im Gegenteil sie würde ihm bald vorherlaufen und ihm den Weg ebnen über alle finstere Klüfte des Aberglaubens und der Angst um nichts, wo er das Sehnen alle was der Menschheit den Busen schwellt aus eignen unverkümmerten Himmelsgaben stillt, sie würde ihn auf ihren Schultern tragen ins Paradies des Bewußtseins. (BK 69)
Projecting the fate of the ideal ruler in positive terms, von Arnim presented the encouraging picture of a people so devoted to their king, that rather than merely follow him, they run enthusiastically ahead, clearing the way of dangers, so that he may progress safely. This landscape, fraught with the dark ravines of superstition, parallels the language of Ganymede’s journey aloft, in which the soul left behind the Madensack of superstition and ignorance.

Von Arnim completed her prophecy with an idealization of the relationship between “Fürst” and “Volk,” clearly designed to inspire the king:

Das heißt wo der Geist freies Spiel hat und braucht sich nicht mehr zu verbergen vor dem Vorurteil was mit gewappneter Faust ihm ins Gesicht sonst geschlagen und hat ihn betäubt ganz, jetzt aber geblendet von seinem Glanz ihm unterliegt, da muß dann auch die Lieb offenbar sein zwischen Fürst und Volk, das wird schon der erste Schritt sein zur Sündenlosigkeit. (BK 69)

Reincorporating her opinions on crime and violence, von Arnim argued that where the spirit is free to develop, force is no longer necessary, thus eliminating the need for violence. Once this occurs, the Volkskönig can lead his people to a state of grace similar to his own by cultivating a reciprocal relationship of love. Said differently, the love given to the people by the king, and thus returned, results in the ability of the people to elevate themselves to a level at which they unite with the king. This description of the love relationship between ruler and people also corresponds with von Arnim’s feminized metaphor of the Volk and Volkskönig nourishing each other’s development as mother and fetus. In this scenario, the king acts as a proxy for the initiation of the divine Entselbstung, or as von Arnim expressed it, the return to innocence (“Sündenlosigkeit”), or paradise.

Using Greco-Roman mythological figures as metaphors for power, reason, wisdom, bravery, and action, Bettina von Arnim aligned the Volkskönig with the spiritual
realm of beauty and genius. Alternatively, she represented the people of the court and the government, along with the ignorant and suffering Volk, as tethered to the secular realm of ugliness and ignorance through grotesque medieval and baroque imagery. In the next section, I trace how Bettina von Arnim constructs a powerful literary tool with a modern figure of mythological proportions, designed to both inspire and caution the king.

4.3.4 Napoleon Bonaparte: Hero, Villain, Genius

For Bettina von Arnim, as for many of her peers, Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) was an attractive source of literary symbolism. Although von Arnim is conspicuously absent (as are all German female writers of the time) from the scholarship concerning German portrayals of Napoleon in the nineteenth century, von Arnim incorporated the figure of Napoleon into almost every one of her published works. As with her Greco-Roman imagery, von Arnim’s literary use of Napoleon as a heroic figure in the Königsbuch was directed toward depicting the Volkskönig, while criticizing the current system. Von Arnim’s Napoleon imagery as it relates to the Volkskönig emphasizes the importance of close and clear communication between the ruler and the people. Von Arnim also wove a new metaphor into her Napoleon imagery, a revised depiction of the Babylonian god Baal, in order to further elaborate on the characteristics of the Volkskönig.

In the first of two key passages, Frau Rat reiterates the necessity of unity between king and people in the development of a Volkskönigtum: “ein edel Verhältnis vom Volk zum Fürsten hat solche zarte Beziehungen, daß ihn nichts betreffen kann was sein Volk nicht in tiefstem Herzen spurt. […] so wahr ists, daß Volk und Fürst ein Leib seien wo sie ein Geist sind […]” (BK 86). Once again, von Arnim likened the intensity of the connection between Fürst and Volk to the connection between a body and soul.
Frau Rat describes this link further through an interesting reference to nineteenth-century scientific theories on electricity, stating that a king and his people can be so close as to share the same electrical spark of life essence: “Also je näher das Volk seinem Fürsten, je größer ist dessen Kraft, er schlägt wie ein elektrischer Schlag durch alle Herzen,” (BK 87).

In contrast, Frau Rat criticizes the artificial separation between rulers and subjects that has been developed by those in power, for the erroneous purpose of magnifying the peoples’ respect for their king: “Bis jetzt hat man künstlich Fürst und Volk auseinander gehalten, um dem Fürsten einen künstlichen Nymbus zu bilden und dem Volk einen künstlichen Respekt beizubringen,” (BK 87). She cites numerous examples of how laborious customs (“blinde Etikette”) and bureaucratic structures have been designed to create distance between rulers and their subjects. Through this institutional separation, Frau Rat argues, the monarch has become so out of touch with the needs of his people that he does not realize how incongruent their agendas are. Similarly, she argues that the people have been so removed from the goals of their rulers, they cannot even fully comprehend the degree to which the system is lacking (BK 88).

At this point, Frau Rat introduces Napoleon as an example of a modern-day hero, who, because of his separation from his subjects, became a destructive power instead of a force of progress. She explains how she had hoped that Napoleon would be a different type of ruler who would enlighten and thus free the people instead of conquer them:

So hatte ich eben dem Bonaparte mit einem Hoffnungsstrahl im Herzen zugesehen und hatte geglaubt er wird seine Mission an die Menschheit besser verstehn, er wird durch die Wahrheit, durch Lösung ihrer Sklavenfesseln sie erschüttern, nicht durch das Kanonenabprotzen,
She had believed that Napoleon would be a catalyst for intellectual and spiritual upheaval instead of physical destruction, in short, that he would be a *Volkskönig*. The idea that a Frenchman could be a *Volkskönig* has contradictory implications for von Arnim’s calls for a German nation led by a German *Volkskönig*. Perhaps she considered this implication a moot point because the defeat of Napoleon’s Grand Army now made a German *Volkskönig* a logical development. This could be an indication that von Arnim’s ideal nation would encompass more than the German people, perhaps to include the development of a world nation. This possibility is suggested further as the text of the *Königsbuch* shifts into the authorial present, and the narrator challenges Friedrich Wilhelm IV directly to succeed where Napoleon failed: “— Ist das Deine Macht, Du neuer Kaiser? daß Du die Tore aus den Angeln hebst, keinem mehr eine verschlossene Heimat gönnst?” (ibid.). However, this sentiment, tearing the city gates from their hinges and not allowing a closed homeland anymore, is an ambiguous one. It could imply an ideal world nation under a new (German) emperor, but it could also reference the violent conquering and annexing of other nations.

Von Arnim’s opinions on the sovereignty of national and/or cultural groups was decidedly tolerant. She believed that all peoples should be allowed to live without oppression or pressure to assimilate. These sentiments were most clearly expressed in her anonymously published *Polenbrochüre*, first printed in December 1848. Written in response to Prussia’s violent subjugation of the Polish people, von Arnim spoke out against oppressive German nationalism and defended the right of the Poles to live freely:

Alternatively, she encouraged King Friedrich Wilhelm IV to rule over the Polish people in a way which would protect them and let them flourish, rather than impede their society:


This later, but nonetheless consistent sentiment helps to explain Frau Rat’s anger with Napolen as she exclaims, “—alles mußte er platt treten! […] Bonaparte! Wie sehr hast Du Dich versündigt!” (BK 89).

Next, Frau Rat reflects on how and why Napoleon lost control. First, she contextualizes his ascent to power as having arisen out of the confusion precipitated by the French Revolution. She characterizes this confusion as an unanticipated fog that had grown out of the abominations of the [French] revolution, which blinded everyone. To illustrate the effects of this “Nebelkapp,” Frau Rat creates an eerie scene of Napoleon and Josephine which portrays the blindness of a monarch, who is in denial of the perilous disconnection between him and his subjects, and is utterly unwilling to listen to good counsel (BK 90).

Die Frau Bonaparte hält Probeaudienz mit leere Sessel und Taburette. Und der Herr Bonaparte studiert sich eine Etikette ein. Und der Genius der starke Feuergeist aber der sieht diese Schmach mit an, wie er Vertrauen kann haben in solche Lapalien und nicht auf seinen guten Dämon. Ja der führte eine Sprache auf die wollt er nicht hören. (ibid.)
The grotesque visual is that of isolated rulers busying themselves with imaginary people and other trifles while their empire falls into ruin.

Frau Rat uses Napoleon as an example of a hero who does not fulfill his calling.

[...] nämlich daß jeder Fürst soll wollen daß sein Volk allen Völkern voranstehe! daß nur dadurch ein Fürst kann der größte sein daß sein Volk das größte sei! -- Das waren die Mahnungen des Zeitgeistes an ihn, und denen ist er nicht nachgekommen. (ibid.)

According to the text, Napoleon is a hero who abandoned his true genius spirit and ignored the impulses of the times. Had he put the development of his people first, he would have achieved lasting greatness for himself. When understood in light of von Arnim’s comments from the *Polenbrochüre*, the comment that a ruler should want his people to be great above all others, does not mean that this greatness should come at the expense of other peoples. Rather, this comment emphasized that a ruler can only achieve true greatness through the greatness of his people, and it is his responsibility to guide them in their development. In order to facilitate this development a ruler must understand the requirements of his people. Von Arnim then projects the past of the narrative into the future (her current time) foretelling Napoleon’s failure: “Aber der Zeitgeist wirds ihm eintrichtern daß er ihn gefoppt hat,” -- the spirit of the times will drum into his head that he has been fooled (ibid.).

In the above scene, the author also created a role for the poet as the “guter Dämon,” whom Napoleon ignores. The sequel to this text, *Gespräche mit Dämonen*, features this *Dämon* as the main character who tries to advise a sleeping king. The presence of the good *Dämon* in this passage legitimizes the poet’s position as the wise advisor because Napoleon’s downfall is equated with his unwillingness to heed the good *Dämon*’s warnings. The negative example of Napoleon’s refusal to listen was designed
to warn Friedrich Wilhelm IV and other monarchs not to make the same mistake. In order to avoid Napoleon's fate, the text implies that the new king should listen to what the good Dämon, von Arnim, has to say.

Much later in the text the author returned to her Napoleon metaphor to convey a similar message: that in order for governments to reform, they must realize what their subjects need. In the process of this scene, von Arnim also skillfully rewrote the traditional Christian interpretation of the heathen god Ba'al to communicate her point.

Professing to know her people and their needs, Frau Rat, describes her privileged relationship to the people of her home, Frankfurt: “Dazu ist mir das Volk geschenkt daß ich in seinem Spiegel mich erkenne” (BK 298). It is unclear whether or not this is how von Arnim considered her relationship to the Volk, but the irony is not lost on the reader that Frau Rat’s overconfident view of her connection to them seems similar to von Arnim’s own. Also, despite the implication that she knows the needs of the Volk as well as she knows her own, she does not enumerate these needs except in the most frustratingly general of terms – the need to develop themselves.

Frau Rat continues, introducing weather as a metaphor for better times that could lie ahead: “Ein Sommertag ist kurz herum, aber er kann ein froher Tag sein, an dem das Volk sich nicht bedrückt fühlt, aufgelegt zu Blühen, an dem es selbst sich entwickelt zu großer Gesinnung,” (BK 298). Although perhaps fleeting, she sees the opportunity to let the Volk develop as one that should be taken. Unfortunately, while those in power have the ability to bring about this “good weather,” they are not working toward this goal:

Wie kommts daß von den großen Monarchen, und Thronbesitzern, den Reichsverwesern, Staatsmänner, Minister, Präsidenten bis auf die Geheimen und Räte aller Welt-, Staats- und moralischen Angelegenheiten, keiner dran denkt schön Wetter zu machen […].

(BK 298)
In fact, she argues, the possibility of putting the best interests of their people first has not even occurred to them. Rather than enjoy the warmth of summer, the people are left to spiritually freeze: “Daß das Volk gleich verschnuft ist, sich räuspert, hustet, keine klare Stimme hat wenn es sein Hosanna soll singen” (ibid.).

Frau Rat states that the unwillingness on the part of those in power to improve the system results in hell on earth: “Nun der Tag geht herum, die Nacht kommt, wogegen aller Tyrannen Gewalt nichts vermag. -- Der Tag des Belial" geht herum so gut wie der Tag des Gott Baal” (ibid.). In other words, the perpetuators of current systems allow “Der Tag des Belial” (“the day of evil”), to rule rather than “der Tag des Gott Baal.” More than a clever wordplay, von Arnim developed the above comparison of “Belial” and “Baal” into a fitting introduction to her final section on Napoleon.

This introduction is an excellent illustration of how von Arnim reinvented mythological figures to express her political messages. In the Christian context Baal is a negative figure, commonly characterized as the terrible heathen god of storms and fertility, who was worshipped in Asia Minor during Biblical times (Werke III 1030). Von Arnim’s text, however, describes Baal as a Genie, a just and effective ruler who encouraged economic and spiritual development:

Er hat durch seine große Geistesgaben das Reich Babilon aus seiner Geisteslethargie geweckt, und ihm einen hohen Schwung gegeben. Er hat das Land urbar gemacht und es mit himmlischen Gärten bepflanzt, [.....] Den Geist hat er zum Höchsten angeregt, wer vor ihm wollte gelten durfte der eignen Güter nicht gedenken, er mußte dem Allgemeinen sie opfern. So haben die Menschen ihn als Gott verehrt. (BK 298-99)

Rather than exact sacrifices from his people, thus draining them materially and spiritually, von Arnim’s Baal encourages spirit of charity which puts the needs of the community first.
Continuing the emphasis on charity and sacrifice, Frau Rat offers a modification to the Biblical interpretation of Baal as a god who exacted human sacrifice. She asserts that the concept of “sacrifice” was misunderstood, and recasts “human” sacrifice as the offering of one’s spiritual strength and/or possessions to others for the common good. Also coinciding with the concept of “sacrifice” is the sacrifice or giving up of all ambitions and objectives which did not promote the improvement of society. She voices her own demands of such sacrifices from any potential Volkskönig: “Opfer ihrer Geisteskräfte, Opfer ihrer Besitztümer, aller Zwecke die nicht das Gemeinwohl betrafen, -- diese Opfer fordere auch ich und Gott mit mir von denen, die das Herz haben Fürsten zu sein ihrem Volk” (BK 299).

In just a few sentences, the terrible heathen god who exacted human sacrifice has been developed into the benevolent ruler of the ancient Babylonians. Von Arnim recast this traditionally negative mythological figure in a positive light by providing a different perspective on his deeds. In so doing, she implied that this figure is not evil, but misinterpreted. Both the example and the methods used to reinterpret Baal create a fitting parallel to von Arnim’s treatment of Napoleon, who makes his last appearance in the Königsbuch at exactly this point.

Frau Rat states flatly that she had expected exactly this Baalian behavior from Napoleon, but was disappointed: “Eben von jenem Weltumwälzer dem Napoleon hätt ichs erwartet. Ja wohl, statt Gott Baal zu sein ist der Belial in ihm erwacht” (BK 299). Unfortunately, rather than developing this Genius spirit to its true potential, Napoleon was overcome by the demon.

In keeping with the narrative timeline of the text, Frau Rat prophesizes that although Napoleon’s government is still in its “glühend heißer Nachmittag,” the people

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43 The word “Belial,” derived from the Hebrew, “beliyya’al” (“evil”), can also be used to refer to the devil in the
have already judged him, and see his impending fall (BK 299). She foretells the costly defeat of the Grand Army and Napoleon’s humiliation: “Und der Boden mit Menschenblut getränkt und die Ernte ein Fluch ein Spott seiner Leidenschaften” (ibid.). She then uses his fate as a warning: “Ja das Volk ist die Warnungsstimme des Herrschers! […] Der Napoleon hat die Eintagsprobe nicht bestanden, die Fürsten machen nicht die geringste Anstalt zu schönem Wetter!” (ibid.). With this unresolved complaint, von Arnim ended her Napoleon imagery in the Königsbuch.

Through her Jupiter, Ganymede, Napoleon, and Baal imagery, Bettina von Arnim created literary metaphors that further described the qualities of a Volkskönig. Her Jupiter imagery showed that as a leader, a Volkskönig must use his wisdom to remove himself from petty details so that he can determine the systemic problems the state and society are facing and offer solutions to the causes and not just to the symptoms. In order to carry out reform, the Volkskönig must exhibit the courage, dynamism, and perseverance of von Arnim’s hero Ganymede, as he answers his true calling to be a spiritual and moral leader to his people. Finally, two of the main requirements in facilitating this development are close communication with the Volk, and a true effort to act in their best interests, which, as demonstrated through the figures of Napoleon and Baal, will bring greatness to a ruler as a reflection of his people.

sense of the Antichrist, or more generally, to an evil demon (Werke III 1030).
44 The confusing situation of Frau Rat “foretelling” Napoleon’s fall during her conversation in the text (which is dated 1807) is meant to be ironic, since the author and the readers of the Königsbuch in 1843 would already know of Napoleon’s actual defeat, which took place in 1815. This illustrates the complexity of Bettina von Arnim narrative timelines.
CHAPTER 5

GESPRÄCHE MIT DÄMONEN: VOLKSKÖNIGTUM IN TRANSITION

5.1 INTRODUCTION: 1843-1852

The following section is designed to place Bettina von Arnim’s political and social activities within the context of the events taking place in Prussia and Europe between the publication of the Königsbuch and the publication of Gespräche mit Dämonen. Des Königsbuches zweiter Band. Her political efforts can be divided into two general categories, private diplomacy and public activism. However, because she was producing in both areas simultaneously, presenting her work chronologically within a wider context magnifies and presents her efforts in a more developmental and logical manner than dividing her work into two separate categories of production.

While German scholarship documents the facts of her life and literary production during this time period, I have chosen to present several of her most notable experiences and accomplishments from 1843 to 1852, which fall within the scope of this project. This approach emphasizes how von Arnim’s concept of the identity and role of the Volk developed in light of historical events, and demonstrates how von Arnim’s concrete political efforts contrasted with the theoretical character of the Dämonenbuch. This contrast prepares the reader for my conclusion to this project, in which I scrutinize and offer my own alternative to scholarly theories on von Arnim’s reasons for creating and publishing the Dämonenbuch.
Later sections of this chapter focus on the character of the *Dämonenbuch* in terms of its (and the author’s) relationship to the *Königsbuch*, and in light of the events around 1848. As illustrative examples of these relationships, I present the first comparative analysis of von Arnim’s treatment of the Siegfried figure in both works, and an examination of her new portrayals of the Volk.

5.1.1 Growing Pauperism and Bettina von Arnim’s Expanding Faith in the Volk

As the 1840s progressed, tensions related to the inability of European governments to adequately address pauperism and political discontent increased. The Prussian decision to respond to unrest with violence exacerbated discord between the classes, and amplified polarization among the many political camps. This polarization further inhibited the possibility for consensus building and systemic reform in Prussia.

Despite mild improvements in educational rates and working conditions, population growth, ongoing recession, and poor harvests throughout the 1840s contributed dramatically to the decline in living standards of the already impoverished fourth class. Decreased food supplies, coupled with higher demand in an unregulated market, led to higher food prices, which were not offset by wage increases and/or job growth. Of all those who suffered in German regions, the Silesian textile workers were the worst afflicted. By 1844, Silesian weavers’ wages had sunk to one quarter of what they had been in 1830, while factory owners’ wealth reached new excesses (*Werke III* 757). Hunger, desperation, and outrage at the dismissive attitudes of callous industrialists led 3,000 textile workers and their supporters to stage the first worker revolt in Germany on June 4, 1844. When rich factory owner Zwanziger belittled the demonstrators’ demands for increased wages and better working conditions, protesters stormed the property, destroying machines and possessions (ibid.). The military was
called in to quell the riot, and fired on unarmed men, women, and children, killing eleven and wounding thirty. The destruction continued as the rioters moved to nearby towns, until June 6, when a larger force of soldiers ended the revolt (Werke III 758).

Word of the revolts reached Bettina von Arnim through multiple channels, including a personal account from one of her research contacts in Silesia, Dr. Isidor Pinoff (M.D.). Pinoff's letter emphasized the motivating factors that had driven the workers to such extreme behavior. On June 22, von Arnim secretly sent Pinoff's letter to Friedrich Wilhelm IV, hoping that if she could make the king understand the people's desperation, he would show mercy to the over 1,500 workers who were arrested for rioting (Werke III 758-60). It is not clear if this correspondence influenced the king with regard to the eighty-seven people who were sentenced to prison, but it did aggravate the relationship between Friedrich Wilhelm and Bettina von Arnim, which had been tense since the publication of the Königsbuch.

These riots were closely connected to von Arnim's concurrent research on the Silesian weavers for her Armenbuch. On May 15, 1844, less than a month before the uprising, von Arnim published an announcement in all the major German papers, stating her intentions to conduct a study of pauperism. She also used this announcement to request information about the poor and the reply was tremendous. Even though she had not yet published her research, many knew about the anticipated report. Newspapers and other brochures were already referencing the “vielverheißende Buch der Frau Bettina Arnim” in related discussions on poverty (Die Armuth und die Mittel ihr entgegen zu wirken, 1844; Quoted from Werke III 1077).

Therefore, when word of the rioting reached a shocked Berlin on June 9, 1844, the prospect of publishing the Armenbuch became much more complicated. Varnhagen reported in a diary entry from June 19 that:
In an uncharacteristically prudent decision, von Arnim gave up her aims to publish the *Armenbuch*, and determined that instead of battling the censors, a more effective use of her time would be to report her information privately and directly to the king. Since information on poverty and violence was reaching the reading public through others, perhaps she felt that she could use her connections and existing relationship with the king to circumvent his advisors and make sure he was apprised of the facts. For the next few years, she found ways to forward him reports of workers’ living and working conditions, the violence being perpetrated by the authorities, and advice on how to better handle these problems. However, the king did not wish to listen to her suggestions, which focused on ways to win over the support of his increasingly discontented subjects by showing grace and mercy, and exonerating those connected with disturbances.

The wisdom of von Arnim’s decision not to go forward with her publication became evident a year later when Silesian factory owner Friedrich Wilhelm Schloeffel (1800-1878) was accused of high treason and arrested in Berlin. Schloeffel had been persecuted throughout 1840s for subversive writing and lectures, and it was well known that he was a main source of information for von Arnim’s *Armenbuch* project. On July 18, 1845 von Arnim wrote to the king, defending Schloeffel’s work and innocence, and presenting him with Schloeffel’s findings on the misery of the Silesian people. Schloeffel was released exactly one week later, but von Arnim knew that it was not because of her letter. It seems as if her efforts to assist Schloeffel were more directed at using her position and the circumstances to expose the king directly to Schloeffel’s research.
Despite her decision to avoid the censors and bureaucrats, in 1846 von Arnim found herself the target and “Opfer der reaktionären preußischen Administration” when she faced a jail term over her right to open a publishing house in Berlin (Werke III 773). The proceedings quickly turned into a public scandal and von Arnim seized the opportunity to speak out against the government’s treatment of the poor. In letters to the accusing Magistrate that were implicitly intended for her reading audience, von Arnim offered characterizations of the Volk which demonstrated the growing importance she placed on their character and role (as opposed to the king’s) in the development of a better society. The following passage is a forerunner to the glorification and deification (“Apotheose”) of the Volk which appeared later in Gespräche mit Dämonen. In her letter to the Magistrate from February 19, 1847, she wrote that she valued the fourth estate higher than both the “Bürgerthum” and the nobility:

Ebenso stelle ich noch höher die Klasse des Proletariats, ohne dessen ihm angebore großartige Characterkräfte, des Ausharrens im Elend, im Entschlagen und Beschränken aller Lebensbedürfnisse, wenig Ersprießliches zum Wohl des Ganzen würde befördert werden. – Der Schatz des Armen besteht im angebornen Reichthum der Natur, […]

(Quoted from Werke III 775-6)

Here, von Arnim’s classification of the proletariat’s character and perseverance as “angebore,” or innate, recalled her descriptions of Ganymede’s steadfast and determined upward striving from the Königsbuch. However, now it is the people who possess these admirable qualities. Also striking is von Arnim’s ennobling of the people’s suffering as “renunciation and limitation” of necessities, as if the poor would choose to

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45 For the details of these proceedings, see Gertrud Meyer-Hepner’s Der Magistratsprozeß der Bettina von Arnim, Weimar 1960.
deny themselves food for the purposes of ideology. Her second mention of the peoples’ “angebornen” good qualities in as many sentences, further established the Volk in a position more similar to that of the king than before.

Finally, von Arnim glorified the honor she saw in the helplessness of the proletariat and marveled at their ability, despite their destitution, to be their own best help: “Offenbar ist daher das Verhältnis des Letzteren [Proletariats] zur Nation das edlere, durch seine Hülflosigkeit das Ehrfurcht erweckendste; ja trotz seiner Armuth für die Armuth am glücklichsten wirkende” (Quoted from Werke III 775-6). If the poor, in all their misery, are nonetheless their own best advocates, that says very little for the efforts of the government. These views also stood in contrast to more typical descriptions of the proletariat from this time, which portrayed the masses as, “dependent, irrational, rootless,” suffering from “material poverty and spiritual degredation,” and generally as “dangerous to the social order” (Sheehan 32). As the desperation of Prussia’s poor escalated at the hands of a static government and a weak monarch, it appeared that von Arnim began to include the masses in her hopes for progress. However, this inclusion was not a shift in faith away from the king or from the Volkskönigtum, but rather an expansion of her hope in the Volk.

5.1.2 The Revolutions of 1848

In 1846 and 1847, conditions worsened in both urban and rural areas as poor harvests led to higher food prices and a deeper state of recession, which the inadequate economic policies of the Prussian government only exacerbated. The Berlin “Potato Revolution” of 1847 was just one example of many hunger riots which were brutally repressed by the Prussian military (Tipton 82). Following the hunger crises was the
Silesian typhoid epidemic, which the government unsuccessfully attempted to cover up (ibid.). By 1847, it was estimated that over half of Berlin was living in poverty (Werke III 778).

In the beginning of 1847, Varnhagen characterized the situation in Berlin as one of “Bedrängnis und Mangel,” in which the government was “gegenüber ohnmächtig,” (Letter to R.M. Milnes, January 28, 1847; Quoted from Werke III 780). Adding to the atmosphere of unrest and instability were the uprisings throughout northern Italy, the outbreak of civil war in Switzerland in late 1847, and disturbances in Palermo in January, 1848 (Tipton 83). On February 27, 1848, news reached Berlin of Bürgerkönig Louis Phillipe’s forced abdication in Paris. These events led to increased popular violence throughout the German regions in the form of attacks on individuals, manors, and factory equipment (Sheehan 53). In response, military violence against the populace escalated; German newspapers reported 197 incidents of military force between 1848 and 1849, up from fifty such deployments during the tumultuous years of 1830 and 1831 (Tipton 83).

Amid the rising chaos, Bettina von Arnim risked another petition to the Prussian king, asking him to pardon Polish revolutionary Louis von Mieroslowski (1814-1878), who had been sentenced to death on December 2, 1847. Unlike her attempts on behalf of Schloeffel, von Arnim believed that her letter to the king from Christmas, 1847, successfully influenced the decision to commute Mieroslowski’s death sentence to life in prison (B/S 121).

As can be imagined, von Arnim’s petitions to the king made her even less popular among governmental supporters, as did her ongoing ties to liberal and radical figures. Despite increased observation by the police and difficulties with both the censors and the administration, Bettina von Arnim continued to host what Petra
Wilhelmy describes as, without a doubt “der interessanteste demokratische Salon der Revolutionszeit” (Wilhelmy 195). For example, while conducting statistical research and practicing private diplomacy, von Arnim hosted members of the democratic group, the “Lindenclub,” which included the republican French ambassador Emanuel Arago, and the Russian anarchist Michael Bakunin in her salon (Wilhelmy 196).

Bettina von Arnim’s increasingly radical company caused a rift between her and her two eldest daughters, Maxe (1818-1894) and Armgart (1821-1880) who traveled in aristocratic circles. The women were able to arrive at an amicable compromise in one of the most interesting developments in the salon culture of revolution-era Berlin. Maxe von Arnim explained the problem and their solution in the following journal entry:


Bettina von Arnim’s renewed appeals to the king and the subsequent harmony restored to the salons at “Haus Arnim,” would not occur until after the German revolution of 1848. Indeed, Bettina von Arnim and many of her “edlen’ Weltverbesserer,” as Maxe von Arnim mockingly called them, communicated news and collaborated from her centrally located apartment during the days of the uprising (Werner 173 Quoted from: B/S 68).

As protesters marched in the streets in Berlin, on March 17, 1848, news of the successful revolution in Vienna reached the city. This news fueled more rioting in the

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47 Mieroslowski was later freed as part of the Prussian government’s amnesty concessions of 1848. He went on to play instrumental roles in subsequent uprisings in Poland, Sicily, and Baden (B/S 121).
Prussian capital. Although ministers attempted to grant concessions to angry crowds outside the royal palace on March 18, the overwhelming presence of troops caused agitated crowds to erupt in fear and resentment (*Werke III* 784-7). Soon barricades were erected and fighting continued into the night. On the morning of March 19, the troops were ordered to cease fighting and were driven back by the crowds. That day, the people presented the slain (183 total) to the king, and from his balcony he capitulated to all demands, promising freedom of the press and a constitution, freeing political prisoners, and ordering the troops out of the city (*Werke III* 790).

Despite what seemed like significant victories for opposition forces on March 19, 1848, promised reforms of the system did not take a firm hold because those in power were not willing to share their power with the people, and the opponents of the state were not willing to stand up to the Prussian military at the cost of more violence. For example, by May, 1848, some improvements had been made to help the poor in Berlin, but no actions had been taken to aid the Silesians. The Prussian army also continued to violently suppress revolts, such as the Polish nationalists in Posen. With growing pessimism, von Arnim described to Pauline Steinhäuser her ruined relationship with the king, who, according to von Arnim, believed that she was partially responsible for his disgrace. In the same letter, she assessed the worsening situation in Prussia:

> Der König sitzt als eine Null in Potsdam, der Prinz von Preußen, vom Volk verjagt, in England. Die Reaction, um ihn wieder herzubringen, wirkt jetzt noch verderblicher, als wenn man sich still verhielte. [...] 40 000 Seelen sind vom Hunger und von Krankheiten, die aus schlechter Nahrung zur Pest geworden, durch den Tod erlöst [...] und noch immer verbreitet sich die Pest weiter. Allein kein Mensch denkt daran, ihnen in dieser allgemeinen Verwirrung zu helfen. (Letter to Pauline Steinhäuser, May 20, 1848, Berlin; Quoted from *Werke III* 794-95)

The situation in Berlin worsened in June, 1848, as the army quelled another uprising in the city and, “pressured by conservative advisors, the king replaced liberal ministers with more conservative figures” (Tipton 87).
Amid growing disappointment, von Arnim and her contacts remained active in their efforts to shape changes in the government in the months after the revolution. For instance, in September, 1848, von Arnim again approached the king in an attempt to convince him to appoint Theodor von Schön (1773-1856) as head of the newly formed Nationalversammlung (Prussian National Parliament). The two letters she sent to him for this purpose were actually a collaboration which demonstrated the level of trust and respect that those in von Arnim’s circle had for her: “B.s politische Aktivität wurde also von Zeitgenossen so Ernst genommen, daß man in ihrem Salon vertrauliche Informationen austauschte, diplomatische Vorverhandlungen führte und mit ihrer Hilfe gezielte politische Strategien entwickelte” (Werke III, 799). Although Schön would have been a sound choice for this position because of his proven ability to moderate between legitimist and oppositional concerns, Friedrich Wilhelm IV did not respond to von Arnim’s letters, and appointed instead a legitimist supporter who favored the continuation of Restoration governments (B/S 120). As further evidence of the administration’s unwillingness to reform, in November, 1848, thirteen thousand troops entered Berlin, martial law was declared, and the parliament was ordered to disband (Tipton 87).

5.1.3 The Polenbrochüre and the Changing Relationship between King and Volk

In addition to her attempts at private diplomacy, Bettina von Arnim still published actively. As discussed in section 4.3.4 of this thesis, the anonymously published Polenbrochüre appeared in December 1848 as a direct response to the Prussian government’s violent responses to Polish uprisings. Although the brochure was addressed to “die aufgelöste Preußische National-Versammlung,” Friedrich Wilhelm IV remained an implied reader. In terms of von Arnim’s concept of an ideal state structure and the role of the monarch and the people within it, the Polenbrochüre offers another
transitional link between von Arnim's changing portrayal of the Volk from the Königsbuch to the Dämonenbuch.

Landfester describes von Arnim's depictions of the Volk in the Königsbuch and the Polenbrochüre as similar in that the term “Volk” had multiple meanings. A comparison these meanings in the two texts, provides a starting point for a discussion of von Arnim’s changing portrayals of the Volk. In the Königsbuch, Landfester aptly classifies von Arnim’s concept of the Volk into four areas: (1) the character/voice of Frau Rat as a Romantic Volksfigur; (2) the Volk as the body of the state, (with the king as the head), which serves as a contrast to the bureaucratic Staatsmachine; (3) the Volk as represented through the information contained in the appendix, and; (4) the Volk as part of the implied audience (Landfester 318).

In contrast, Landfester categorizes von Arnim's varied conceptions of the Volk in the Polenbrochüre as: (1) the German people, who are distinguished from other nationalities; (2) “als zweiter Körper der jeweiligen Führungsfiguren,” (Landfester 337); (3) the suffering masses; (4) the ignorant, misled German populace, who believed their government’s propaganda on the need to suppress Poland: “Welches ist das Vertrauen das du sicherst, und welcher deiner Fürsten, der erhaben über Despotismus vor andern Völkern hervorleuchtet?” (PB 624) and; (5) the implied idea of an “europäische Völkergemeinschaft” (ibid.). According to the text of the Polenbrochüre, this greater European Volk was composed of all the heretofore oppressed peoples who will have to pay for what the current “Volkstyrannen und ihre Diener zusammen rasen,” (Bettina von Arnim, PB 651).

A comparison of Landfester’s classifications demonstrates von Arnim’s new emphasis on a less theoretical portrayal of the Volk. This is not surprising since the Polenbrochüre was not intended to be a literary work, as was the Königsbuch. On a
more thematic level, a comparison of both points numbered “(2)” shows a distinct separation of the Volk from the ruler. Von Arnim made this separation clear in the Polenbrochüre, portraying a “verwaisten Volk,” abandoned by their king (PB 634). This separation of the people from their leaders symbolized the exclusion of the Volk from the post-revolutionary governments in which their participation was only short-lived hope (Landfester 338). The separation created by von Arnim also disassociated the people from the crimes of their rulers.

Von Arnim’s portrayal of the Volk in the Polenbrochüre as both suffering and misled reflected the result of the disparity between the goals and needs of the governments and their subjects. The reason for this disparity was the rulers’ inability and/or unwillingness to communicate effectively with their people. In other words, the negative outcomes that von Arnim had warned against in the Königsbuch by way of her Napoleon metaphor had come to pass, resulting in the same dishonor and brutality that for which Frau Rat had cursed Napoleon.

As opposed to earlier body imagery, which depicted the Volk as the body of the ruler or as the organically nourishing pregnant mother, body imagery in the Polenbrochüre underscored von Arnim’s new separation between ruler and people. Inverting previous imagery, von Arnim described the Volk in the Polenbrochüre “wie Kinder im Mutterschoß [das] nach Form und Leben trachtet,” satisfying a natural impulse to grow and develop (PB 633). She argued that these natural drives were misinterpreted by the king as evil, destructive impulses (ibid.). Unfortunately, she explained, the king preemptively struck out and “beginnt erst der Kampf und zerreißt die Seele, die so viel Gutes wollte, und alles Leben, was durch sie wahr werden sollte,” (ibid.). In this new scenario, it was not the king, but the people who were the developing fetus in need of
nourishment and protection. Rather than foster their natural imperative to grow in agency and responsibility, those in power attempted to abort their development.

Despite changes to the relationship between the king and the people as presented in the *Polenbrochüre*, von Arnim still sought reconciliation between the two entities. Von Arnim challenged Friedrich Wilhelm IV to give the Poles their freedom and begin fostering the development of his own people (*PB* 634-35). Rather than advocating revolution, she called for “Dulden” and “Ausharren! – ja Ausharren mit ihrem Fürsten und für ihn!” (*PB* 638). Although von Arnim’s portrayals of the *Volk* became more independent and active in the *Polenbrochüre*, she still sought the solution of a monarchic form of government based on “moralische Kraft [die] muß Volk und Regierung zügeln, tragen und einander verbinden,” – in other words, a *Volkskönigtum*.

5.1.4 The Aftermath of 1848: Assessing Bettina von Arnim’s Post-Revolution Politics

From this brief exploration of the *Polenbrochüre*, it becomes apparent that while von Arnim’s disappointment and pessimism had increased in the aftermath of the revolution, she was not yet willing to abandon her vision of the *Volkskönigtum*. Meanwhile, the Prussian government continued to clamp down on threats to the existing order. As a result of the uprisings which continued around Germany well into 1849, thousands were imprisoned and executed, and censorship was reinstated (Tipton 87). Consistent with his public policy, Friedrich Wilhelm’s replies to Bettina von Arnim’s requests for pardons and leniency became increasingly hostile and bitter.

Bäumer and Schultz aptly describe von Arnim’s post-1848 political positioning as that of one who “zwischen allen Stühlen saß” (B/S 123). As before the revolution, her support of a monarchic system was not in line with the liberal constitutionalists, socialists, democrats or other radicals whose company she kept. She also disagreed
with the concept of violent revolution as expressed in Marx’s *Communist Manifesto*, which was also published in 1848 (ibid.). On the other end of the political spectrum, she was even more alienated from legitimists than before because of her continued outspoken views on pauperism and the *Volk*, not to mention her defense of revolutionaries (ibid.). Despite her ongoing intellectual activity and others’ support of her private diplomatic efforts, von Arnim was theoretically more alone than ever.

As she prepared to finish her sequel to the *Königsbuch*, it seemed that Bettina von Arnim was unable to break with her pre-1848 idealism, but at the same time she could not blindly believe in the king and her ideas as she had before. The *Dämonenbuch* illustrates her inability to abandon her vision, but also her attempts to alter this vision to reflect her own disillusionment as well as and her developing belief in the agency of the *Volk*.

5.2 **GESPRÄCHE MIT DÄMONEN: A DIFFICULT COMPOSITION**

Because of the events in Europe around 1848, when considering *Gespräche mit Dämonen. Des Königsbuches zweiter Band* in relation to its prequel, its 1852 publication date remains its most obvious and telling characteristic. Although von Arnim began drafts of the *Dämonenbuch* as early as 1843, she did not write the main body until 1850 (B/S 126). Separated almost evenly by the German revolution of 1848, the *Königsbuch* and the *Dämonenbuch* also provided the author with an unexpected (although not entirely unanticipated) opportunity to create a dialogue between her two volumes which reflected almost a decade of changing relationships and perspectives.

The *Dämonenbuch* was a problematic text not only for its author, but also for readers and critics. The text’s conspicuous absence from the most recent and complete edition of von Arnim’s works (completed in 2004), attests to the book’s continued lack of
recognition, although recent scholarship agrees that the work deserves more attention than it has received thus far. Bettina von Arnim’s difficulties with her compositional processes were reflected in the text’s shortcomings in terms of structure and content. The content is also indicative of her dissatisfaction with the liberals’ and the king’s responses to the revolution, as well as the author’s conflicted state with regard to her political model as she struggled to rethink her ideal vision in light of the failed revolution.

In May 1850, Karl August Varnhagen von Ense documented the troubles von Arnim was having composing the text: “Bettina war unzufrieden mit ihrem neusten Band und gestand, sie sei dem Stoffe nicht gewachsen, eigentlich politische Gedanken könne sie nicht verfolgen oder verarbeiten” (Quoted from: B/S 127). There were several reasons for von Arnim’s struggles, not the least of which was her disintegrating relationship with Friedrich Wilhelm IV. Unfortunately for von Arnim, her efforts to convince Friedrich Wilhelm IV of her Volkskönig model of government in the Königsbuch and in her private letters had fallen far short of her goals. As his replies to her letters after March, 1848, showed, he regarded her as having lost any influence, and as such, of little importance to him (B/S 126-27). The king’s rejection of her ideas, and her skepticism that this next attempt would make any difference, certainly contributed to her dissatisfaction with her writing. Hock offers insightful expansion to this explanation, which takes into account von Arnim’s writing process in its larger context: “Her efforts found little resonance, little reflection in the way of others’ reception of her ideas, in other words, little of what she required for her own productivity” (Hock, Replicas 182-83).

In addition to von Arnim’s aggravation with the king and at her own loss of influence, she was exasperated by the post-revolution Prussian political landscape. The bitter edge to the Dämonenbuch (which von Arnim could not tone down to blend with the other aspects of the text) was partially caused by her frustration with the efforts by
politicians and bureaucrats to reform the government that had resulted in impermanent solutions, still overshadowed by restorative and reactionary tendencies (B/S 132).

Based on the king’s choice of ministers and the dissolution of parliament, von Arnim was understandably pessimistic with regard to the viability of these structural reforms. The movement of the Prussian government toward a more participatory configuration was seen by von Arnim as another form of "kleinlichen Gesetzespolitik" (Gespräche mit Dämonen 291). Therefore, she rejected the parliamentary structures as well as the new Prussian constitution that Friedrich Wilhelm IV certified (under protest) on February 6, 1850 (B/S 132). Bäumer and Schultz further describe von Arnim's skepticism toward these reforms in comparison with her own views of the ideal state, as presented in the Dämonenbuch:

Nicht den neugeschaffenen demokratischen Institutionen in Berlin und Frankfurt und den Details der Gesetzgebung gilt ihre Aufmerksamkeit, sondern der Frage, welche kritischen Ansätze der liberalen Bewegung Preußens König 'verinnerlichen' sollte, der nach wie vor an seiner "gotteingeboren[n] Herrscherwürde" festhält. (B/S 132)

The above quote brings attention to von Arnim's lack of faith in both the convictions of liberal reformers and the trustworthiness of king.

Besides von Arnim's dissatisfaction with the king, her position, and the reforms, I would add another factor to her struggles in composing the Dämonenbuch: her ongoing shifting perceptions of the Volk and their role in generating change, and how these changing perceptions affected her Volkskönig model. Von Arnim's expanding view of the Volk as a force of agency, as seen in the Polenbrochure and also in the Dämonenbuch, was probably caused by her loss of faith in the king to be a lone catalyst for reform. However, because of her aversion to democracy and her steadfast belief that
monarchy was the best system of government, she was unable to abandon her
Volkskönig model. Fanny Lewald’s eloquent and thoughtful assessment of the
Dämonenbuch explains this predicament:

Die Thronbesteigung Friedrich Wilhelms IV., wenn schon Epoche
machend in der preußischen Geschichte, bedeutend für das deutsche
Vaterland, ward dennoch nicht der Anfang jener Erlösung, jener
weitgreifenden Beglückung welche Bettina erwartet hatte. So kam in ihr
wie in vielen Tausenden der Gedanke zur vollen Klarheit, daß kein
Einzelner zur Erlösung der Menschheit die Kraft habe, daß jetzt kein
einzelner Mensch dazu berufen sei, sondern daß der Geist der
Menschheit, der sich in jedem Menschen offenbart, mitarbeiten müsse an
der Neugestaltung der Welt, daß nur der Genius der gesamten
Menschheit zu befreien vermöge von dem Joch der Willkür welches die
alte Zeit über sie gebracht hat, indem sie den Gebrauch, den Ausdruck
der Macht in die Hände eines oder einiger bevorzugten Menschen legte.
Dem Theile der Menschheit welcher am meisten gedrückt war, am
tiefsten litt unter der Last der bestehenden Verhältnisse, wendet sich von
jetzt ab ihre Liebe, ihre Theilnahme, ihre Thätigkeit vor allen Andern zu.
Mit Wort und That wird sie der Anwalt der Proletarier, der Juden, der
Polen, der Magyaren […] (Der Cultus des Genius. Brief an Bettina von
Arnim von Fanny Lewald, in Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung, Nr. 174,
July 21, 1849, p.63: Quoted from Werke III 809)

Although Bettina von Arnim did have faith in the ability of people to govern themselves
on a micro-level, this faith did not extend to their ability to advance humanity. She
believed that only a being of a higher caliber could truly lead a people. I suggest that
Bettina von Arnim continued in her portrayals of a Volkskönigtum because she was
bound by her convictions to the Romantic notion that it was possible “durch Poesie die
Utopie zu verwirklichen,” and she could not envision a better ideal alternative (Schmitz,
“Alterswerk” 143). As such she apparently saw no point in constructing an ideal vision of
a compromise.

5.3 THEMES AND CHARACTERS IN THE DÄMONENBUCH

Published on August 3, 1852, Bettina von Arnim’s final work was structured
around a dream in which a Dämon tries to convince a sleeping king to act on her utopian
vision of the *Volkskönigtum*. Within the narrative frame of a dream scenario, by now a commonly recognized tool of the author, von Arnim created a safe space for the expression of political ideas and criticisms. In the *Dämonenbuch*, however, this construct served a symbolic purpose as well. Just as the historical conversation partner of King Friedrich Wilhelm IV was not to be influenced by the author, so was the fictional king in the text not to be convinced to change while awake. The author’s only solution to this problem was to create a character who attempted to reach him in a dream state (Landfester 358). However, even the attempt to influence the fictional sleeping king was doomed to be unsuccessful, a plot characteristic which demonstrated the author’s personal skepticism. The symbolism of the dream structure thus reflected the author’s own suspicions that her endeavor would prove futile, despite her enduring belief that a *Volkskönigtum* was the ideal state structure.

Another successful technique that the author repeated in the *Dämonenbuch* was the dialogic format. Von Arnim began the *Dämonenbuch* with a monologue, followed by a two-person conversation, which developed into a discussion among multiple speakers (Hock, *Replicas* 183). The central character is, of course, the incorporation of the author as both narrator and *Dämon*. To emphasize their connection, the two entities merge halfway through the text and share one voice, and then separate again at the very end.

As the literary projection of the author’s inner voice, the *Dämon* was not intended (as in today’s language) as an evil or negative character, but rather as a messenger figure such as Hermes, who communicated between the realms of the spiritual and physical (Landfester 340; B/S 131; Schmitz, “Alterswerk” 146). Within this role, the *Dämon* functioned “im Sinne der antiken Mythologie” as “ein hilfreicher Halbgott,” that represented “die gute Stimme, das politische Gewissen des Königs und versucht, ihn zur Wahrheit zu führen” (B/S 131). Despite its position as a manifestation of the author’s
voice, however, the Dämon should not be understood as a Genius figure, which appears as an independent character later in the text. The Dämon functions as a good conscience whereas the Genius acts as the creative spirit which controls an individual’s developmental potential. (Landfester 349).

In addition to the Dämon and the Genie, other main characters include the narrator, who fuses with the Dämon during the king’s dream sequence, and the Primate (Primas) of Frankfurt Karl Theodor von Dalberg, with whom the narrator discusses the situation of the Jews in Germany, and in Prussia in particular. In the Dämonenbuch, von Arnim argued for full social recognition and integration of the Jews as an equal segment of society, while heavily criticizing Christians for their historical and current mistreatment of this group. Von Arnim also suggested that it was the duty of the Christians to bring about peaceful co-existence (rather than assimilation) with Jewish communities (B/S 129-30). While it is evident that for her time, von Arnim’s treatment of Jewish issues in her texts was considerably radical, as Hock argues, “it is misleading to apply the appellation of Arnim’s ‘Bettine’ [the narrator/character] as a protector of the Jews to Arnim herself, for even in her later years, the author did not fully reject the stereotypes frequently associated with Jews in the nineteenth century” (Hock, Replicas 200).

Also, von Arnim’s concern for the Jews, however progressive, should be seen in general terms. Her engagement with Jewish issues was related to her general

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48 The character of Primate Dalberg is based on the historical Primate of Frankfurt, Primas (Fürstprimas) Karl Theodor von Dalberg.
sympathy for oppressed peoples, “die zu Unrecht von der Gesellschaft und den Regierenden benachteiligt, verfolgt oder verachtet w[u]rden” (B/S 131). From this standpoint, both the Jews and the Poles, for example, were groups deserving of sympathy and advocacy.

In order to reinforce the experiences shared between oppressed peoples throughout history, toward the end of the Dämonenbuch, many allegorical characters from such groups throughout time appear to face the sleeping king and uphold the narrator/Dämon’s arguments. Such characters include the Germanic peoples (Germane), the Poles (Pole), the Hungarian Magyars (Magyar), the Lombards (Lombarde), and the Gauls (Gallier). This high number of allegorical characters and their lengthy discussions contributed significantly to the lack of enthusiasm for the style of the text. Interestingly, the Jews do not appear as one of these allegorical groups. This could imply that von Arnim restricted her allegorical characters to nationalities, to which she attached the importance of a common language or geographic boundaries.

As a testament to von Arnim’s increased focus on the Volk, other allegorical characters include the (united) Peoples (Völker), the proletariat (Proletariat), and the Spirit of the Volk (Volksgeist). Less tangible, but also connected to these groups, are the spirits of the past (Ahnengeister) and the spirits of future progeny (Geister der Nachkommen).

Underscoring the many voices in the text is the Geist der Islam, who appears both at the beginning and end of the work, and who also functions as the narrator’s own Dämon before the narrator and the Dämon characters conflate (Landfester 362). Von Arnim first introduced the Geist der Islam in the dedication. As with the Königsbuch, the Dämonenbuch was dedicated to a monarch, but rather than to a German king, von Arnim dedicated her last work to the “Kaiser der Osmanen,” Abdul Medschid I, who
came to power at the age of sixteen and ruled from 1839 to 1861. Bettina von Arnim came upon this figure through her friend and correspondent, Hermann, Fürst von Pückler Muskau, who was famous throughout German lands for his travel journals and letters, which he began publishing in 1835.\textsuperscript{50}

Abdul Medschid I became known for his attempts to establish equality among all his subjects, and for continuing the reforms begun by his father, Mahmud II, which included educational reforms, the construction of hospitals, and the continued centralization of the government (Hock, \textit{Replicas} 184). Von Arnim saw in Medschid I a model reformer who stood in contrast to Friedrich Wilhelm IV. For these reasons, the dedication to the \textit{Dämonenbuch} reads, “Dem Geist des Islam, vertreten durch den großmütigen Abdul-Medschid-Kahn Kaiser der Osmanen” (1853 ed. p.II ). In this manner, the character of the universal \textit{Geist der Islam} enters the text. Interestingly, this spirit not only inhabits Medschid I, but is also the spiritual guide to the narrator and later the “guter Dämon” (combination narrator/Dämon) who speaks to King Friedrich Wilhelm IV. In the dedication, this great world-genius spirit inspires the narrator to continue her work (BW Pückler 399).

\section*{5.4 FROM VOLKSKÖNIGTUM TO VÖLKERKÖNIGTUM: THE PLOT OF THE DÄMONENBUCH AND THE NEW AGENCY OF THE VOLK}

After gaining inspiration and courage from the Spirit of Islam, the narrator decides to continue her attempts to communicate an ideal despite her past defeats. The

\textsuperscript{50} Pückler reported, for example, on Greece (from the middle of a revolt), and praised Mehmet Ali, the Muslim Viceroy of Egypt and ruler of Crete, because of his support of the Christian church. With the viceroy’s help, Pückler visited lands rarely seen by Germans: the ruins of Thebes and Karnak, Nubia, and the Sudan. He acquainted the Germans with Asia Minor and North Africa and was one of the most-read authors in Germany at that time (BW Pückler 398-99). Pückler included Bettina von Arnim in his publications as well, when he addressed his second “Semilasso in Afrika” letter to her. His character, Semilasso, which means semi-dark, was one of his personae through which he reported on his travels. Through these publications, von Arnim (and many others) became informed about the governments, peoples, and happenings in the near East.
narrator echoes an actual letter from Friedrich Wilhelm IV to Bettina von Arnim from 1852, lamenting, “früher sei ich eine Macht gewesen, deren Teilnahme ihm schmeichelte. Aber heute?” (GD 259). The spirit calls on the narrator to think of the future rather than the past: “das Gute überlebt dich, und der Nachlebende wird’s erkennen!” (ibid.). The atmosphere thus becomes focused on the future value of the communication.

The second section, titled, “4 April 1808,” reiterates this focus on the future in its representation of the artist’s spiritual striving toward genius. In “4 April 1808” (von Arnim’s twenty-third birthday), the narrator recalls her early inspirational relationship with Goethe, as well as her maturation with regards to Goethe in the Goethebuch. She then recognizes nature as the force that empowered her to escape the banality of everyday life, politics, and the church, in her quest to aspire to her own poetic genius (Hock, Replicas 185-86).

The third section, “Die Klosterbeere. Zum Andenken an die Frankfurter Judengasse,” is by far the longest section of the text. This part begins with an historically based anecdote about Bettina von Arnim’s childhood years spent in a convent. The anecdote represents the process of spiritual and emotional development of human beings which eventually outgrows organized religion (as the girl outgrew the convent) and develops into a spiritual awareness that incorporates the concept of Genius (Schmitz, “Alterswerk” 144). This spiritual progression also demonstrates that such personal development cannot take place in isolation from society and nature (Hock, Replicas 186-193). From here, the text resumes its dialogic style, thus symbolizing interaction with society, as the discussion turns to the plight of Jews in German regions.

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51 See page 23 of this thesis for complete quote and citation of this letter.
Although the primate is not fully convinced of the narrator’s argument for the spiritual evolution of both Germans and Jews, his encouraging attitude inspires her to address the king with her concerns. The narrator then expresses her wish to fly into chambers of the king and whisper these truths into the monarch’s sleeping ear. Although Primate Dalberg encourages her, he also warns that the king might see her as troublesome fly, alluding to the power differential between the two figures. His warning, however, fails to dissuade the narrator despite her realization that her chances of communicating effectively with the king are indeed slim. It is at this point that the narrator transforms herself into the king’s Dämon (Hock, Replicas 190).

In the ensuing conversation with the dreaming king, the Dämon conveys notions of justice and equality, and criticizes the death penalty, war, conscription, and religious hypocrisy. The Dämon also emphasizes the importance of the ruler placing his trust in his subjects above all other established structures. At first, the king appears willing to listen, but before long the Dämon’s words overwhelm him and he begins to threaten the Dämon, calling it a pesky mosquito: “Kleine Mücke du!” (GD 304).

A discussion between the Dämon and the sleeping king ensues, in which the Dämon eventually proposes a universal Volkskönigtum. The king resists this idea because he assumes a competitive (nationalistic) relationship between nations:

_Schlafender König:_ “Nationen sind nicht unter eine Hut zu bringen, je mehr ihre Annäherungspunkte sich erweitern, je gehässiger werden sie einander, jede Annäherung ein dauernd Reiben.” (GD 364)
However, the *Dämon* argues for a model based on cooperation, which redirects the tensions between nations and revisits von Arnim’s references to the organic harmony of nature:

*Dämon:* “Dies Reiben ist die fortlauufende elektrische Kette, die alle Einzelwesen organisch einander verbindet. Untergeordneter Magnet, der das Farbenbild lebendiger Einheit ihnen zuströmt. Fürsten und Völker bilden und erkennen sich ineinander” (ibid.).

Also in keeping with the *Volkskönig* model, both ruler and subjects are necessary to the developmental process.

The sleeping king persists in his skepticism of the *Dämon*’s solution. In order to convey the universality of the *Dämon*’s views, other spirits appear as reinforcements. This rather large cast of allegorical characters signifies a final turn within the language of the text from the concrete and worldly to the symbolic and spiritual. These spirits present a model of universal tolerance and cooperation which, Schmitz argues, must first become manifest within the spiritual realm before it can become reality in the physical realm (Schmitz, “Alterswerk” 144).

As the group discussion progresses, von Arnim explicitly emphasized the power and duty of the *Völker* to combine their efforts in order to forge a new age. Despite her new focus on the agency and responsibility of the people, as compared to their more passive role in the *Königsbuch*, this new age also takes the form of a *Volkskönigtum*, in which the people set themselves once again under the leadership of a king. The process, the *Volksgeist* argues, must begin with a reconciliation of past injuries: “Versöhnung ist Rache, die Gott verlangt – das ist Adel der Volksbildung, und was jene als idealisch verwerfen, das ist Mögliches dem Volk,” (*GD* 385). This sentiment also defends von Arnim’s continued portrayals of utopic visions. The following excerpt guides the reader through the rest of this process:
Gallier: “Alle Volksstämme bilden einen Völkerwald, der gemeinsamen Stürmen widersteht. Der Gott ist mit uns, der die Zeit der Zerstörung in die Zeiten der Wiedergeburt umwandelt.”

Germane: “Lange waren wir abgesperrt voneinander, jeder Volksstamm in seinem Käfig von Verleumdung umgittert, und wir waren ein Spiel der Tücke gegeneinander. […]”

Volksgeist: “Völkereinheit ist sich selber alles und will allein, was sie sich selber dankt. Sie ist nicht ein gewährtes Recht, sie ist die angestammte Kraft, sich selbst zu helfen, sie mißt mit üppigem Kraftgefühl die Schlachtfelder. […] aber die Fürsten, wie zersplitterte Bäume, die kein Laub mehr krönt, können mächtig oder ohnmächtig zu sein nicht entscheiden, ob sie einer fruchtbringenden oder Früchte und Blüte hinabstürzenden Zeit sich zuwenden.”

(GD 386)

Above, the overarching spirit of the Volk expounds on the Gauls’ and the Germanic peoples’ call for unity among all peoples. Unlike the Volk of the Königsbuch, who were much more dependent on a strong king to rally their support and lead their development, the Volksgeist reminds the other character groups that it is their duty to help themselves. While the Völker can stand united and protected as a forest of strong trees, time has proven the rulers to be weaker and less reliable. However, this frailty is portrayed by the Volksgeist as a choice which the rulers themselves decided not to make. Also notable is von Arnim’s portrayal of the rulers as trees unto themselves, which set them on equal footing individually with each tribe of people.

Next, the Germanic peoples speak of the resiliency and ability of the Volk to begin this healing process: “Gut wieder machen, was andere verdarben, Opfer auf sich nehmen, die andre nicht leisten können, das ist die souveräne Kraft des Volkes, frei sein zu können; denn nicht umsonst ist harter Lebensweg dem Volk Beruf […]” (ibid.). Here, von Arnim implied that the people have the power to be free and should not wait for their rulers to (paradoxically) bestow freedom upon them. This freedom includes the rights of the Volk to trust that their leaders will not to betray them by working against their development and committing acts of violence toward them. Through the various groups,
von Arnim then described these rights in the spirit of Kant’s moral imperatives, as basic human rights which are not the product or privilege of any faith, code, government, or class:

_Volksgeist:_ “Denn Rechtssinn geht nicht hervor aus Religion, noch aus Moral, noch aus politischen Systemen; er ist nicht aristokratisch, noch demokratisch, noch auch despotisch oder monarchisch. Über Menschenrechte klar entscheidend ist souveräne Kraft im Volksgewissen.”

[…]

_Völker:_ “Aber den Herrscher verrieten seine allesverkehrenden Imperative und haben ihm hinweggeschwätzt zu gelegner Stunde, was aus eignen Tiefe der Geist ihm eingab.”

_Pole:_ “Und mit seinem Fluch schreckten sie die Liebe der Völker, die sich ihm kundgeben wollte in ihren Taten. Und die Begeisterung ward Empörung, und der, auf den wir unsre Hoffnung setzten, war ein Unbarmherziger uns geworden.”

_Volksgeist:_ “Volksgewissen im Herrscher verletzt, ist Verletzung der Majestät.”

_(GD 386)_

These are clear references (which Lewald echoed in her review) to the high hopes of the many, which Friedrich Wilhelm IV so brutally betrayed, shaming himself in the process.

The _Genius_ then enters the conversation, providing its more removed and optimistic wisdom, which projects what the future could look like:


The term, “Volksgewissen,” is not clearly defined, but seems to include notions of human rights in terms of what is innately moral (as opposed to morality as dictated by a specific society, government, or group). When honored, this _Volksgewissen_ has the power to restore the king to his proper role as beloved leader. Through the figure of the _Genius_,.
von Arnim has expanded the role of the *Volkskönig* to *Völkerkönig*, and implied that a renewal of society which puts the rights of the people first would remove the pain of past injustices from the collective memory.

Finally, the *Volksgeist* and the *Genius* sum up their argument by stressing the relationship between the king and the people:

*Volksgeist:* “König ist Volksgewissen, Volksgesetz, Volksgenie.”

*Genie:* “Alle Macht und Kraft und Herrlichkeit der Völker im Brennpunkt der Volkssonne ist König.”

(*GD* 387)

And the sleeping king’s response to the vision of a realm in which his power, knowledge, laws, and spirit are derived from his people (i.e., to a *Völkerkönigtum*)?

*Schlafender König:* “Mir schwindelt.”

(ibid.)

At the end of this section, the Spirit of Islam returns just as the sun is rising, and the sleeping king knows that he will soon awaken. The Spirit of Islam leaves the king with a parable of Kaab been Mame, a tribal leader who selflessly sacrificed his own life for that of another in a rival tribe. While the king understands the intrinsic value of the parable, he is afraid to act in such a way. The spirit then explains that the rewards of immortality outweigh any earthly rewards the king might receive through acting in the interest of power (*Hock*, *Replicas* 192). He urges the king to act on the ideas presented to him in the dream, to yield to the needs of the people before it is too late: “Gewähre, solange es Zeit ist. Es wird eine Zeit kommen, wo du gewähren möchtest, aber keinen findest du, der es annehme” (*GD* 407).
5.5 SIEGFRIED IMAGERY IN VON ARNIM’S WRITINGS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO DEVELOPING GERMAN NATIONALISM

Another method by which Bettina von Arnim communicated both her disappointment in the king and her hope for a universal Volkskönigtum was through her imagery of the Germanic hero Siegfried. Also, von Arnim’s use of the Siegfried metaphor poignantly demonstrates the parallels and changes between her heroic and mythological imagery in Königsbuch and the Dämonenbuch. Known mainly from the Niebelungenlied and the Volsungasaga, Siegfried was recognized for his superior fighting skills, courtly values, and near-invincibility. He represented the values of courage, steadfastness, and nobility.\(^{52}\) Equally important in Bettina von Arnim’s Siegfried imagery are the giants and the dragons which he defeats. Von Arnim used these monsters in various writings to symbolize that which (because of greed for material riches and earthly power) threatened the well-being and development of the Volk.

Von Arnim’s Siegfried metaphor developed through letters and drafts before appearing in the text of the Königsbuch. In a letter to the king from February, 1843, von Arnim prepared him for the imagery which was to appear in the Königsbuch, associating him directly with the Siegfried, so that when he read the text he would recognize the reference. In the following passage from this letter, von Arnim introduced the Siegfried image while expressing her wish to function as the communicative link between the king and the people (Püschel, BW FWIV/Püschel 316). She wrote that she wished to describe “wie es den edlen den genialen Beziehungen zwischen Fürst und Volk geziemt” (BW FWIV/Püschel 81).

In this early example, von Arnim assumed the role of Siegfried, stating that she has the knowledge, courage, and key (her writing) to wrench all the armored giants and sulfur-belching dragons away from the king as soon as he would allow her to do so. In this position, von Arnim carefully constructed a hierarchy in which the king rules over his vassal, Siegfried. This not only placed von Arnim in an intermediary role of the loyal vassal, but also gave the ruler his due respect. She offers these services on behalf of both the king and the people to lessen the distance between them, which would form a new relationship based on communication and trust. In this passage the giants and dragons symbolized “die Philister die sich Staatsmänner nennen … [die] vom Volk nichts wissen konnten, [und] nichts wissen wollten” (BW FWIV/Püschel 82).

The next example of the Siegfried metaphor appeared a few months later in the text of the Königsbuch. Toward the end of a heated discussion with the Vicar concerning the function of organized religion in society, Frau Rat accuses the Christian church of placing its concern for its own wealth and power far above their duty to help educate their flock in matters of spiritual development. In this instance, the dragons and giants symbolized the church fathers who had let themselves be led astray from their spiritual duties because of personal greed. Allying herself with the knights of old, Frau Rat encourages the Vicar to fight for the benefit of human development, just as brave knights of long ago faced loss and terror in order to fight for the welfare of the people:

52 Siegfried became invincible by defeating a dragon and bathing in its blood, which protected him from all attacks except for a small spot in the middle of his back where a leaf had fallen.
So mancher ritterliche Geist hat schreckliche [Ge]Fährlichkeiten ausgestanden [...] um den Gürtel der Unsichtbarkeit, um das Schwert des unfehlbaren Siegs zu erlangen; und was dergleichen unschätzbare Seltenheiten noch mehr sind. – Drachen haben sie bezwingen müssen und Riesen, und in alle dunkle Irrwege und Wildnisse sind sie unermüdet herumgetappt, Hunger und Durst haben sie gelitten, allein ihr feuriger Geist hat sie zum erwünschten Ziel gebracht. (BK 128)

These knights did not fight the monsters to obtain worldly riches for their own benefit, but rather used their hard-won treasures to do battle on behalf of the people.\(^53\) Not only did they face great danger, but they also suffered hardship in the form of hunger and thirst in their selfless quests, relying only on their spirits as the sustenance to help them achieve their goals.

Such danger and sacrifice, Frau Rat implies, is far beyond what the church would endure to ensure the spiritual development of their worshippers: “So müßt auch Ihr hoffen, Ihr werdet zur Ziel kommen […] Ihr Kinder es ist viel wert auch nur einen Schritt der göttlichen Erkenntnis näher gekommen zu sein” (ibid.). While the dragons and giants in this example represented the Christian clergy, the greater symbolism remained consistent: the threatening creatures represented the forces that were working against the overall welfare of the people. Within the text, the image of warriors past was meant to inspire the Vicar (i.e. the church) to change his focus from his own welfare to that of his flock. As a message to Friedrich Wilhelm IV, it meant to inspire the king to do the same.

Years later, von Arnim revisited this imagery in Gespräche mit Dämonen on two occasions. The first served as a condemnation of the king by representing European rulers as the new breed of monsters. In this example, von Arnim created a biting reversal, casting the king in the role of the destructive dragon. As before, the dragon

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\(^53\) Such magical items as the belt/cloak of invisibility and the invincible sword, while present in various Siegfried tales, are also common in Germanic and Nordic sagas and fairy-tales (BK 958). Von Arnim seems to have chosen to remain general in her imagery, perhaps because of the wide appeal of these well-known images.
symbolized personal greed, and the forces that threatened the best interests of the people. For this example, von Arnim chose the character of the *Fürst Primas* to draw this new connection at the end of his conversation with the narrator. Through this choice of speakers, von Arnim lent credibility to the criticism because it came from someone of governmental rank, albeit not directly connected to the Prussian state.

The primate’s criticism stems from his general skepticism of a *Volkskönig* style of government. His doubt is based on his belief that neither the people nor the king is fully capable of this utopian relationship for which the narrator argues. The primate begins his argument by blaming God for having abandoned His faith in humanity: “Er verzagt an seinen Werkzeugen, den Menschen, das Große durch sie hervorbringen zu können” (*GD* 286). No longer believing that humans are capable of such greatness, the primate wonders how a ruler with the values of a *Volkskönig* (provided that were possible) would be able to survive among the politicians whom he calls “Heuchlern und Schmeichlern,” and “eingebildeten, übermütigen Narren” who would only seek to betray him (ibid.). As far as the *Volk* are concerned, the primate is equally critical: “Und wenn er des Volkes Sehnen und Hoffen erfüllte, so konnten sie das nur närrisch finden, da sie selber vom Gemeinen zum Höheren keinen Beruf fühlen (ibid.).

He concludes that a ruler can only rely on himself, but unfortunately, the power to do so seems to no longer exist among European rulers:

*Aber diese Geniuskräfte sind versiegt unter christlichen Fürsten! sie pflanzen dem Volke keine Treue ein, sie kreuzigen es und würfeln um sein Vaterland und reißen die Bande los, mit denen es an den Fürstenstamm gebunden war. Sie reißen seine Heimat in Stücken, und jeder behält das meiste, was er vermag, und meint sich den Mächtigsten und hat nicht Mache des Geistes, sondern des Wahnsinns, und rottet aus im Volk allen Lebenstrieb und seine Kühnheit und edlen Willen und nennt sich selber groß, ruhend wie ein Drache in der Wüste auf einem toten Schatz!* (*GD* 286-87)
Clearly, the king has moved from the Siegfried side of the equation present in pre-1848 texts, to that of the dragons (Landfester 361). The portrayal of the dragon perching on dead treasure emphasized the empty value of worldly power and wealth in the face of the suffering and dissatisfaction of so many people. However, the primate’s statement that the power of genius is no longer available to Christian rulers, implies that it may still be present elsewhere, namely, in the Spirit of Islam which is guiding the narrator and the Dämon.

At this point the narrator, to whom the primate has acted as a foil, wishes that she herself were a spirit who could whisper to the king the wisdom that God intended (GD 287). The primate supports her idea, and she then explains how she would encourage the king to become a hero among heroes and to reconcile the relationship with his people in order to rule in the best possible manner: “Du schlummerst gefesselt von Trug und Gewalt!” she would tell him. “Dein trauriger Dämon durchforscht die Öde - - Die Musen deines Thrones! O rufe sie zurück – Weisheit, Mut und Mitleid – süßes mitleid mit den Menschen, die dein Volk sind” (ibid.). This statement formed the main premise of the Dämonenbuch – that wisdom, courage, and empathy on the part of the ruler will bring about an atmosphere of reconciliation, renewed trust, and cooperation with his people. With this mission in mind, the narrator tries to deter the sleeping king from existing as a “dragon,” by presenting a multinational and multicultural vision of Volkskö nig tum. If the sleeping king were to take the idea of reconciliation to heart, and unite with the people against those forces which sought to oppress them all, a Völkerkö nig tum could be achieved.

Von Arnim reiterated her allegorical utopian vision of a universal Völkerkö nig tum toward the very end of the text by developing a scene in which all of the allegorical peoples in the book come together to fight another dragon. The dragon from this
passage represents all of the old systems and forces which had neglected and exploited the people from the early tribes of Europe to the newly established Proletariat. This rather large section represents all of humanity working together – a pan-European solution as begun through the multiple revolutions and uprisings of the 1840s. It also functions as a positive example of the extent to which people of all lands would cooperate and act under a true Völkerkönig. This vision was designed to serve as a final attempt to communicate Bettina von Arnim’s vision of an ideal (world-) nation. Alternatively, it also implied that if the king was not part of the solution, he was a hindrance.

As a chorus surrounding the sleeping king, the various characters describe a scene in which they come together to battle the dragon under the leadership of a Völkerkönig. The combination of the people and their king creates an invincible synergy between the two parties in which each strengthens the other beyond what was possible before. First, the character of the Volksgeist explains that those in power who do not derive their power from the will of the people, but rather from force, are themselves the cause of revolution:

Alle Völker haben ihr Ideal, zu dem ihre Begeistrung hinauffrischt. Der Machthaber, der nicht in ihnen sich verklärt, ist Machträuber des Göttlichen am Volk. Revolutionen sind nicht Verbrechen, aber die Folgen davon. Der aber in seines Volkes Flammengeist sich spiegelt, der hat absolute Gewalt über es. (GD 390)

Revolution, the Volksgeist argues, is the response of the people to being treated unjustly. The Volksgeist explains that, unlike those rulers who abuse their power, a ruler who internalizes the spirit of the people would have both power and peace.

The Gauls continue the discussion of revolution while introducing the dragon imagery, by explaining that when the forces of malevolent “Machträuber” oppress the people to an extreme, then the people will fight the “dragon” out of desperation,
overcoming it through the power of their collective rage: “Und wenn ein Volk in Verzweiflung ringt mit dem Drachen, der über die Grenzen des Irrsterns hinaus die wilde Brust aufbäumt, dann wird aus den Tiefen seines Wesens der Zorn den Verderber überkommen” (ibid.).

The Poles amend the vision by adding that with the aid of the people, a true Völkerkönig can defeat the dragon. The Poles explain that with the protection and courage of his people, the king will rise to defeat the threat:

Dann fühlt er erst, wie in Gefahr der Mut ihm wächst. Wie ein vollblühender Baum beschatten unsre Taten sein Haupt … die Welt baut er um. Getragen vom Volksmut, schwingt er plötzlich sich auf und nimmt mit Schnelle die Fassung dem Drachen und reizt ihn, bis er zum Schlag das Haupt ihm reicht. (GD 391)

In this passage von Arnim also reintegrated an important component of her Volkskönig image: the ruler as the “Haupt,” or head of the body that is the people (both literally and figuratively). In his battle with the dragon, the king now assumes the role of Siegfried.

The Lombards also join the fray, explaining the lengths to which the people will go to defeat the dragon: “Auf in die Schlacht! An den Drachen lasset uns Streit gehren. Sind die Pfeile verschossen, dann schnell greifen wir nach dem Schwert. Sind die Schwerter verschroten, so fassen wir die Keulen” (ibid.). Their loyalty and determination is magnified by the character of the “Völker,” as they emphasize the immense size and power of their masses: “Und schwingen Massen groß wie Berge. Sinnlos fällt er dann nieder, und sein Mund wird schweigen” (ibid.).

Once the beast is brought down from the skies, the Germane fetch the king and explain what has happened:

Wie der Wind sitzen wir auf und eilen zum Herrscher, der voll leuchtender Glorie uns anstaunt, vor ihm sagen wir aus, wie einer Pechwolke gleich der Drache die Welt verdunkelt und der Pechdampf wie ein Zelt über den Häuptern seiner Anhänger sich ausbreitet, und wie alle Edlen Zornes voll sind über ihn. (ibid.)
The *Germane* reveal how the dragon’s shadow reaches across the world like a dark and luckless cloud, and how the dragon’s breath sprawls out over the heads of its followers, demonstrating both the scale and the insidiousness of the foe. The king looks on in astonishment, as if realizing for the first time the scope of the dragon’s power. Next, as the people prepare for a final battle, the dragon orders its followers into the fray, depleting its dominion of all people and resources in order to protect itself. It threatens its army, saying that “keiner finde Sicherheit vor meinen Grimm” (ibid.).

Under the leadership of their *Volkskönig*, the peoples cooperate in one last battle to defeat the beast and its forces. The Lombards’ horses grow wings and they battle the dragon in the air while the Magyars shoot arrows and the Poles throw their spears. The Germanic peoples deal the deathblow to the beast’s heart, after which the people rush to the king to praise him and profess their loyalty:


The victorious ruler is again united with both *Volk* and God. Not only is he purified of evil, but his riches come in the form of the trust and loyalty of all peoples, rather than from the steely gold of a dragon’s hoard.

After this climax, the author incorporated distance from the charged scene as the sleeping king comments that he understands the vision, but still cannot imagine working in cooperation with the people. The Magyar people then explain that it was because of the oppression and dashed hopes of the various peoples that, in desperation, they sought to communicate with the king through this dream in the first place. The *Magyar*
say, as if trying to make the dream a reality: “Da erwachte dieser und rief uns in den Krieg mit dem Drachen, der sich bäumte gegen ihn; und nun ist er die Sonne der verbannten Völker” (GD 393).

While still dreaming, the king is awakened and surrounded by the various peoples as a new sun surrounded by rays. This enlightened and strong Völkerkönig receives his mandate from the people and from God. Finally, von Arnim expressed the ultimate union of Fürst and Volk, through the Germane: “Seine Weisheit erprobten die Völker, die gebunden waren, und die Umherirrenden. Aller Kräfte flossen in einen Strom zusammen. Es ist der Atem des Volks, der in ihm lebt” (GD 393). In a final corporeal reunification the body of the people becomes the breath of their leader.

In Bettina von Arnim’s Siegfried imagery, which is present throughout her writings, the author expressed her initial hope in Friedrich Wilhelm IV, followed in the Dämonenbuch by disappointment, and then by continuing hope for reconciliation. In reference to developing notions of German nationalism in the 1840s and 1850s, von Arnim’s choice to use Siegfried as a metaphor for the ultimate Völkerkönig should not be overlooked. Because of the emphasis von Arnim placed on the needs of all oppressed nations, cultures, and socio-economic groups from all times, it is difficult to align von Arnim’s vision with a purely nationalistic agenda that would promote the prominence of Germany over other nations. However, the role of Germany within the text cannot be ignored. Von Arnim’s privileging of the character of the Germane in its expression of key concepts, and the delivery of the deathblow to the dragon’s heart in the final battle, as well as the fact that it is a German king who assumes the role of the Völkerkönig, must be accounted for.
In my opinion, von Arnim clearly did support the development of Germany as a nation *in addition to* the development of other nations based on the principles of her *Volkskönig* system. Also, the Spirit of Islam, which inspires the actions of the narrator and the *Dämon* could indicate that von Arnim attempted to infuse a German/European ruler with an Eastern spirit, thus forming a world spirit (*Weltgeist*) which would render nationality irrelevant. The meeting of the dragon (east) and Siegfried (west) seems to support this. In the end, while von Arnim’s writings resist a label of “nationalistic,” her preference for German leadership implied that she was not completely free of her own cultural biases.

5.6 CONCLUSION: THE IMPACT AND INTENTION OF THE *DÄMONENBUCH*

*Gespräche mit Dämonen* remains a problematic and enigmatic text. Just before its actual publication, Bettina von Arnim gave Varnhagen an almost complete version of the text which had already been set for printing. Varnhagen’s opinions of the text were, like von Arnim’s own, conflicted. He obviously enjoyed seeing his dear friend’s personality reflected in the book, commenting that, “im Ganzen ist Bettine darin, mit einer Fülle von Bildern, Anschauungen, Ahndungen, Gedanken; ein Freund ihres Genius findet alles wieder, was er früher an ihr geliebt,” (Quoted from: *Werke III* 816). However, he also worried about the unpolished style, poor transitions, and overemphasis on allegory, noting (as can be inferred from the above analysis) that the political messages were “auf phantastische Gebilde beschränkt,” (ibid.).

Varnhagen’s fears were realized when reviews of the published work generally regarded it as disconnected, obtuse, illogical, and (because of von Arnim’s continuing support of a *Volkskönigtum*) politically impractical. Friedrich Wilhelm IV never replied to the letter and copy of the *Dämonenbuch* that von Arnim sent to him on August 3, 1852.
Also, as late as October 26, 1856, Varnhagen noted in his diaries that not a single copy of the book had been sold; von Arnim’s son-in-law, Herman Grimm also recorded a similar observation (Konrad, GD 491).

The text’s unpopularity probably came as no surprise to the author, who had heard plenty of criticism from family and friends long before she chose to publish it. Varnhagen expressed his own frustration her unwillingness to edit her text: “Was soll ich ihr nun sagen? Wäre das Buch noch Handschrift, so ließe sich vieles umstellen, auch könnte man es liegen lassen, nun ist es schon so weit gedruckt, die Kosten darauf verwendet! Vorher wollte sie sich nicht raten lassen!” (Quoted from: Werke III 816-17).

Von Arnim’s lack of interest in revisions, the lack of marketing, sales, and reviews for her book, and its very personal nature all call into question whether Bettina von Arnim had ever intended the text for a general readership. One of the few positive reviews of the book that addressed its intimate nature could provide a clue to von Arnim’s actual intended audience. In the anonymous reviewer’s attempt at a structural analysis of the text, s/he posited the dream structure as symbolic of the psychological development of the individual:

Der König, die subjektive Persönlichkeit des Individuums, soll der Messias, der Erlöser der Welt, werden, und zwar nicht im Hinblick auf äußere Elemente und Normen, sondern ganz aus sich selbst heraus, aus dem Entschluß des eigensten, innersten Schauens und Wollens. (Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung, Nr. 46, November 12, 1853; Quoted from Konrad, GD 498)

Konrad comments that this particular review is surprisingly unique in its “methodologisch modernen Kategorien” of psychological analysis (Konrad, GD 500). These factors lead me to suggest that Bettina von Arnim intended the Dämonenbuch for an audience of two: Friedrich Wilhelm IV and herself.

As the above review implies, the Dämonenbuch can be seen as an exploration of the author’s own inner development, of her own “innersten Schauens und Wollens” with
regard to her convictions to preserving her ideal while revising her views on the *Volk*. I would also suggest that the text was an attempt to urge the king to do the same, although von Arnim harbored no delusions as to his likely response. So rather than Ulrike Landfester’s description of the *Dämonenbuch* as a “literarische Monument eines gescheiterten Projektes,” I would characterize it more as a monument to her project of communication and change, both of which were still under construction (Landfester 361).

So why, then, did von Arnim bother publishing it? Maybe her decision was indicative of her commitment to the belief that in order to begin the process of change, ideals needed to be presented and discussed. Not publishing the text would have snuffed out this process. Perhaps she envisioned herself being better understood by later generations, or in typical “Bettina” fashion, she wanted to annoy and embarass her family and had the money to do so publicly. Maybe she wished to complete the dream begun in the *Königsbuch* and express her disappointment in the king. I believe that these possibilities all relate to Bettina von Arnim’s need to have her opinions acknowledged by others, in her efforts to be validated in a society and time that severly restricted her participation in intellectual discourse.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSIONS

Bettina von Arnim’s urge to express herself seems to be overshadowed only by her desire that this expression be noticed by others. When she had exhausted her chances of fulfilling these needs through the fame of her husband and Goethe, she entered the arena of public literary and political discourse herself as an author, salon hostess, and socialite.

In the area of politics, where “politics” includes not only that which is directly related to governmental policies, but also to the societal needs of the populace, Bettina von Arnim expressed herself in a variety of ways. In her salon, she participated in discussions with some of the most active, capable, and influential intellectuals of the Vormärz period. These discussions revolved around topics of local, regional, and international scope, and related to governmental structures, political and societal reform, revolution, religion, and philosophy.

Von Arnim also explored these topics in her writings, which took the form of books, letters, newspaper and journal articles, brochures, reviews, and statistical surveys. Her progressive social activism in Prussia was well-known and contributed to a new awareness among the middle and upper classes of the growing problem of pauperism. For example, the appendix to von Arnim’s Königsbuch called international attention to poverty, criminality, and disease in Berlin, the extent of which had remained unknown up to that point due to strict censorship regulations. When von Arnim’s public
production in areas of social reform were curtailed by this censorship, she boldly continued her attempts to influence public policy by writing to Friedrich Wilhelm IV privately.

However, von Arnim's radical views on social welfare and the exploitation of the fourth estate conflicted with her reactionary belief in preserving the institution of monarchy. Bettina von Arnim thought that the best way to ensure the welfare of the masses was to have a strong monarch who would know the needs his subjects and put these needs above all else, even himself. In the ideal system she created to describe her vision, a morally superior Volkskönig would be an example to his trusting and loyal Volk for the purpose of leading them to spiritual enlightenment.

One of the aims of this project was to describe von Arnim's model of Volkskönigtum, and to trace the development of this model in her literary political texts. Based on the close textual analysis of her mythological and heroic imagery in Dies Buch gehört dem König and Gespräche mit Dämonen. Des Königsbuches zweiter Teil, I have elaborated on her vision of Volkskönigtum, presenting a detailed picture of both the Volkskönig and the Vok. Von Arnim's Volkskönig imagery emphasized wisdom, critical distance, bravery, perseverance, independence, strength of character, and a true desire to communicate with the people. She also created negative examples which functioned as a critique of the court, state bureaucracies, organized religion, and eventually the king himself. Her complex literary imagery both enhances and detracts from her political message because, while it presents an aesthetic accompaniment which underscores her ideas, the presentation itself is at times too intricate or too obscure to follow. Von Arnim's choice to construct such complicated imagery was likely motivated by a combination of factors, including her desire to enter into the literary discourse of the day, as well as to keep her political criticism obtuse enough to avoid censorship.
The impracticality von Arnim’s Volkskönig model stood in stark contrast to her efforts at raising social awareness and improving the conditions of the poor. Her own naïve belief in the viability of her ideal resulted in the suggestion of a system that failed to recognize certain realities of human nature. Ironically, while von Arnim had the ability to see and describe the areas in which social, religious, and governmental policies were detrimental to the well-being of large segments of the population, she seemed unable to propose viable options to overcome these problems. I believe that this conflict stems from the dissonance between her background in German Romantic philosophy and her involvement in the intellectual movements of the Vormärz period. Specifically, von Arnim’s faith in monarchy, as influenced in particular by Novalis, created a belief so strong that she was unable to abandon this model in favor of more participatory ones. Also, her faith in the power of idealism to affect changes in awareness and perspective, caused her to be inflexible in her search for a more fitting model of government when she realized that Friedrich Wilhelm IV would never become a Volkskönig.

As Chapter Five demonstrated, the Dämonenbuch was von Arnim’s attempt to grapple with her extreme disappointment and disillusionment with both liberal and legitimist supporters after the failed German revolution of 1848. In this text, she expanded her belief in the agency and responsibility of the Volk in their own development, but because she refused to exchange her Volkskönigtum for a more realistic (and therefore less idealistic) model, this expansion of the Volk resulted in a proportional expansion of the Volkskönig. The result, a united world nation of Völker under a single Völkerkönig was nothing more than a larger version of the same model.

Overall, von Arnim’s steadfast support of a monarchy diluted the effectiveness of her social agenda. Bettina von Arnim’s extensive network of contacts throughout Europe and her gift for communication, which was universally recognized by her peers, made an
impact by encouraging the exchange of ideas among many of the best minds of her time. Had she devoted more of her seemingly limitless energy to the social aspects of her ideal vision, rather than to the theoretical aspects, her impact on improving conditions might have been significantly greater.

In a person with intellectual acumen of Bettina von Arnim, it is difficult to imagine that, in her more introspective moments, she did not have similar realizations. Yet she continued to pursue her theoretical idealizations at the expense of other opportunities. This situation has led me to question the significance of another theme which was borne out during the course of my analyses: von Arnim's fascination with dominant male figures, both in terms of her literary imagery and her historical attachments to powerful father-figures from whom she obsessively sought approval. I believe that her psychological attraction to such figures did play a role in her unrealistic idealization of the monarchical model, albeit unintentionally. Finally, although her obsessions may have detracted from some of the more practical aspects of her life and writing, in the end they served to create and enrich a significant portion of her literary ouvre.
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